

## Palisades Community Bible Church

### Online Sunday School

# The Devil Made Me Do It!

March 7, 2021

We've heard this said many times, and in many ways; "The Devil made me do it." A more antiquated term is; "He has a demon." In the Old Testament, the term; "Unclean, or Troubling Spirit" is used. The idea is that Satan is inside a person forcing them to behave a certain way.

Does Satan, or a demon, actually inhabit a person? Hollywood has made a ton of movies with such themes. Our society has incorporated demonic references, perhaps in greater volume than Godly references. So, let's try to make sense of this notion that there is some "evil force" driving people to do things they'd rather not do.

First of all; this study is NOT about "demonology." There are many books on the topic. Though interesting, they will not change your status of Salvation. Further, delving into such a study might take the focus OFF the person responsible for a demon's, or unclean spirit's, presence in one's life: the individual! So, rather than dwelling on the "devils and demons" let's look at what is really going on.

The Old Testament has many references to "unclean spirits." They are associated with idolatry, communicating with the dead, or just plain giving one's self over to lustful or evil behavior, and are usually identified with heathen gods. These false gods had as much power in a person's life as their followers were willing to give to them. God makes his hatred for these unclean spirits very clear.....or, better said; God makes his disgust that HIS OWN PEOPLE GIVE THEMSELVES OVER TO THESE UNCLEAN SPIRITS very clear:

**"On that day, I will banish the names of the idols from the land, and they will be remembered no more," declares the Lord Almighty. "I will remove both the prophets and the spirit of impurity from the land. 3 And if anyone still prophesies, their father and mother, to whom they were born, will say to them,**

**‘You must die, because you have told lies in the Lord’s name.’ Then their own parents will stab the one who prophesies.” Zechariah 13: 2**

Note that God is NOT currently banishing the idols from American society, today. In fact, we observe the very opposite! God has warned, and warned, and warned the USA of the consequences of turning from Him and running after evil. As has been demonstrated so many times through the Old Testament, and the New, that God will reluctantly remove His hand of protection from his people, allowing the consequences of their evil choices to chastise them (us!).

**Romans 1: 18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. 19 For what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from His workmanship, so that men are without excuse.**

**21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and darkened in their foolish hearts. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images of mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.**

**24 Therefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to impurity for the dishonoring of their bodies with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is forever worthy of praise. Amen.**

**26 For this reason God gave them over to dishonorable passions. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. 27 Likewise, the men abandoned natural relations with women and burned with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.**

**28 Furthermore, since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, He gave them up to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. 29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-**

**haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful. They invent new forms of evil; they disobey their parents. 31 They are senseless, faithless, heartless, merciless.”**

**32 Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things are worthy of death, they not only continue to do these things, but also approve of those who practice them.**

We also see many accounts of demons being cast out in the New Testament.

**Mark 1:34 “And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.”**

**Mark 1:39 “And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons.”**

**Mark 3: 14-15 “He appointed twelve of them, whom He designated as apostles, to accompany Him, to be sent out to preach, and to have authority to drive out demons.”**

Bear in mind that the primary reason Jesus performed miracles was to prove that He is the true Christ, the Messiah. Casting out demons was an important demonstration of that truth for several reasons. First, just as Jesus forgave sin, because only GOD can forgive sin, He cast out demons for the same reason. Second, Jesus clearly demonstrated His own (and His Father’s) disgust for people giving themselves over to these false deities. Third, He did not want his followers to be deceived by fakes. An all-too-frequent occurrence, then, and today!

**Luke 21:8 “And He said, “See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not go after them.”**

By casting out demons, Jesus also convicted his enemies of their own sin by pointing out their evil intent:

**Mark 3: 22-24 “And the scribes who had come down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and, “By the prince of the demons He drives out demons. So, Jesus called them together and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, it cannot stand.**

Beelzebul is a name derived from a Philistine god, known in demonology as one of the seven princes of Hell. By asking how Satan can drive out Satan, Jesus was illustrating the hypocrisy of the Scribes.

The lifelong duty of a Scribe was to maintain faithful copies of the scriptures! They were rejecting the very Messiah prophesied in those scriptures. **Note, that there is never a situation described in scriptures where the Jewish leadership examines Jesus from a Biblical, Scriptural perspective. They never attempted to use God's own words to determine whether Jesus was who he said he was – even while observing such miracles as healing the infirmed and raising the dead! Today's Jews STILL WILL NOT! I have had many interactions with Jews, and the conversation about Jesus as Messiah always ends when I suggest they examine their own scriptures on the matter, or to even ask God about it.** I, personally have a hard time NOT calling that closed mindedness an “unclean spirit.”

So, why is there a Satan? I cannot answer that. I can only share that, in the beginning, God created an environment in which BOTH good and evil can live. Same as when you till a garden spot; you create a place where both weeds and tomatoes can live. God created man in His own image, and part of that image is FREE WILL. So, God placed humans in an environment in which both good and evil can exist. He gave humans the ability to choose whether to love and honor God, or to love and honor Satan. Therefore, Satan is a choice...God is a choice.

So, back to this demon thing; the largest part of “The Devil made me do it” is making a choice for sin. Take adultery, for instance: you choose your first transgression, you choose the next, and the next, and the next. You can either choose your last, or not. It's a choice, but the “Devil” does NOT force you to choose. Nor, does God force you NOT to choose. That choice comes from your own desires.

I grew up with a stepfather who was a thief. He was an electrician, and I worked with him as often as I could. I regularly saw him stealing things from job sites. I did not think it was right, but because he did it, I started doing it. By the time I was out of high school, I was a clepto! When I got saved, I repented and turned from that behavior. It was no demon; it was a choice!

I drove a school bus for a couple years, following a few surgeries. One day, while the high schoolers were loading up, I saw about 6 boys crowding around one guy

in the back with a cell phone. All at once, they burst out in laughter that I can only describe as “hostile.” I instantly knew what they were doing. So did the girls on the bus, as they all got up and moved forward. I stood up and addressed the boys in this way:

“Gentlemen; I want you to watch the backs of the heads of the ladies who have just moved up here to sit. Ladies, all you have to do is nod your head when I say something that you feel. Guys, these ladies are now very afraid to be with you. What you think is funny, they find disgusting and frightening. You don’t understand it, but that stuff will destroy your life. One day, you may want to ask one of these ladies to the prom, or on a date. They will never forget how repulsive and frightening you are, right now, and they WILL tell all their friends. They will never want to be alone with you...ever. If you value your ability to relate to women, you’ll never, ever, look at that stuff again.” The ladies nodded enthusiastically throughout.

Yes, those young men were dabbling with an unclean spirit....a demon. But, it wasn’t the demon’s fault that they chose to mess with it. They could walk away from it, or they could open the door to it again and again. The ‘devil’ is our personal choices. The ‘devil’ is our self-governance, or the lack of it. The ‘devil’ is our love of an evil thing more than a righteous thing.

So, does the devil really make us do it? Look into your own life. In your past, you have a spell, or a series of spells that were very dishonoring to Jesus? Many of us have....

I read a book that was an empirical study on men’s most important inner thoughts. The study group was made up of 600 men who identified with God and 400 who did not. One of the questions delved into men’s reaction to seeing an attractive female. It asked if they only glanced, took notice, or considered “what it might be like, if...” It also asked if her image returned to their mind never, sometimes, or far too often. Well over 98% of the men in the study responded that they considered her appearance seriously, and that her image returned to their minds far too often. I used this data in a Bible study I was conducting with a men’s group. Most of them confessed to having the exact same reactions. I then asked; “If you had a switch in your brain that could turn that off, would you use

it?” Every man affirmed that they would rather turn off the tendency than have to wrestle with it.

Unfortunately, we MUST wrestle with temptation:

**Proverbs 12:24 The hand of the diligent will rule, But the slack hand will be put to forced labor.**

The message is clear; if you are diligent in fleeing from evil and following Jesus, you will have charge over your life. But, if you are lazy and, like a dog that will sniff and lick most any nasty thing he comes across, your base motivations will take over.

“The Devil made me do it.” Really, it’s just a way of saying; “It wasn’t my fault.” It’s a way of cursing God for having given us His character trait of personal choice. Does the Devil actually influence our behavior? Is it possible that Satan MAKES us do things? He certainly did not FORCE Eve in the garden:

**Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field that the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’ ”**

**2 The woman answered the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden, 3 but about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You must not eat of it or touch it, or you will die.’ ”**

**4 “You will not surely die,” the serpent told her. 5 “For God knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”**

**6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eyes, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom, she took the fruit and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.**

**7 And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; so they sewed together fig leaves and made coverings for themselves.**

Eve was not, in any way, forced by Satan! He told her she would not die – that was a lie. The rest; the part about knowing good and evil was true. (beware of

those who mix truth and lies!) The serpent knew just what she wanted, in her heart, and he played to it. Eve is the one who made the choice:

If there is ANYTHING supernatural about Satan, it's that he knows our hearts....motivations....weaknesses.

It's the same as with a soldier who starts frequenting prostitutes. It's the same with a young guy who copies his dad and steals. It's the same with a teenage girl with a self-image problem who decides she's meant to date girls. It's the same as a kid who cannot stop playing video games. It's the same with a young man who grew up as a sex toy to men and becomes gay as an adult. It's the same as a politician who puts his hand on the Bible and promises to protect and defend the constitution, then turns to graft and corruption to maintain his office. It's the same as a woman who uses her body to please a man, but must have frequent abortions to keep from losing him.

In none of these circumstances is there any FORCE from an outside influence. There is only choice when considering options.

Yes, there are extremes. When it becomes pathological, it's more than a choice....but, there is an age of responsibility on the part of the individual in which they can either turn for help, or keep going. And, there is an extremely dark, DARK, path down which any mild indiscretion can lead. Most of us know someone who is seemingly stuck on such a path. Prayer and loving kindness are essential in such cases – **but acceptance of the sin is NEVER a part of helping someone toward healing.**

There is a real-life story of a teenage boy who felt he was born to be female. His parents went to counselling to learn to support him in that pursuit. He was put on hormones and had the surgery (incredibly invasive, followed by serious complications). And, now, "she" and her friends sing to young students about the courage it takes to be what you want to be. I grieve for that boy because his parents are the sick ones; they have no Biblical moral compass. At no time does the story state that this boy met with any professional that did not 100% support and encourage his choice to mutilate himself. (In a Catholic ministry study of 4,000 transgenders, 6-10% later regretted their change.)

It grieves God's heart to see His own, especially those who call themselves by His name, rejecting HIM and following the influences of this world. Jesus came to provide a way of forgiveness and fellowship with God. Repentance is key....

This, now begs the question: Do we repent of our own free will, or does God cause us to repent?

**2 Timothy 2:25b "...God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth. 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him (Satan) to do his will.**

Some interpreters argue that we cannot repent, unless God grants this to us. Others insist that it's entirely upon the individual. Is free will important for repentance? In other words, are we responsible for repentance, or is God?

**Acts 5: 31 "Him (Jesus) God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."**

We see that God gives us the opportunity to repent, but we still decide to repent. There are a number of reasons why this is the case. First, Jesus, Peter, John and Paul all call on fallen people to repent.

**"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." Mark 1: 15**

Such calls for repentance would be an illusion if repentance is ONLY a gift. In other words, why would God call on us to repent, if this is actually impossible for the individual to do?

Second, God granted repentance to groups of people, as well as to individuals. Paul is effectually saying that God is breaking into new groups of people. For instance,

**Acts 11: 18 When they heard these things, they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."**

However, when God grants repentance to the Gentiles, corporately, He is not saving every individual Gentile! He is reaching new groups of people, so that individuals may come to Him. The emphasis remains on free will of the individual.

Third, being granted repentance refers to an opportunity –not an action. It’s like an unlocked door; you can walk through it and get out of the cold, or continue to stand outside and freeze. Again, personal freedom of choice.

**2 Corinthians 10: 5 “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,”**

Fourth, it would be inconsistent to say that God grants some people repentance, when He grants this to everyone. How could God grant some people repentance, when it’s clear that he doesn’t want “any” to perish but for “all” to come to repentance?

**1 Peter 3: 9 “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward <sup>[c]</sup>us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”**

**Psalms 119:9-11 “How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.”**

So, we see that REPENTANCE is the way out of a sinful condition, and that having God’s Word in one’s heart is the way to PREVENT entrapment by poor choices. And, what is it that compels us to repent? God’s moral law (what is right and wrong), the consequences of our choices, the impact that our choices have on others, our love for Jesus, etc. “What have our choices led us into?”

We know that Jesus died that we may have eternal life, but what has Satan done that our mortal bodies must suffer and die? All Satan did was tell a lie. That’s it! He told a lie, and Eve believed it. The original sin was disbelieving God and believing a lie. Yet, Paul confesses to the very same struggle....this struggle is common to all of us:

**Romans 7: 13 “Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.**

**14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. 15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do**

the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

But, thanks be to God for the precious saving blood of His son, Jesus, who has paid the debt of our sin that we may have a way of repentance and victorious living in Christ:

**Galatians 2:20** "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."