

How a Person Can Become Demonized (And What You Can Do About It)

Rich Nathan
June 5-6, 2004

**The Holy Spirit: Riding the Wave of God's Spirit
Acts 16:16-18**

Back in 1976 two young women, Donna Lauria, who was an 18-year old, and her 19-year old friend, Jody Valenti, were talking in Jody's car near the entrance to Donna's building in the Bronx, New York City. It was 1:00 a.m. in the morning and Donna's parents said, "It is getting late. We want you to come upstairs to the apartment now." Donna promised that she would be right up.

After her parents went inside, Donna noticed a man standing along side the passenger side of the car. She turned to her friend, Jody, and said, "Who is this guy? What do you think he wants?" Before Donna could get an answer to her question, the man pulled out a .44-caliber handgun, knelt down and fired into the car five times. Donna died immediately from a gunshot wound to the neck. Jody was shot in the leg and began leaning on the horn, screaming for help.

Donna's father came racing down from the apartment when he heard the noise. In his pajamas and bare feet, he raced his daughter to the hospital hoping that doctors could save Donna's life. But it was too late. The police couldn't find any motive for the killing. They theorized that maybe it was a mob execution and they got the wrong victim, or that there was some sort of psycho on the loose. But this was an isolated situation. They didn't know that the shooting of these two women was the beginning

of a terrible string of shootings over the next year in New York, resulting in a terrorized city and six utterly innocent people being killed, with six others surviving, some as paraplegics.

The killer was first dubbed by the press, “The .44-Caliber Killer,” but then he began writing letters to the newspapers claiming that he was ordered to do the killings by a demon named “Sam,” who was thirsting for blood. The killer became known as “The Son of Sam.” When they finally caught up with him, more than a year after these first shootings of Donna and Jody, the police found that his real name was David Berkowitz. Years later, David Berkowitz told the story of his life from prison. Let me read to you a portion of David’s account in his own words.

Ever since I was a small child my life seemed to be filled with torment. I would often have seizures in which I would roll on the floor. Sometimes furniture would get knocked over. When these attacks came, it felt like something was entering me. I was like a wild and destructive animal. My father had to pin me to the floor until these attacks stopped.

As a young man, it seemed like an evil force would come upon me in the middle of the night. When this would happen, I felt an urge to sneak out of the house and wander the dark streets. I roamed the neighborhood like an alley cat and would creep back into the house by climbing the fire escapes.

I constantly had thoughts of suicide. Sometimes I spent time sitting on a window ledge with my legs dangling over the side. We lived on the sixth floor of an old apartment building. When my dad saw me doing this, he would yell at me to get back inside.

At age 22, after I completed a three-year enlistment in the Army, I met some guys at a party who were heavily involved in the occult. I had always been fascinated by witchcraft, Satanism, and occult things since I was a child. When I was growing up I watched countless horror and satanic movies, one of which was Rosemary's Baby. That movie, in particular, totally captivated my mind.

Now I was 22 and this evil force was still reaching out to me. Everywhere I went it seemed like there was a sign or symbol pointing to Satan. I felt as if something were trying to take control of my life. I began reading the satanic Bible and I began practicing various occult rituals and incantations. Eventually, I crossed the invisible line of no return. After years of mental torment, behavioral problems, and deep inner struggles, I became the criminal that it seemed my destiny was to become.

Looking back, it was all a horrible nightmare and I would do anything if I could undo everything that happened. Six people lost their lives at my hand. Many other people suffered and will suffer for a lifetime because of me.

The prosecutors said that he was making up all of this involvement in the occult in order to cop a plea of insanity. David Berkowitz was sentenced to 365 years in prison. He almost certainly will never be released.

Is it possible that a human being could really become invaded by a supernatural evil force?

Less dramatic than this, let me tell you the story of a woman, who I will call Janis. Janis often felt an evil presence in her bedroom at night. Several hours after she drifted off to sleep, she felt something come into her room that was vile and menacing. She would wake up in a sweat, look around the room, and see that no one was there, at least no one visible. But then she would feel herself pinned down to the bed and violated. After 10 minutes, the presence would leave.

Janis was often sickened by the experience. She would stay up reading the Bible. She found comfort in reading the Psalms.

What do we do with experiences like that of Janis? Can it all be explained by simply a product of emotional brokenness, or some subconscious trauma?

Today, as we continue in a series I've been doing from the book of Acts, a series I've called, "Learning to Ride the Wave of God's Spirit," we are going to be looking at the evil side of the supernatural. I've called today's talk, "How a Person Can Become Demonized (And What You Can Do About It)." Acts 16:16-18. Let's pray.

SLIDE

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune telling. This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

Now, let's take a look at the setting for this encounter by the apostle Paul with a demonized girl. And I want to consider the setting not only for the encounter with the demonized girl, but also all the subsequent trials that happened to Paul and his companions subsequent to this encounter. They are attacked by a mob; they are beaten and they are thrown in jail. I want to consider for a moment the setting of these problems, because the setting is a clear leading from God to go to Philippi in Macedonia.

God shut the door on Paul traveling south or north or east. Then we read in vv. 9-10,

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During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got

ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”

Well, when they get to Philippi in Macedonia, clearly having been led by God there, they meet some success. Paul preaches the gospel to a wealthy businesswoman and she becomes a Christian. And that’s what vv. 13-15 are about. But following this initial success, we have the encounter with the demonized girl and then a mob attack on Paul and his companions, and then Paul and Silas are beaten and imprisoned.

So what do we learn from this series of events beginning with God’s leading and ending with Paul in prison? What we have here is an extraordinary illustration of a fundamental principle of life that every Christian has to learn. The fundamental principle that every Christian will experience over and over again is the principle of attack and counter-attack that results from spiritual warfare. So many of you have said to yourself at one time or another, “I don’t get it. I prayed and prayed and I really thought God was leading me to take this job, or to move to this neighborhood, or to get involved in this ministry, or to start this group, but nothing has seemed to work out the way I thought it would. Doors have been slammed in my face. Relationships have been really hard. I’ve been hassled in so many areas of my life. What’s going on?”

What’s going on is a clash of two opposing kingdoms – the principle of attack and counter-attack. You see, with the first coming of Christ, the age of the kingdom of

God dawned in this world. Because of Christ's coming, something fundamentally different happened in this world. God's rule broke in. God, the King, began reclaiming this world for himself. Right now, because of the coming of Jesus Christ, we can experience the forgiveness of our sins. Right now, because of the coming of Jesus Christ, we can experience the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. Right now, because of the coming of Jesus Christ, God will manifest gifts of the Holy Spirit through our lives. The new age of the kingdom has broken in. And it is accompanied by spiritual gifts like healing, prophecy, wisdom, discernment, and tongues. Right now, because of the coming of Jesus Christ, God wishes to give you the ability to be freed from the bondage of sin.

But even though the age of the kingdom of God has dawned in this world, the fullness of the kingdom of God awaits the second coming of Christ. All of life has not yet been redeemed by the dawning of this new age. This world has not yet become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. Yes, we Christians have a new citizenship in the kingdom of God; yes we have a new identity as children of God; yes, we have received the Holy Spirit as a down payment on our future inheritance. But we still live in a corrupt world that is dominated by the presence of supernatural evil.

Here's the way the apostle Paul describes this present age. In Ephesians 2:1-2 Paul writes,

SLIDE

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live

when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

Despite the dawning of the age of the kingdom, this world continues to be subject to our greatest enemy, namely death. All around us there are manifestations of this present evil age. There is terrorism, violence, family breakdowns, marriage breakdowns, racial and religious discrimination. All around us we see betrayal and perversion and selfishness and hundreds of different kinds of brokenness. There is a conflict between the two ages; a conflict of allegiance, a conflict of loyalty, a conflict of powers, and we are caught in the middle of the conflict.

Friends, every time there is forward movement, every time you see God's rule extended just a little bit in a situation, in a person's life, in a family, there is going to be opposition and counter-attack.

You say, "What's going on?" A family member or a friend has just made a choice for Christ. You see someone respond to the gospel and receive Christ as his or her Lord and Savior. They finally surrender. But then you get sidetracked. An old boyfriend shows up again. They get laid off from work or their mother suddenly gets sick. Or maybe you make a choice to pray and you feel led by the Holy Spirit to do a certain thing or to make a particular move. Every time you make a choice to obey, God's kingdom manifests itself and the darkness is pushed back a little bit. But there will be a counter-attack and opposition from the other side.

Let me ask you a question: have you experienced this principle of attack and counter-attack? Most of us don't understand it. We're surprised when there is a counter-attack. We say, "Why is this so hard? Why, even though I prayed and prayed, am I not seeing any forward progress?"

Years ago I got an image in my mind of how most of us as Christians live. We're like football players who practice our offense until we can execute our plays perfectly. We come onto the football field and are full of confidence. We practice. We run through our drills. And then when the game starts, things begin to break down for us. Our star running back is slammed to the ground. Our quarterback gets sacked. Our passes get intercepted. We go back to the sideline and say, "Coach, what's wrong? This is nothing like practice." The coach says, "Well, the difference is because there is another team on the field."

You are not playing alone, friends. The Christian life is not just a steady movement down the field. The Christian life is not a pretend practice game, or a pretend war. There is real opposition to the spread of the kingdom of God. There is a real war going on, Christian – at your job, in your home, with your friends, with your kids, in the church, in your small group, regarding your health, regarding your finances, regarding your choices in every area of life. Every time the kingdom of God moves forward, there will be counter-attack.

Life is hard because you and I and the entire world are living in a war zone and there are no non-combatants in this war. And you cannot conscientiously object and sit the war out. You can't say, "Thank you, but no thank you." You will be opposed by supernatural evil regardless, so you might as well volunteer to serve the interests of King Jesus and learn how to fight in this war. You can't escape the war, so you might as well volunteer to be on the right side and learn how to fight.

So we read in v.16,

SLIDE

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune telling.

The NIV says: We met a girl who had a spirit. Literally the text reads: We met a girl who had the spirit of a python. A python spirit, according to Greek mythology, the Python was the snake that guarded the Temple of Apollo and the Delphic Oracle. And this snake was eventually killed by Apollo, but devotees, worshippers of the Sun God Apollo, were said to be able to channel the spirit of this dead snake. So there were women in the ancient world, who were pythonesses. They supposedly spoke for the Python spirit and they predicted the future. Eventually, men and women who were demonized were said to be inhabited by the Python spirit whether or not they belonged to the occult of Apollo.

Is it possible for a person to be inhabited by an evil spirit? Let me share a personal story with you.

Several years ago I was teaching at a few conferences in England. A pastor came up to me at the end of one of the meeting where I was teaching and he asked me for prayer. Unfortunately, someone was waiting for me, and I needed to rush off to an appointment, so I said: Why don't we schedule a time to meet after the next day's session and I'll pray for you then. He said: That would be perfectly fine.

Well, at the end of the conference I saw the pastor standing near the stage, so I said: Why don't we pray now? This pastor said that he wanted prayer for God's empowering of his ministry. Our custom in the Vineyard is to invite the presence of the Holy Spirit to come when we pray and then to wait a moment and to listen for the way God may direct, the way God may lead the prayer time.

Well, when I invited the presence of the Holy Spirit to come, this pastor began to shake in a very odd way. Now, I have become used to people trembling as they experience God's power. It is entirely normal that when a person begins to experience the power of God, they would have some kind of physical bodily response to that power. But this was different. It appeared to me that this pastor's whole body was fighting something. He began grimacing. It looked like there was this terrible internal wrestling going on. He was clenching his teeth and it was obvious that something was wrong.

I felt led to ask the pastor if he had had any experience with the occult, or any experience of feeling attacked by an evil spirit? He said: Well, as a matter of fact, a number of years before this time he was in Salt Lake City, Utah, doing some ministry when he saw, or at least he thought he saw, a huge spiritual being. It frightened him terribly. He said he shrunk back in terror from seeing this spiritual being. And since that time, he often felt very afraid, very intimidated in ministry settings.

Well, I had a strong impression that the spirit he saw was a spirit of Mormonism. I looked this man in the eye and said: In the name of Jesus Christ, I rebuke the spirit of Mormonism and command it to go. Well, this man let out a blood-curdling shriek and fell face down on the floor without putting his arms out to break his fall. He was well over 6' tall and he fell hard. Fortunately, he didn't get hurt.

I prayed for him a while longer and when our prayer time was over he said: You know, Rich, for years I felt myself enslaved by this evil force. I knew something was dreadfully wrong, but I just couldn't put my finger on it. For the first time in a decade I feel free.

Now, I have witnessed something similar to what happened to this pastor dozens and dozens of times over the last several decades. The most recent instance that I observed this kind of thing was just two weeks ago with a member of our church staff.

How do we explain these kinds of experiences? Some of you have had experiences like this. Some of you would swear that you have actually seen spirits – not angels, but something dark, something evil, something vile in your home, your bedroom. Some of you would swear that you have had nighttime visitations by a supernatural evil presence.

Some of you are followers of Jesus Christ, but there is an area of your life where you feel totally out of control. I've talked with some of you and you believe that you are being tormented or in some cases even enslaved by a demonic spirit. You have experienced forward movement in your life. You have experienced change as a result of becoming a follower of Christ. You can point to a lot of areas that are now different for you since you surrendered your life to Christ and invited him to rule over you as your Savior and Lord. You pray. You read the Bible. You are connected in fellowship. But there are issues in your life; there are places in your life that you feel totally out of control. Maybe for you the issue is rage. You are fine one moment, but then something sets you off and you completely fly off the handle. You totally lose it and then you feel totally ashamed. It is like something comes over you. You can't explain it.

Maybe the issue is not rage. Maybe it has to do with your sexuality. You feel like you are gaining ground, you haven't had an episode for a week, or a month, or several months. But then it is like the dam breaks and you completely spiral down again. It is like everything just flushes down the toilet. You have another sexual encounter, or

you have another plunge back into pornography or prostitution, or self-abuse, or homosexuality. And then you loathe yourself and vow not to repeat the pattern.

Or maybe for you the issue is out of control fear and anxiety. You know the truth. You know that Christ is in control. You know you are supposed to trust him with your life and with your future. Maybe, if you are a parent, you know you are supposed to trust Christ with your kids, but you just find yourself overwhelmed. It is like this ocean wave sweeps over the top of you and you cannot stop your emotions from going haywire.

Well, how do we approach these things, this experience I had with the pastor, or with people who believe they have seen evil spirits, folks who feel like they are making progress, but there is still an area of life in which they are entirely out of control?

Well, one approach is to say that the idea of evil spirits, what we read about here in Acts 16, this whole idea belongs to a primitive, superstitious, pre-scientific age that cannot in any way be accepted by a thoughtful, educated person in the modern world. All the instances of so-called demonization can be explained in psychological categories. Sometimes the issue is framed as a conflict between the assured findings of science and the primitive worldview of religion.

But friend, I'll tell you the conflict about believing that there are evil, supernatural spiritual beings is not a conflict between science and superstition any more than believing in a personal God who is good somehow makes you unscientific. The real

conflict is between a worldview that dismisses the possibility of the supernatural and a worldview that says reality is composed of more than what we can see, smell, and touch. Reality also involves the supernatural.

Let me ask you a question: Are you a thorough going supernaturalist? In other words, when you hear a story in which someone says that God has intervened in their life to heal them, or you hear a story about a possible encounter with some demonic force, do you immediately dismiss that as being impossible, or highly improbable? Or do you say: Well, this is worth further investigation, because I know that I know that these things are real.

Another approach that some people take is to say: “Well, I do believe in the possibility of demonization, but such things only happen on the mission field, in largely non-Christian areas. But things like that don’t happen in America.”

You know, friend, there is no reason to suppose that demons have moved just because some people have become Christians, or because you and I show up. Wouldn’t you say, if you were honest, that America and Europe, to a very large degree, are becoming progressively post-Christian...non-Christian?

The most straight-forward approach to the accounts in the Bible, and at least to some of our experiences, is to say that at least some of our experiences, certainly not all, but at least some of them, involve real supernatural personalities. The most straight-forward approach, if we believe in the supernatural, and if the Bible is telling the

truth, the most straight-forward approach is that sometimes what is going on in our lives is the result of an encounter with real spiritually evil personalities that the Bible calls demons or evil spirits.

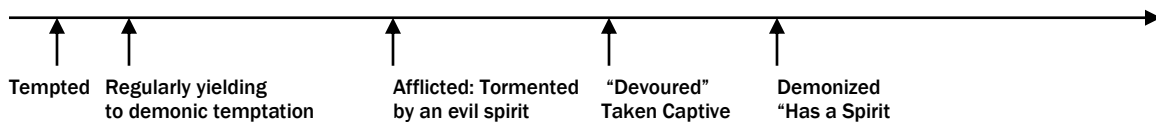
Listen to me. I need to tell you that there is a great deal of evil and brokenness that simply arises from our own sinful natures. There is such a thing as our own flesh, our sinful patterns of addictions and our broken psychological processes. There certainly is personal sin that manifests itself in our lives. It is certainly the case that a great deal of our problems can be attributed to our own addictive hearts.

You can't just say the way the old comedian, Flip Wilson, used to say: "The devil made me do it." There is a factory of sin, friend, living inside of you and inside of me, manufacturing deception and corruption. And this factory of sin is at work 24-hours a day, 7-days a week producing corruption. We have the capacity to become addicts and out of control wholly apart from demonic influence. And friend, you can't cast out the sin nature. You need to spiritually grow, step by step, through exercising spiritual disciplines like prayer and Bible study, scripture memory, fellowship, service, and saying "no" to yourself and "yes" to God.

And there is a lot of corruption that comes from the collective evil of our culture, what the Bible calls "the world." These are the patterns, thought processes, and evil ways that our culture shapes life in an anti-God direction. But there is a component of evil and wickedness and enslavement, a component of a great deal of the violence, addiction and mental confusion, emotional brokenness, and physical affliction and

hostility to the gospel, which has to be attributed to evil spirits. These entities are real and they impact people's lives all the way from tempting you and me to sin, all the way to attacking, afflicting, tormenting and sometimes inhabiting a person like the slave girl in this story, or the pastor I prayed for.

SPECTRUM:



Often these demonic forces work in cooperation with a person's sin nature, and in cooperation with the anti-God, anti-Christ approach of the world. Sometimes it is hard to discern which components of a person's problems are due to which influences. Perhaps the apostle Paul waited several days to take authority over this evil spirit because he didn't know the source of the opposition. He wasn't sure if the opposition was purely human, if it was cultural, if it was the demonic, or some combination of the above. And I believe that Paul, in this instance, was given the supernatural gift of discernment.

Friend, I'll tell you, when you are facing an issue in your life or another person's life, something is out of control, they seem in bondage, something in your circumstances is not going right, you need to pray for the gift of discernment. Lord, what is happening here? How do I separate these components? You need to pray for discernment.

Now, how does it come to be that a person can be demon inhabited, or enslaved? A person can certainly become enslaved and even invaded by the demonic through repeated sin. If you are being willfully disobedient to God over and over again, what you are choosing is to bring an area of your life under the influence and control of demonic powers. We are told in Ephesians 4:27,

SLIDE

Do not give the devil a foothold.

Right before that, the apostle Paul says,

SLIDE

In your anger do not sin, do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.

In other words, do not allow this particular sin of anger to reign and rule in your life. If you repeatedly give vent to your temper and your rage, you are turning over turf in your life to the influence and possible enslavement by demonic forces. I think of demons as being like flies around garbage. If you don't want flies in your house, then get rid of the rotting garbage. Don't bring garbage into your home. Don't bring garbage onto your computer screen. Don't bring garbage into your mind. Repeated, willful sin will give Satan a foothold in our lives.

Sometimes the demonic is present because of sin committed against a person. Some of you may have been abused physically or sexually or emotionally. I have seen this over and over again in people I've had an opportunity to pray for. A person is molested as a child, or raped as an adult and sometimes, certainly not always, but sometimes the effect of the invasion is that there is a residue of demonic enslavement. The demonic becomes present in an individual like an infection around a wound. The wound has to be cleaned out and then the infection goes.

Sometimes the demonic will invade a person through the pursuit of secret knowledge or power apart from that person seeking Christ. We read in v. 16 of Acts 16,

SLIDE

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future.

Here is a woman who was learning about the future not by turning to Christ, not by turning to scripture, but by turning to spirits apart from Christ. You know, the Bible forbids us from seeking secret information, information that can't be discovered by natural means, we are forbidden from seeking secret information from any spiritual source other than God. We read in Deuteronomy 18,

SLIDE

Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts

spells, or who is a medium or spiritist, or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord and because of these detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the Lord your God.

We are forbidden in the Bible to not only seek information, but to seek power from a source other than God – power to attract, or manipulate someone else’s affections, power to earn us money, power to curse someone who has hurt us, power to obtain healing. We are forbidden to pursue information or power from any spiritual entity or any spiritual practice apart from Jesus Christ. And if Jesus won’t give you the information or the power, then you need to learn to accept his will. But people get enslaved as they make contacts with spiritual forces that put information or power on the end of the demonic hook.

But you know, one of the greatest causes of enslavement is greed. We read in Acts 16,

SLIDE

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She also earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune telling.

And v. 19, once the demon is cast out, we read,

SLIDE

When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.

This girl was doubly enslaved. She was a slave girl, and she had been enslaved by a demonic spirit simply in order to satisfy her master's greed.

Friends, I will tell you that has you look around America today there are millions and millions of people enslaved in order to satisfy some perverse person's greed. Do you know that around the world there are literally millions of children who are enslaved by the practice of child prostitution and the trafficking of child pornography? One of the saddest stories that I've read recently was in the NY Times a few months ago. It was titled "The Girls Next Door." I just want to read to you a little excerpt.

The story begins in Plainfield, NJ, a nice little suburban community. Here is what the NY Times article says:

On a tip the Plainfield police raided a house in February 2002 expecting to find illegal aliens working there. Instead, what the police found were four girls between the ages of 14 and 17. They were all Mexican nationals without documentation. But they weren't prostitutes. They were sex slaves. The distinction is important. These girls weren't working for profit or a paycheck; they were captives to the traffickers who controlled their every move.

“ I considered myself hardened,” Mark Kelly, a special agent with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, told me recently. “I spent time in the Marines. But seeing some of the stuff there I saw and heard about from those girls, was a difficult and heart-rending experience.” The police found a squalid land-based equivalent of a 19th century slave ship with rancid, doorless bathrooms, bare, putrid mattresses, and a stash of penicillin, morning after pills, and an anti-ulcer medication that could induce abortion.

The girls were pale, exhausted and malnourished. Police say there are dozens of such stash houses and apartments in the New York Metropolitan area mirroring hundreds more in major cities like Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Chicago, where underage girls and young women from dozens of countries are trafficked and held captive.

Some have been baited by promises of legitimate jobs and a better life in America. Many have been abducted. Others have been bought from or abandoned by their impoverished families. And on both sides of the border, children are rented out for sex for as little as 15 minutes at a time dozens of times a day...

I’ll stop there. It is estimated that in Costa Rica 5000 American men go there each year simply to engage in sex with children. Thousands more visit Thailand, Brazil, India, Nepal, and border towns in Mexico for the same purpose.

Why are people enslaved to satisfy someone else's greed?

Pornography is now being aggressively marketed to women. Women now account for a quarter of all visits to pornographic websites. It is considered by business people in America to be a great growth investment. Pornography in America is now a \$10 billion dollar industry. As much is spent on pornography as is spent attending sporting events, buying music, or going out the movies. And some of our biggest companies – companies like General Motors, the Marriott, Time Warner, and ComCast are making millions selling pornography. There are over 800 million rentals of adult videotapes and DVDs every year. Last year the industry churned out 11,000 titles. Most of the companies, like General Motors and ComCast, the nation's largest cable system, and Time Warner, hide how much they are making from pornography in their annual statements. But their greed enslaves people.

But do you know what the most profitable enslaving enterprise in America is? It's not pornography. It is not prostitution. It is gambling and specifically slot machines. Our Ohio Legislature recently rejected a proposal for slot machines to be placed at the seven racetracks around the state of Ohio. Representatives said that they were going to bring up this issue again next year. Every day in the U.S. slot machines take in on average a billion dollars. One billion dollars a day. Most of that money is paid back to players, but the hold taken from slot machines is so great that collectively they net more than McDonald's, Wendy's, Burger King, and Starbuck's combined – just in slot machines. American casinos took in 30 billion dollars last year in slots. Last year,

only 9 billion dollars was taken in by movie theatres, all forms of pornography took in 10 billion dollars. Slot machines took in 30 billion dollars.

The former head of the Republican Party is one of the strongest advocates of slot machines. But here is the reality. A professor of psychiatry, who was addicted to gambling for years said: "The slot machine is brilliantly designed from a behavioral psychology perspective. People who are making these machines are using all the behavioral techniques to increase the probability that the behavior of gambling will reoccur."

She went on to say: "No other form of gambling manipulates the human mind as brilliantly as these machines. That's why I think the most popular form of gambling with which people are going to get into trouble is using slots."

Slot machines are referred to as the crack-cocaine of gambling. Just as crack addicts are seen to frequently self-destruct much faster than those who abuse other drugs, even powder cocaine. There is abundant evidence that people become addicted to gambling much quicker by using slot machines.

People get hypnotized by the machines. They can't think of anything else. It is played alone, in isolation. It is played over and over again and it is ruining millions of people's lives. This is what our Legislature was considering as a way to help education in Ohio.

In so many different areas of life, you see at the root of it, enslavement greed.

So how do we get free?

A significant part of freedom comes when a person makes a decision to break their connection with evil. The Bible says in James 4:7,

SLIDE

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

If we don't want demonic influence in our lives, then we have to renounce and decisively turn away from behaviors and attachments the Lord Jesus Christ detests. Freedom comes when a person changes their allegiance, their loyalty. "I've been attached to, I've been loyal to, I've had my allegiance to something that God detests, but now I'm going to remove that ground in my life from demonic influence by renouncing my connection, my sinful lifestyle and my sinful practices."

How do I get free? One of the fundamental issues is repentance. Turn from sin and turn your life and this out-of-control-area over to God. And sometimes we have to do that again and again and again. For some it has to be done hourly. I'm going to turn this area of my life over to God, praying for his strength and his enduring power. We have to remove the ground upon which the invasion rests.

If the ground is a wound suffered through some trauma or abuse, then that wound needs to be brought to the light. Friend, we will never get well while our wounds are hidden in a closet, or buried in the basement of our souls to fester and get more and more infected. Our wounds need to be brought to the light, to God. We need to pray: “God, heal this place of invasion. Wash away the demonic infection.”

Often a renouncing of sin or the revealing of our wounds needs to be done in the context of mature, godly Christian fellowship. Often, if we are really stuck, we will not get free on our own. Many of you have tried that over and over again. I’ll deal with this privately before God. And it hasn’t worked. Often freedom comes only through the assistance of a mature, safe, godly person who can help us to get unwrapped. That mature, safe person may be a counselor, it may be your small group leader or women’s group leader, a mature Christian friend, or the person may be your spouse or roommate. But I have rarely seen areas of enslavement become really broken apart from connection with the body of Christ.

And the demonic element needs to be dealt with directly. It is not enough simply to renounce the ground in which the enemy has a foothold in your life. It is not enough to expose places of wounding and hurt to the light. The demonic needs to be confronted directly. We read in Acts 16:18,

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She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned

around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her.” At that moment the spirit left her.

Now, there are some folks that reject power encounters. But I think we have a number of examples in scripture where Jesus or one of his followers takes authority over an evil spirit and commands it to leave. Friends, sometimes you can do that with yourselves. I believe that much deliverance is, in fact, self-deliverance. We confess our sins to God. We tell God that there has been a place in which the enemy has gotten a foothold. We ask God to wash that place. We renounce our connection with that sin. And then we directly confront every demonic infection and we renounce our allegiance, our ties to that demonic influence. We command it to leave us. We break its power over our lives.

Often you may experience freedom and release through what I call self-deliverance. But many times we need the help of another. We need someone else to confront an evil spirit and command it to leave our lives.

See, the Holy Spirit works by attaching us to other Christians. You want the power of God in your life? Get attached to other believers in meaningful fellowship in a small group.

I want to close with this. I began with the story of David Berkowitz, a man who was invaded by the demonic, and who became one of the most terrorizing serial killers in

American history. Let me tell you the rest of the story, at least as it involves David Berkowitz.

In 1987 another inmate came up to David in the prison yard and told him about Jesus Christ. This other inmate said that Jesus Christ loved even David and wanted to forgive him. David said that even though he knew the inmate meant well, he mocked him because he didn't think that God would ever want to forgive him, or in fact, ever want anything to do with him other than to judge him and send him to hell.

But the man persisted and persisted. They became friends. The other man's name was Rick. Rick and David would walk in the yard together and Rick would share about his own life and what Jesus had done for him. Rick kept reminding David that no matter what a person ever did, Christ was there ready to forgive him, if the person was willing to repent and turn from what they were into and put their full faith in Christ and what he did for them on the Cross by dying for their sins.

Rick gave David a Bible and encouraged him to read the Psalms. One night David was reading the Psalms and he came upon Psalm 34:6, which says:

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This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him from all his troubles.

There in his prison cell David Berkowitz knelt down and poured out his heart to God. He poured out the guilt from what he had done, the disgust at what he had become,

the filth and brokenness that he had allowed into his life. Right there in his prison cell he knelt down and cried out to Jesus Christ. He told Christ he was sick and tired of doing evil. He asked Christ to forgive his sins. He said that evening it was like an invisible chain that had wrapped him up for years was broken. He didn't know what was happening, but he knew something had happened inside of him and that his life was forever going to be different from that point on.

That was more than 15 years ago. David Berkowitz who was the Son of Sam has, from the reports I've read, been walking consistently with Christ for more than a decade. He may never get out of prison, and the harm that he did to others can never be made up, but the Son of Sam has become a son of God! And if he found freedom in Christ, so can you and so can anyone that you pray for. Let's pray.

How a Person Can Become Demonized (And What You Can Do About It)

Rich Nathan
June 5-6, 2004

**The Holy Spirit: Riding the Wave of God's Spirit
Acts 16:16-18**

- I. Why Is Life So Hard? (Acts 19:9-24)
- II. What Should We Make Of Claimed Experiences With The Demonic? (Acts 16:16)
- III. How Can A Person Become Demonized? (Acts 16:16, 19)
 - A. Willful Disobedience
 - B. Trauma
 - C. Occult Contact
 - D. Greed
- IV. How Can A Person Get Free?
 - A. Turn To Christ
 - B. Deal With The Ground Of Attack
 - C. Deal Directly With The Evil Spirit
 - D. Get Attached To The Church