**Bible Lesson: Vexation of Spirit**

This lesson is a continuation of last month’s discussion on demons; monthly lessons are generally relevant to previous ones. Vexation of the spirit is a direct attack against the spirit inside a person, usually from someone or something outside that person to include demons, evil people, lusts of the flesh, etc. Vexation brings trouble, affliction, distress, possibly death. Addiction was introduced last month as an invitation to greater evil; alcoholism is an example of vexation coming against one’s spirit. There are a great many sins that can become habit forming which are dangerous, and vex the spirit. If the evil heart does not turn to God, He will vex that spirit to death.

Nowadays, the prevalence of evil is everywhere, as is the presence of demons and the numbers of humans capitulating to them. One needs only a cell phone or computer to connect to all kinds of evil, from hardcore pornography, to making drug deals, engaging in adulterous affairs, viewing and posting violence, conspiracy to commit murder, rip-off scams, and the list goes on. Many social media applications actually promote such behavior.

Remember this: the flesh and the spirit are at war. And what are they fighting over? Answer: control. Control over what? Answer: your soul. Your soul encompasses your mind, will, thoughts, and emotions. The more important question to ask is, which is controlling your thoughts: your flesh or your spirit?

Your soul is what makes you unique from everyone else as well as from other earthly creatures; and it makes you particularly valuable to God. Protect your soul from the influence of evil by tapping into your higher power, which is your connection to God, the highest power. That connection is a spiritual one between your spirit and God’s Holy Spirit. God gave everyone the spirit of life (JOH 6:63); upon death that spirit returns to Him (ECC 12:7). Everything and everyone beholding to the physical/material world will be destroyed by it and with it (ISA 51:6; MAT 24:35; REV 21:1), including the lost souls condemned to the lake of fire.

* JOB 33:4 ~ The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty has given me life.
* ROM 8:5–6 ~ Those who follow the flesh are mindful of things concerning the flesh; those who follow the spirit keep in mind spiritual things. To be carnally minded is death; to be spiritually minded is life and peace.
* GAL 5:13–18 ~ Brothers, you have been called to be free men, but do not use that freedom as an excuse to engage in lusts of the flesh, but in love serve one another. For all the Law is fulfilled by loving your neighbor as yourself. So, walk in the Spirit not in the flesh, because the spirit and the flesh oppose one another. If you are led by God’s Spirit you are not under the Law.
* GAL 5:19–21 ~ The works of the flesh include adultery, fornication, perversion, lust, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, quarreling, rivalry, dissension, rage, fighting, sedition, heresy, jealousy, murder, drunkenness, orgies, and the like. Those who engage in such activities will not inherit the kingdom.
* GAL 5:22–23 ~ Fruits of the Spirit include love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against those things.

The verb “vex” means to make someone annoyed, worried, frustrated, defiant, deviant, and/or fearful. It is a form of harassment or maltreatment, and often an attempt to get someone to do something that goes against their better judgment or moral compass—unless it comes from God in the form of vengeance (DEU 32:35,41; PSA 7:16; ISA 26:14: ROM 1:32).

* EXO 22:21–22 ~ Do not vex or oppress a stranger; remember, you were once strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not afflict a widow or a child.
* NUM 25:16–18; NUM 33:55–56 ~ The Lord said to Moses, “Vex the Midianites, and kill them; for they vex you with their tricks with which they have beguiled you… If you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, those who remain will be like a stick in your eye and a thorn in your side, and you will be vexed living in that land. Moreover, I will do to you as I wanted done to them.”
* 2 CH 15:5–6 ~ In those times there was no peace for anyone going out or coming in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants. A nation was destroyed by another nation, and a city by another city; for God vexed them with all adversity.
* JOB 19:2 ~ Job asked, “How long will you men vex my soul, to break me into pieces with your malicious words?”
* ECC 1:14–15; ECC 2:17; ECC 4:6; ECC 6:9 ~ I have seen all the works committed under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight. Therefore, I hated life because of the works done under the sun, for it grieved me; because all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Better is a handful of quietness than two hands filled with travail and vexation of spirit. Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire, which is also vanity and vexation of spirit.
* ISA 65:14 ~ Behold, God’s servants will sing for joy of heart; but the others will cry for sorrow, and will howl from vexation of spirit.

Vexation can be a temptation that keeps plaguing one’s mind (i.e., soul). Note that it is one thing to be tempted but another to give into temptation. Everyone has a choice either to dismiss the temptation or to succumb. Being tempted is not a sin; many things tempt us in this material world, not to mention Satan and his demons. Once a person gives the temptation further consideration, he or she has sinned in thought. Once a person acts out on that thought, he or she has sinned in deed. The Bible warns us to be careful about what we think and do. The most difficult part is to remain mindful at all times what you are thinking; for example, entertaining lust is akin to adultery (MAT 5:28) and entertaining hate is akin to murder (1 JO 3:15).

* ISA 28:18–19 ~ Those who have made a contract with death and hell will find their agreements to be null and void. They will be trampled into the dust when the scourge passes through. From that time forward the scourge will take people away; it will be a vexation just to hear this message.
* EPH 2:3–4 ~ In times past we also engaged in lusts of the flesh, fulfilling desires of the body and of the mind; we were by nature children of wrath, just like the rest. But because of God’s great love for us we were made alive in Christ, even when we were dead in our sins. It is by that grace that you also can be saved.
* JAM 1:15 ~ When lust is conceived it brings forth sin; and sin, when finished, brings forth death.

Consider the frequency of lone-wolf murderers, whether by gun, knife, car, shoving someone into train, etc. Or what about the random unprovoked beatings going on every day in certain cities here and abroad? Then there are the arsonists, looters, robbers, vandals, and assorted anarchists menacing the country. These people most certainly are vexed in spirit. Are they mentally deranged? Well, yeah. Are they possessed by a demon(s)? Hmm, quite possibly. Most are repeat offenders who have been in and out of jail, let loose on low or no bond, not prosecuted to the fullest extent, or simply ignored by law enforcement both before and after their crimes. Maybe the enablers are vexed in spirit as well. Citizens become reluctant to get involved, or report suspicious activity, or call 9-1-1 for fear of retaliation. You know, fear can vex the spirit too. What is the cure for fear? Answer: perfect love (1 JO:18). Keep watch over your soul and trust in the Lord to protect you; listen to His voice before you follow through with your plans.

* DEU 4:9–10 ~ Keep your soul diligently. Don’t forget the things your eyes have seen; never let them slip away. Teach these things to your children and your children’s children.
* PSA 51:10–12 ~ Create in me a clean heart, Lord, and renew an upright spirit within me. Don’t remove me from your presence and don’t take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with your free Spirit.
* PRO 4:23 ~ Guard your heart with all diligence, for from it flows the issues of life.
* ROM 12:2 ~ Don’t conform to the world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, to do the will of God.
* COL 3:2 ~ Set your mind on things above, not earthly things.

As mentioned in previous lessons, out of control people who strive to control others are neither in their right mind nor a right spirit. How can anyone be trusted to run our government, institutions, and lives when they are focused on power, riches, and lasciviousness? Incidentally, these are the top three motives for murder and other capital crimes (Barber, 2020). Leaders who are hedonists, power mongers, and control freaks become tyrannical; history has shown them to be the greatest mass murderers of all time: Mao, Stalin, Hitler, and many more (*ibid*). People addicted to power go bonkers without it; they already were crazy for power before seizing it.

* ISA 5:20–24 ~ Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Woe to those who consider themselves wise and prudent. Woe to those who are mighty in their ability to drink alcohol, who justify and reward the wicked, and who take away righteousness from the righteous. Just as the fire devours the stubble and chaff, so will their roots become rotten and their blossoms wither; for they have thrown away God’s laws and despised the Word of the Holy One of Israel.
* ISA 29:20 ~ The ruthless will come to nothing and the scoffers will cease. All who watch evil and do evil will be cut off.
* JER 18:12 ~ They acted according to the abominations of an evil heart.
* MIC 7:2–6 ~ All the godly and upright men are gone. The wicked lie in ambush for blood. They do evil with diligence. Princes and judges ask for bribes. Great men speak of and pursue the evil desires of their souls. Even the best of them is like a thorn. Their confusion and punishment await them. Nobody can be trusted; even family and friends become the enemy.
* HAB 1:4 ~ Law and judgment are loosened, for the wicked encompass the righteous. Therefore, wrong judgment proceeds.

Tyranny is once again at our doorstep. Americans had to fight it off twice during our beginnings. Who knows, maybe we’ll have to fight it off again. That’s why the framers put the Second Amendment in the Constitution in the first place. What is the motivation of certain politicians who would take away your right to protect yourself, your family, and your property? They would remove guns from our possession, yet are actually multiplying the number of guns, because more Americans feel responsible to personally prepare, protect and defend. Notice how the lions’ share of violent crimes occur in areas where this right is suppressed. The criminals target soft targets like the weak, innocent, unarmed, unprotected. They avoid locations with high probability of the presence of law enforcement or others inclined to fight back (e.g., hard targets). Violent people are the ones who are weak-minded and cowards. The USA needs to get back to the philosophy of “peace through faith” not only for leaders but also for the citizenry. By faith we are made strong in the Lord (2 CO 12:10). Among many noteworthy sayings from the statesman Patrick Henry (paraphrased): Slavery is not a reasonable price to pay for peace.

God is all powerful. What did God do with that power? Well for starters, He created the universe and He sent Jesus Christ to the earth to save us from sin (JOH 3:16–17). What did Jesus do with that power? He humbled Himself in service to humanity. Note that Satan has considerable power as well. What does he do with that power? He seeks to destroy humanity. God gives us power too, and we should use that power in the same manner as Christ: in service to others. Those using their power to subjugate others are abusing that power; they are as out of control as a drug addict. They should never be in a position of leadership or authority since they cannot find their own way. They are using their power in service to Satan, not God and country. If you do not have the Spirit of Christ, you are susceptible to the spirit of antichrist (1 JO 4:3–4).

* DAN 8:24 ~ The evil one’s power is mighty but not by his own power. He will destroy awfully, and will prosper; he will destroy mighty and holy people.
* PHP 2:5–11 ~ Keep your thoughts on Jesus Christ who, although He was God in the flesh, did not glorify Himself but became a servant. In the form of a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death even death on a cross. Therefore, God has exalted Him and given Him a name above all other names. Everyone should bow at the name of Jesus Christ, whether they are in heaven or on earth. Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

To conclude this lesson, let us return to the basics: right versus wrong; good versus evil. Adam and Eve learned this immediately, as does every human being. That means we all know to do what is right though we struggle with that simple principle. Then there are those who dismiss all of God’s laws since they love sin. Consider the first ten laws God handed down to Moses; a plain hierarchy is implied. The first five are spiritual duties to God; the second five are how we treat others. If you get into the habit of disobeying any of these laws, your spirit is likely vexed. If you do not discontinue bad behavior, you leave yourselves open to fallen devils. Yes, all sins can be forgiven if sincerely confessed and repented with true godly sorrow; this will compel you to want to quit the bad habit, and make it a habit to let your conscience or higher power guide you.

1. Love God above all others
2. Never practice idolatry
3. Never take the Lord’s name in vain.
4. Honor the Sabbath by dedicating a day of worship to God
5. Honor your parents.
6. Never murder anyone.
7. Never commit adultery.
8. Never steal.
9. Never lie.
10. Never covet.

* PSA 97:10 ~ Those who love the Lord hate evil.
* AMO 5:15 ~ Hate evil, love goodness, and establish justice.
* MIC 3:2–5 ~ You hate good and love evil. You skin people and eat their flesh. You chop their bodies into pieces. You talk of peace but make war. When you cry to the Lord He will not listen; He will hide His face from those engaging in such behavior.
* 1 TI 6:10–11 ~ The love of money is the root of all evil; through the craving for worldly riches many have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts. Strive for righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness.
* 1 JO 2:15 ~ Don’t love the world or worldly things, because you can’t love the world and love God at the same time.

Reference: Barber, A. V. (2020). A Message of Truth: The History, Science, and Politics of Christianity (Second Edition). El Paso, TX: Special Delivery Press.

By Andrew Barber (Posted 08/01/22)