



# Spiritual Warfare

## Part 7: Wrong Warfare - Hexes

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The only exposure Ryan ever had to anything “spiritual” was rooted in the occult.<sup>1</sup> His mom and dad dabbled in occult practices such as tarot cards, ouija boards, and séances. His mother avidly read books on astrology, horoscopes, and New Age Spirituality.

Ryan's parents were by no means pioneers in the field from within their larger family. His maternal grandmother had boasted of being a wicca high priestess, and though Ryan had never known his great-grandfather, he had heard about his involvement in these same practices from his father, who proudly followed in his grandfather's steps. All told, Ryan could count nearly a dozen family members who had some involvement in some form of spiritism, divination, astrology, or occultism.

Until he arrived at college and met his roommate, an evangelical Christian named Mark, Ryan had never met anyone who took the Bible seriously, let alone someone who diligently read it and attended Bible studies. Mark and Ryan began to have long discussions about spiritual realities, spirit beings, the occult and the Christian faith. After attending almost a dozen Bible studies with Mark, and a long lunchtime discussion with Mark's pastor, Ryan became convinced of his need for a Savior.

He came to see the weight of his own sin and his need for forgiveness and he embraced Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The radical difference in Ryan's conduct and outlook was immediately manifest. He had a hunger for the Bible like he had never had for anything in his life.

As if a light had been turned on, Ryan suddenly saw the horrors of the spiritual entities that lay behind his parent's activities. He was grieved over the lost, deceived condition of not only his parents, but others in his family who were

involved in the occult. Ryan's concern turned to fear, when, at his weekly Bible study, he heard a fellow student suggest that he may have inherited a demon from his parents. This Christian went on to explain that the punishment of God would be “visited upon” Ryan and his children because of his parents' sin of witchcraft, and unless Ryan specifically renounced the sins and demons of his parents, then Satan's influence would be allowed to continue for generations to come. To protect not only himself, but his future children, Ryan was encouraged to deal directly and specifically with demons that supposedly had become entrenched in his family by generations of occult practices.

### True?

Does any of this sound familiar? Have you been exposed to teaching like this on the subject of spiritual warfare? Must I verbally renounce sins, demons, or curses in order to be delivered from them?

Does God punish children (even those who have become believers) for the sins of their parents? Can a person inherit a demon? Does someone saved from an occult background need a further work of God in their lives to prevent satanic influence? **What does the Bible mean when it says that God visits the sins of the parents on the children to the third and fourth generation (Exodus 20:5)?**

I get asked these questions often by people who have been exposed at one point or another to this type of teaching. It is rather prolific in many Christian circles, so, answering these questions deserves our focused attention.

### The Teaching

Commonly referred to as “generational curses” or “generational sin,” it is a part of a larger theology of spiritual warfare that includes binding Satan, performing exorcisms

<sup>1</sup> Though the characters and circumstances of this story are fictional, they represent real events and real teachings that permeate the Christian Church.

(even of Christians), and praying against territorial spirits.

The practice of renouncing generational sins or generational curses is based on **Exodus 20:5**, “. . . **I the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate me.**. . .”<sup>2</sup>

Some use this verse to teach that God will punish children for the sins of their parents. Others go further, and teach that one can be under a curse because of their parents' sin: a curse which must be persistently renounced and fought against. Yet others go even further and teach that a child can actually inherit a demon from their parents, particularly if their parents were involved in sins of witchcraft or idolatry.

It is believed that unless the Christian consciously and verbally confesses in prayer the sins of their ancestors, and renounces those sins and all their attendant curses and consequences, Satan will have a “legal hold” in the believer's life which will keep that believer from spiritual freedom, sanctification, spiritual growth, and the blessing of God. This “legal hold” can result in demonic oppression and even possession of a Christian.

Much is made of the dangers associated with adopting children, since demons can supposedly transfer through bloodlines and thus gain access to unsuspecting Christian homes.<sup>3</sup> After discussing the dangers of demons attaching themselves to adopted children, Mark Bubeck, in his book *The Adversary*, offers a recommended prayer of “Renunciation and Affirmation”:

*“As a child of God purchased by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, I here and now renounce and repudiate all the sins of my ancestors. As one who has been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, I cancel out all demonic working that has been passed on to me from my ancestors. As one who has been crucified with Jesus Christ and raised to walk in newness of life, I cancel every curse that may have been put upon me. I announce to Satan and all his forces that Christ became a curse for me when He hung on the cross. As one who has been crucified and raised with Christ and now sits with Him in heavenly places, I renounce any and*

2 The presence of the ellipsis at the beginning and end of that quote should indicate to you right away that something is being taken out of context! More on that in a bit.

3 Mark I. Bubeck, *The Adversary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 147-148. Bubeck defines “transference” as “the passing on of demonic powers from one generation to the next” and then goes on to cite a number of anecdotes to prove his doctrine.

*every way in which Satan may claim ownership of me. I declare myself to be eternally and completely signed over and committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. All this I do in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.”*<sup>4</sup>

Bubeck then includes this note: “None of us knows what works of Satan may have been passed on to him from his ancestry. Therefore, it is well for every child of God to make the above renunciation and affirmation. It is advisable to speak it out loud.”<sup>5</sup>

Not one to shy away from offering special incantations for nearly any situation, a special and far more extensive prayer for adopted children or foster children is given along with this reminder, “A renunciation and affirmation of this type should often be a part of one's prayer ministry for his adopted child.”<sup>6</sup>

This type of formulaic prayer is not unique to Mark Bubeck. It is also found prolifically in the writings of popular author Neil T. Anderson. In his book *Released From Bondage*, Anderson writes, “The last step to freedom is to renounce the sins of your ancestors and any curses which may have been placed on you. . . . Familiar spirits can be passed on from one generation to the next if not renounced and your new spiritual heritage in Christ is not proclaimed. You are not guilty for the sin of any ancestor, but because of their sin, Satan has gained access to your family. . . . In addition, deceived people may try to curse you, or Satanic groups may try to target you.”<sup>7</sup>

Anderson even suggests formula prayers for cleansing apartments and houses that may have been formerly occupied by unbelievers and which might still carry a curse. Taking this unbiblical teaching to its logical conclusion, Anderson saddles the reader with this burden: “Adopted children can be especially subject to demonic strongholds because of their natural parentage. But even an adopted child can become a new creation in Christ, and must actively renounce old strongholds and embrace his or her inheritance as God's child.”<sup>8</sup>

4 Ibid., 148. This prayer was actually composed by Ernest B. Rockstad of Faith and Life Ministries in Andover, Kansas, whom Bubeck refers to as “one of God's most experienced veterans in this subject of warfare.”

5 Ibid., 149.

6 Ibid., 150. Indeed, Anderson, Bubeck and White offer prayers for cleansing hotel rooms, houses, breaking curses, adopted children, foster children, bedtime and a host of others. One quickly gets the impression that we would be lost without the formulaic incantations which are said to be of such great value against the demonic forces.

7 Neil T. Anderson, *Released From Bondage* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993), 250-251.

8 Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House

Like Bubeck, Anderson offers a prayer to effectively break the curse: *"I here and now reject and disown all the sins of my ancestors. As one who has been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, I cancel out all demonic working that may have been passed on to me from my ancestors. . . I renounce all satanic assignments that are directed toward me and my ministry, and I cancel every curse that Satan and his workers have put on me. I announce to Satan and all his forces that Christ became a curse for me. . . . I reject any and every way in which Satan may claim ownership of me. I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, who purchased me with His own blood. I reject all of the blood sacrifices whereby Satan may claim ownership of me. I declare myself to be eternally and completely signed over and committed to the Lord Jesus Christ."*<sup>9</sup>

In a section entitled "Generational Sin," Thomas B. White writes in his book *The Believer's Guide to Spiritual Warfare*, *"Those who have had experience with deliverance know that in some cases there are demonic powers that have worked within a family bloodline for many generations. This phenomenon is clinically documented. . . . If sin occurs, especially sin related to idolatry or witchcraft, and it remains unresolved, the enemy has a **legal right** to accuse and oppress. . . . We observe a connection between genealogical sin and oppression in current generations."*<sup>10</sup>

I could multiply examples of this *ad infinitum*, *ad nauseum!* It is not difficult to see that there is "a new generation of Christians who are beginning to see the [spiritual] world through a grid that has more in common with Greek and Persian mystery religions than with Christianity."<sup>11</sup> Indeed! When did Christianity start resembling a Harry Potter novel?

### **What about Exodus 20?**

As you read through the prayers above, you will notice language that comes directly out of Scripture: "I have been crucified with Christ," "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son," etc. (**Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:13**). Though the language might be gleaned from Scripture for *some* of the statements, the question remains, "Is this overall theology biblical?" Does the Bible teach that demons and curses can be transferred through bloodlines? Can we inherit demons and

curses? Must these curses be renounced verbally, forcefully, and repeatedly in order for the child of God to be free or protected from Satan?

The verse which serves as the linchpin in this theology, and one you will hear quoted constantly in support of this practice, is **Exodus 20:5**. I have found that the full context is seldom quoted and even less frequently rightly understood. Here is the passage: **"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments" Exodus 20:4-6.**<sup>12</sup>

The underlined phrase of verse 5 is usually isolated from its context and used to teach that God punishes the sins and curses of those who hate Him on their children, even to the fourth generation. Interestingly, and most telling, is the fact that verse 6 is almost *entirely ignored* by spiritual warfare teachers in explaining the meaning of verse 5. And verse 6 is not a separate paragraph, or even a separate sentence. It is the rest of the sentence of verse 5!

A careful look at the passage will show that it has nothing at all to do with the modern teaching of "generational curses." Let's observe a few things.

**First, there is an obvious parallelism present between verse 5 and verse 6** that is central to understanding the meaning of the passage.

Verse 5	Verse 6
visit iniquity	show lovingkindness
to the fourth generation	to the thousands
of those who hate God	of those who keep His Commandments.

This Hebrew parallelism contrasts two actions of God, two numbers of generations, and two groups of people. The two groups in contrast are **those who hate God** versus **those who keep His commandments**. The two numbers of generations contrasted are **three or four** versus **"thousands."** The two actions of God contrasted are **"visiting iniquity"** versus **"showing lovingkindness."**

There is nothing difficult to understand about this passage. It is a Jewish literary device used for expressing

<sup>12</sup> New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (Lockman Foundation)

Publishers, 1990), 207.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 207-8.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas B. White, *The Believer's Guide to Spiritual Warfare* (Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1990), 62. Emphasis Added.

<sup>11</sup> Chuck Colson, J.I. Packer, R.C. Sproul, et. al., *Power Religion* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 278.

comparison and showing a preference of one thing over another. *God would rather bless a thousand generations of those who love Him than curse three or four generations of those who hate Him.* His preference is to bless those who keep His commandments.

**Psalm 30:5** is another example of this comparative parallelism, **“For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning.”** The abundance and enduring blessing of God's favor is highlighted when contrasted with God's anger.

Deuteronomy 7 expresses the same thing, though the order is reversed. **Deuteronomy 7:9-10**, **“Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face.”** This is the same thing expressed in **Exodus 20**, showing it is God's preference and nature to bless and show lovingkindness.

**Second, it cannot be assumed that the ones punished in verse 5 are “righteous” people or believers.** The most natural interpretation is that God would visit circumstantial punishments on those who hate Him.<sup>13</sup> We should not *assume* that those being punished are the righteous descendants of those who hated God. It would make more sense, and be in keeping with teaching from the rest of the Old Testament, that those being punished, even in the third and fourth generation, are also God-hating idolaters.

**Third, the interpretation of spiritual warfare teachers does not hold up when consistently applied.** They will say that verse 5 teaches that a curse or demon can be transferred to children for 3 or 4 generations because of the sin or activities of ancestors. Yet they will not be consistent and take verse 6 in the same way! Would they also suggest that God will bless a thousand generations (in spite of their personal and persistent sin) because of the righteousness of one ancestor? Yet, to be consistent, they would have to affirm this. Verse 6 says that God will show lovingkindness for a thousand generations because of the one who kept His commandments. If a Christian can be punished and afflicted because of the un-renounced sins of his father, grandfather, or great-grandfather, then will unbelieving descendants be blessed because of a righteous ancestor 597 generations

<sup>13</sup> Examples of these circumstantial punishments would include expulsion from the land and other punishments that would come from not keeping the Mosaic covenant (**Deuteronomy 28:15-68**).

ago? Certainly not!

**Fourth, we notice the complete absence of any mention of demons or evil spirits**, or even curses of the type Anderson and others suggest. The passage is not describing demonic strongholds, spiritual warfare, or how to renounce curses, but rather the Ten Commandments - not spirits, but sin and its consequent punishment. It is an unimaginable and unjustified stretch to take anything in this passage and build on it a theology of demons.

**Fifth, Scripture consistently teaches that each person is punished for his own sins, and not the sins of another.** An essential passage on this very subject is **Ezekiel 18**. In Ezekiel's day people quoted a proverb, **“The fathers eat sour grapes, but the children's teeth are set on edge” (18:2)**. They seemed to believe (wrongly) that though the father's did the crime, the children were cursed or punished for it. Ezekiel spent 32 verses refuting this very teaching to show that **“the soul that sins, it shall die” (18:4)**.

In contrast to modern “generational curse” teachers, Ezekiel affirms that, **“The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself” (Ezekiel 18:20)**.

### **The Problems Are Many!**

Anderson tries to show his practices are legitimate by citing similar examples from church history: *“The early church included in its public declaration of faith, ‘I renounce you, Satan, all your works and ways.’ The Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and many other liturgical churches still require this renunciation as part of confirmation. For some reason it has disappeared from most evangelical churches. You must not only choose the truth but disavow Satan and his lies.”<sup>14</sup>*

I think I might know why the practice vanished from Evangelicalism—because it is patently unbiblical and without scriptural warrant!

Apart from the rampant quoting of Scripture out of context and abuse of those verses, there are a myriad of other problems with this theology. I'll begin with what I consider to be most offensive.

**First, this theology denies the sufficiency of the cross, the atonement, and the gospel.** This is the most serious and yet subtle error propagated by those who teach this theology of generational sins and curses. They would

<sup>14</sup> *Released*, 70. Emphasis Added.

affirm vocally, and forcefully, that they do, in fact, believe in the power of the cross and the sufficiency of the gospel, but in practice, their theology denies these very things.

Apparently one-time repentance from a life of sin, the cleansing of the blood of Christ, forgiveness of all sins—past, present, and future—is not sufficient *in itself* to free one from bondage to sin and the power of Satan. Something else is necessary, namely, reciting and renouncing verbally all the sins that the Holy Spirit will bring to my mind. The prayers of renunciation must be spoken in order to break the power of Satan and eliminate His strongholds—to revoke his “legal right.”

Scripture says that the One who trusts in Jesus Christ for salvation has been delivered from the kingdom of darkness and set free from Him who had the power of death, namely the devil (**Col. 1:13; Heb. 2:14-18**). The child of God has been adopted into the family of God and is indwelt by the Spirit of the living God. The gospel has justified him freely, fully, and forever. To suggest that **anything** more is necessary apart from the gospel is an affront to the sufficiency of the work of Christ on the cross.

These renunciation and affirmation prayers allegedly accomplish things that Scripture says have already been accomplished and secured for the believer by the death of Christ. No further “work” on my behalf is necessary to effect that deliverance.

If the believer is in Christ, he is a new creation. All old things have passed away. Period. To suggest that without the verbal, specific renunciations of Satan, he will continue to have a “legal claim” on my family, possessions, and life is to say that the work of Christ did not break that “claim” (although, as we have seen, the whole idea of that “legal claim” is suspect from the beginning)!

What is the significance of being in Christ, if freedom from Satan is not secured in Him? What good does the work of Christ actually do if I need to further continually renounce sins and curses and cleanse my surroundings of Satan's strongholds through incantation-like prayers?

**Second, this theology is an attack on the sufficiency of Scripture.** You will search the Bible in vain for any of the prayers offered by Anderson, Bubeck, and others. There are no prayers for renouncing curses, protecting adopted children, cleansing houses, apartments, or hotel rooms, or binding Satan from dreams. There are no prayers offered for canceling Satan's claims, demonic curses, or generational bloodline demonic influences. Not one. Not only do we not find any examples of them, we are never told to pray such prayers.

As Ice and Dean point out, *“In fact, there is not one example in the entire Bible of a saved person being under a*

*satanic curse which had to be broken by Christian exorcism or distinct confession.”*<sup>15</sup>

One is left to wonder how ill equipped we would be without all the incantations, prayers, and formulas offered by spiritual warfare teachers. We are told they are essential, and yet we don't find them in Scripture—only in the books by “spiritual warfare experts.” Without those books, countless millions would live lives of bondage to Satan and his generational demons and curses, and that because all they had was the Bible! Imagine!

Anderson makes the following claim: *“To be completely free from the past, **we have found it necessary** for each person to specifically renounce every false religion, false teacher, false practice and every means of false guidance that he or she has participated in.”*<sup>16</sup> In my opinion, this indicates incredible hubris—unintended, but hubris nonetheless. When someone teaches that something outside of Scripture—not commanded, illustrated or patterned in Scripture—is *necessary* for our sanctification and deliverance, he is saying that Scripture is not sufficient and claiming that God neglected to provide us with information necessary for our life in Christ. Along comes Anderson suggesting that he has discovered the heretofore unknown solution.

**Third, this theology leads to bondage, not freedom.** Though these spiritual warfare teachers would say that this teaching helps to set people free, *“it instead binds them to a superstitious worldview where Satan is not only present on every front, but he must repeatedly be renounced on each and every one of those fronts or he will control them.”*<sup>17</sup>

Christians are unwittingly adopting a pagan, mystical, voodoo-magic-type worldview in the area of spiritual warfare. They are being encouraged to constantly fear the power, curses, influence, presence, and claims of Satan over them, their possessions, and their family. Without the uttering of incantations, formulaic prayers, and constant renunciations, they can never hope to be free, resulting in bondage to a patently unbiblical worldview and theology of angels and demons.

**Fourth, this is an insult to adopted children everywhere!** To burden adoptive parents with the unbiblical and unjustified fear that their adopted child could be carrying some “bloodline curse” which requires special attention not

15 Thomas Ice and Robert Dean, *Overrun By Demons: The Church's New Preoccupation With The Demonic* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1990), 181.

16 Neil T. Anderson, *Helping Others Find Freedom in Christ* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995), 247. Emphasis added.

17 Elliot Miller, “*Spiritual Warfare and the Seven Steps To Freedom*,” *Christian Research Journal* 21, No. 3 (1999): 16.

procured at the cross is cruel at best.

The theology of “generational curses,” “generational sins,” renunciation prayers, hexes, and curses is completely unbiblical. The cross has secured your salvation, justification, deliverance, sanctification, glorification, and total freedom from the kingdom of darkness. Those in Christ are delivered. Period. Having professed and embraced Christ, you need not “renounce” anything. You are new and complete in Him. Rest in it—without fear!

Without Wax-

