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DELIVERANCE FROM THE SLAVERY OF ADDICTIONS

Not long ago our local newspaper displayed a series of photos of a young woman who was addicted to meth. Over a few short years her face was transformed and disfigured with wrinkles and blotches, her remaining hair was stringy and gray, and most of her teeth had fallen out. Think of beautiful, young Dorothy/Judy Garland becoming the Wicked Witch of the West. Those photographs demonstrated the ravages of addiction to meth.

How can a habit control, deceive, and mesmerize a man or woman and lead them into destroying everything in their life: health, relationship with spouse and children, career, self-esteem, and even their relationship with God? This is what the Bible calls bondage or slavery, and it is a spiritual problem. The devil is deeply and personally involved in trapping people, like that poor woman with a meth addiction, and destroying them. Our Savior is also deeply and personally involved. Because of His great love, He died on a cross to set us free from that trap. Following is a review of some things I have learned about this subject:

A. All sin is addictive, and since we all sin addictions are universal. *Those who sin become slaves of sin, captives of the devil.* (John 8:34, 2 Tim 2:26)

B. Christ came to set us free, but many Christians are not really free. Paul writes to a church and warns them: *Don't be entangled again in a yoke of bondage.* (Gal 5:1) As someone in ministry for more than 56 years, I have learned that it is common for Christians to be enslaved by all kinds of sins and addictions: alcohol, street drugs, prescription drugs and painkillers, fear, anger, depression, self-hatred, greed and love of money, love of pleasure, sexual sins of all kinds (many surveys have revealed that the majority of men in most every church are enmeshed in pornography, but many are also caught in fornication, adultery, or homosexuality - - or they are struggling to get free).

C. One addiction can be tied to others. *Don't be drunk with wine, which leads to debauchery.* (Eph 5:18) The level of self-control for most of us is balanced on a knife-edge. Just a little alcohol or pot can loosen our self-control enough, or give us the excuse we need, to turn loose our beast nature.

Example: Many years ago a news story in Dallas became national news. A certain family in Dallas kept a pet snake in their home, a python. They got it when it was only a couple of feet long and fed it dead mice and rats. It was their pet. They named it Sammy. Over the years it grew and grew until it was about 13 feet long and as big as a man's thigh. One night this family went out for the evening and left their little son at home alone with Sammy. During the evening the snake slithered up and coiled around the little boy, crushed the life out of him, and started swallowing him from the head.

The family came home and discovered this horrible scene. They called the police who came and shot the snake. The next morning reporters descended on the family and asked them how they could be so blind to the danger in their home. They became defensive. They said, "We had Sammy for 15 years. He was our pet. We had no idea he would do such a thing!"

The family forgot one thing: Sammy was a snake!

Maybe you have an addiction in your life: alcohol, pot, cocaine, painkillers, opioids, pornography or some other sexual sin, over-eating, ungodly music or videos, hoarding, gambling, etc. You regard it as a harmless habit, but you have had it for many years, and it is quietly growing and controlling more and more of your life. Friends, it is a SNAKE! It has demonic power. You will either conquer it or it will conquer and destroy you. Or maybe it won't destroy you, it will destroy a little one in your home. It is not your friend.

D. How do people act when they are addicted? They lie. They deny it and make excuses and blame circumstances or another person. "It's just the way I relax." "It's just a harmless habit, don't make a big deal out of it." "You have your habits, too." "I can quit anytime I want to." "I'm not spending that much money on it." "The doctor gave me these medications." "It's my wife's fault, she gets me so upset that I can't help myself." "Our family has always done this, it's a cultural thing." Addicts always lie to their families and to themselves.

E. Addiction isolates. A horrible reality about addictions is that people will start pulling away from their loved ones,

their family and friends, and devoting more and more of their attention, time and money to their addiction. One Sunday morning in Mexico, about 10 AM, several of us were walking to a church and passed a young man lying unconscious on the sidewalk. He was maybe 25 or 30 years old, dressed in shabby clothes, lying on his back and clutching a bottle in a paper sack. I thought, that is a perfect picture of what addiction does to a person. That young man has lost everything: his family, friends, job, self-respect, health, and God, and all he has is that bottle of alcohol. Frightening, isn't it?

Remember all those examples in last month's newsletter about how those trapped by gambling had given up their lives and loved ones in order to escape into "the zone" via a slot machine? I know of a young man who abandoned his wife and two little children and surrendered himself fully to pornography and masturbation!

This is the clue that proves that homosexuality is demonic. The "gay lifestyle" becomes the identity and center of a homosexual's life and existence. Everything in life revolves around it. It becomes their god.

Do you comprehend that addiction is not just a psychological matter, but there is a devil and this is how he traps and destroys souls? Consider that God is infinitely fair. If what you want in your life is some addiction, if you love it so much that you give it all your time and attention, all you want is to get high on alcohol or drugs or porn or gambling or whatever, when you die God may give you what you truly live for and love for all eternity. You may be isolated forever with your bottle or needle or porn or slot machine or money. James suggests as much: *Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire.* (Jas 5:3)

F. Loss of control and suicide. Addictions grow like Sammy the snake. Alcohol use escalates. Marijuana no longer satisfies, so he tries "just a little snort" of cocaine or opioids, or meth. Porn use grows until those filthy images fill and dominate his mind, dreams, and every waking moment. The gambler borrows, steals from his family and employer, cannot control his gambling compulsion, and finally decides he may as well kill himself. This is the end-game of Satan's plan - death.

CAUSE AND CURE OF ADDICTIONS

I have to acknowledge that I don't really understand the deep power that addictions have over people, but following are some of the root causes and cures that I believe are valid:

I - - Modeling, and Judgment of Parents

We learn how to be human beings in our home of origin. If our parents are alcoholics, drug addicts, gambling addicts, or sex addicts, then we will learn from them how to live and cope with life. Then, too, we will tend to judge them for the pain and suffering they bring to our lives - - and you understand the principle that if you judge and condemn others you will be judged by the same measure, and you will tend to repeat the very thing you condemn in others. (Romans 2:1) If we want mercy for ourselves instead of justice, then we must extend mercy to others. The cure for bad modeling is to have your mind renewed and transformed by the Word of God. (Romans 12:1-2) The cure for judging others is to forgive them and repent for unforgiveness and judgments.

II - - Rebellion

The basic sin of mankind is rebellion against God. The sequence for a boy or girl growing up in a dysfunctional home might look like this: Rejection – Fear – Anger – Bitterness – Rebellion – Pride rules (taking on an identity as a gang member, pleasure seeker, money and power lover, alcoholic, drug addict, playboy, gay lifestyle, or member of Congress.

Cure: Forgive and honor father and mother, repent for judging, renounce rejection and rebellion against God, cry out to God for deliverance and salvation.

III - - Pain of Life

Life is painful in this fallen world, isn't it? How do we cope with the pain? By dulling the pain or escaping via alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, opioids, painkillers, meth, smoking, pornography and other sexual adventures, gambling. Last month I focused on gambling, and do you remember the motivation that so many gamblers expressed? Not money, as I had always assumed, but in order "to get into the zone," to escape into another reality. The same is true for alcoholics, drug addicts, etc.

Cure: 2 Corinthians 1:3 calls God, *The God of all comfort*, or *The source of all comfort*. God wants us turn to him for comfort. He wants to give us his comfort and peace and strength. When the soldiers brought Jesus to the hill of Golgotha, *They offered him wine drugged with myrrh, but he refused it.* (Mark 15:23) They offered him alcohol and drugs to dull his pain before they crucified him, but he refused. He was saying, "I am going to suffer and die for the sins of my children, and I am going to drink this cup to the full because of my love for them." If our Savior was willing to do that for you and me,

can't we choose to endure the pain of life without escaping into a demonic zone of addiction? Can't we choose to stand up and be a man or a woman of God?

IV - - Generational Sin, and Generational Curses

Science has proved that many of our addictions have a genetic root. The children of alcoholics who are adopted out at birth to a home that is free of alcohol have a 72% greater rate of becoming alcoholics than children who do not have that history! All you have to do is look at your struggle with an addiction(s) and examine your family's history to see the connection. Or at least that is true in my case and with most people.

The cure: Forgive your parents and family, repent of your own sins in this area, repent of all judgments in your heart, renounce and break generational curses on the basis of Galatians 3:13: *Christ became a curse for us, for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.'* (See my teaching, Overcoming Generational Curses, on my website, www.glennbrownministries.com, for further insights.)

V - - Demonization

This is a subject that we simply cannot overlook if we want to help people get free of their addictions. It is Scriptural, and it is a part of normal Christian ministry. I have a long teaching on my website titled, Ministry to the Demonized. The problem with that title is that you may infer that only a few especially evil people become demonized, while in my experience it is a common experience of us all. That certainly does not mean that we are or have been "demon possessed." That is a misunderstanding and mistranslation of the Greek words (see my teaching). But every one of us has been tempted, oppressed, accused, tormented, deceived, and controlled by demons. That is our common lot. Read Ephesians 2:1-3 and see what it says.

So how do we get rid of demons? First, get rid of all the garbage they have been feeding on (I through IV above, plus a number of issues that are covered in my website), then have the person renounce the devil, renounce spirits of rejection, fear, immorality, greed, alcohol, gambling, fear, suicide, death, etc. – you personalize it for yourself or for the person to whom you are ministering.

VI - - Ongoing Ministry

I have added another major point, ongoing ministry, to this list because while some people receive immediate freedom and relief when they receive ministry, it is obvious that many do not. They are helped, but they still struggle with temptation. Their compulsions are not gone. It has been compared to the way the walls around Jericho and Jerusalem were removed. When the Israelites followed God's directions, the wall around Jericho fell down, "Boom!" by supernatural power. The wall around Jerusalem was torn down by the Romans one stone at a time. When I went through ministry and demonic deliverance, my addiction to alcohol was removed instantly, Boom! But my addictions to porn and anger and pride involved a years-long struggle. I immediately stopped all pornography, but getting my mind and heart clean, and getting free of habitual anger and pride has been a lifetime process.

This is the very reason that participation in Alcoholics Anonymous, or Narcotics Anonymous, or Gamblers Anonymous, or Sex Addicts Anonymous, or Celebrate Recovery, or a Christian Small Group, and regular Bible reading and prayer, is absolutely essential. God wants us to be disciples of Christ.

Why doesn't God deliver us from all our addictions instantly, like the walls of Jericho fell down? He doesn't specifically tell us, but Jesus demands, *Take up your cross and follow me*. God tells us, *Crucify the flesh*, and *Die to yourself*. Paul said, *I die daily*. I believe this has particular application to addictions. My daughter has stopped gambling for eight months now, but even after going through deliverance and intensive ministry the compulsion, the yearning to lose herself in a Casino, is still ongoing. She is having to crucify her flesh, and crucifixion is agonizing. 1 Peter 4:1 says, *Those who have suffered in the flesh (suffered physically) have ceased (finished) with sin*. Are you and I willing to suffer in order to become like Christ? There is no shortcut.

Friends, in the New Testament the Christian life is not centered on spiritual warfare, but on a joyful life of obedience in the Spirit. We need to know our enemy or else there would not be so much teaching and reporting on this matter in the New Testament, but our focus is on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the center and focus of the Bible. He is the center of history. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. He is our Savior, Healer, and Deliverer. All glory and honor to Him and to our gracious Heavenly Father.

WHEN WE STAND BEFORE GOD

A couple of months ago while ministering at a small church in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, I met a very unusual man named Mike Lucero. Mike's life as a follower of Christ has been remarkable, to say the least. He said that not long ago as he was praying, suddenly he saw a vision of a cemetery and one of the tombstones had his name on it. Then God asked him, "Mike, what do you want to have written on your tombstone as the summary of your life?" Mike thought for a few minutes and answered: "He was a faithful husband, a faithful father, and above all a faithful Christian."

God said, "Do you know what I want to be on your tombstone?" Then words appeared on the tombstone beneath Mike's name:

"He fulfilled his purpose."

This is a profound revelation from God, and I think it is worth much reflection and prayer on our part.

A SILVER BELL AND A GOLDEN WING

Many years ago when I was a pastor, one of my best friends was pastor/priest of an Episcopal Church. One of his friends, another priest, had the following experience which became widely known:

This pastor had gone through a difficult time for many years and was burned out. There had been family problems, financial problems and church problems. The members of his church had let him down in many ways and had criticized him for everything he did or did not do. He was disappointed with his church members, disappointed with himself as a pastor (he felt like a failure and a hypocrite), and disappointed with God (he felt that God had broken promises and had not answered his prayers). He was thinking about leaving the ministry and had talked about it with his wife and close friends.

A friend had a beautiful cabin in a remote spot high in the Rockies, and this friend suggested that the pastor go there alone and spend some time praying before making this decision.

He drove up to the cabin late one afternoon. The cabin was built on a granite precipice, and the rear of the cabin dropped off almost a thousand feet. It looked out onto a spectacular vista of mountains and forests. As the pastor unlocked the front door, he heard the clear tone of a silver bell. He thought, "What could that be? There is no one around for miles." He walked into the cabin and on into the main room that had a large picture window overlooking the view. Near the top of the window he saw something glistening in the semidarkness. It was the tip of a golden wing, slowly rising above the frame. With electric excitement and goose bumps all over he rushed to the window and looked up, but the angel was gone.

It was enough. He fell on his knees and raised his hands above his head. With tears coursing down his face he cried out, "Oh, God! I thought you had forgotten me! Forgive me for giving up. Help me to live for you and to serve you all my life."

It is extremely difficult to serve the Lord and to keep Him first in your life. There are dry times. There are many temptations. Don't sell out for money! Don't sell out for sex! Don't sell out for glory and selfish ambition! Don't sell out for the escape of some stupid addiction! It is deception. It is idolatry. God has not forgotten you. The Lord promised, *I will never leave you or forsake you*. He loves you with all His heart. Give Him your heart, your love, your life.

PATHWAY TO FREEDOM SEMINAR STARTING FEBRUARY 5

My spring seminar on inner healing and deliverance will start the first Wednesday evening in February, Feb. 5th, in the Chapel of Canyon View Vineyard. It will last for 10 weeks, and at the conclusion everyone will be offered the opportunity of personal ministry by teams trained under June Fellhauer and Jolene Hanson. Over 60 people received the personal ministry last spring, and it was life transforming for many. If you have gone through the seminar before, or a part of it, you are invited to participate again. Workbooks and suggested reading have now become a part of the seminar.

God Bless

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