

DELIVER US
from
EVIL

A PASTOR'S RELUCTANT ENCOUNTERS
with THE POWERS of DARKNESS

DON BASHAM



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A NOTE ABOUT THE DELICATE MATTER OF NAMES

ANY BOOK DEALING with a minister's relationship to people faces a dual problem. On the one hand, he must tell the truth exactly as it happened, without concealing or altering the facts. On the other, he has a pastoral obligation to protect the confidence of those whom he serves.

I have solved this dilemma in the usual not-altogether-satisfactory way: Where relating a story might cause harm or embarrassment, I have changed names and occasionally locale or other external circumstances that might permit identification.

In every other respect, these events are recounted exactly as I experienced them.

Don Basham

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FOREWORD

WHEN I WAS a young pastor, a troubled woman was referred to me by the Bible Study Fellowship teacher in our church. She had been diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic and hospitalized several times. Resolving her problem appeared clearly over my head, and the nature of her problem far exceeded my education and experience—if the diagnosis was accurate. But it wasn't!

I gave her some simple psychological tests, which she could not process. I told her I would be willing to spend more time with her if she was willing to come under the authority of our church. She immediately got up and said, "I have to get out of here."

That was my first experience with a Christian who was in deep spiritual bondage. With my limited experience, I assumed that someone in such bondage was either dabbling in the occult or struggling with some gross immorality. Neither was the case, which really puzzled me. Her problem was rooted in bitterness, and when she was finally able to forgive her father, her condition improved dramatically.

Other cases followed, and slowly I learned how to set the captives free by the grace of God. I was not starting in a vacuum. Scripture clearly reveals that we are all in a spiritual battle, and

scholarly saints like Dr. Mark Bubeck, Dr. Victor Matthews and Dr. Merrill Unger were cutting new ground in evangelical circles. Don Basham was one of those early pioneers, and I am glad that Chosen Books has decided to reissue his book.

Like me, Don was not looking for encounters with the evil one. Neither of us was predisposed to include the reality of the spiritual world in our thinking, much less in our pastoral ministry. But God had other ideas.

The American culture is dominated by Western rationalism and naturalism, and that has prevented us from having a biblical worldview.

Jesus referred to Satan as the ruler of this world, and the apostle John says that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. The Bible clearly exposes the battle between Christ and the Antichrist, between the Spirit of truth and the father of lies, between the true prophets and the false prophets, and between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. Every believer is in this battle, whether he or she likes it or not, and that is why we are all admonished to put on the armor of God, stand firm and resist the evil one.

Don is with the Lord, but his journey from ignorance and doubt to liberation is a great read. Most evangelicals will identify with his learning curve and be helped by his conclusions. Ignorance of our enemy is not bliss. For many it is defeat. Truth sets us free, and we need to know the whole counsel of God, which includes the reality of the spiritual world. The world we see is temporal and passing away, but the unseen world is eternal and just as real as what we can touch, hear and see. May the good Lord protect you and liberate you in Christ as you read this fascinating journey.

Dr. Neil Anderson

Founder and president emeritus, Freedom in Christ Ministries



I

THE MOVE

IT COULDN'T BE God's will for us to come to a place like this!" I complained to my wife, Alice, as we drove up the unfamiliar street leading out of town.

An invitation from the pulpit committee of the East Side Church had brought us the three hundred fifty miles from Toronto, Canada, to visit the small mill town of Sharon, Pennsylvania. The weekend had been pleasant enough, insofar as the East Side people were concerned. But the contrast between the broad, clean streets of Toronto and the drab business section of Sharon seemed only to symbolize the intangible differences between the two places.

The fact was, we were in the midst of a spiritual revival in our Hillcrest Church in Toronto and no minister wants to leave a church where God is performing miracles. At least I didn't, and apparently Alice felt the same way.

“I know what you mean,” she said. “After what’s been happening in Hillcrest, this church seems so—well, complacent.”

That was it exactly. The Sharon congregation had precisely the kind of tame, unexpectant, it’s-Sunday-so-it’s-time-for-church approach that the Toronto church had had before a number of us became involved in what is known as the “charismatic renewal.” Now all preconceived notions and self-sufficiency were swept aside as week after week we witnessed the supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Among other things there had been remarkable cases of healing in response to prayer.

One of the first of these had occurred when a young woman came to our midweek prayer meeting on crutches and in great pain. Suffering from severely impaired circulation in one leg—a condition that had previously put her in the hospital for many months and left her partially paralyzed—she had finally recovered, only to have the condition recur, putting her back on crutches. The leg was numb and useless, yet even to touch that foot to the floor brought excruciating pain.

We gathered around her. Even as we prayed, circulation began to improve: Before the meeting ended she had discarded one crutch and was gingerly putting weight on the bad leg. Next morning she telephoned to report she had discarded the other crutch and was completely healed. The experience had greatly stirred the congregation.

Besides miracles of healing there had been experiences of prophetic dreams and visions. A number of people attending the meetings had entered into the spiritual experience known as the baptism in the Holy Spirit, first described in the New Testament on the day of Pentecost, and usually accompanied by the phenomenon called “speaking in tongues.”

I was most grateful for all that was happening. For a long time I had preached that the Christian life offered joy and vic-

tory and wholeness; here were living illustrations of the truth I believed in.

It was no wonder, then, that the prospect of leaving Hillcrest Church did not excite us. We had responded to the invitation to visit Sharon only out of courtesy. Why the East Side congregation had singled me out, we had no idea. But both Alice and I had been struck by the timing of the letter from them. When we had left a pastorate in Washington, D.C., to move to Toronto in 1961, we had planned to spend three years in Canada. Now it was 1964, and here came the letter.

On the long drive back to Toronto, Alice and I continued to discuss it. East Side was not without interesting aspects. It was a “federated congregation,” formerly two separate churches—Baptist and Disciples of Christ—which had united with the agreement that they would alternate denominations in choosing a pastor. Their last minister had been Baptist; I was ordained in the Disciples Church. That part intrigued us, along with the timing. But—how could we tear ourselves away from Hillcrest!

Neither of us realized that the visit to Sharon was a prelude to a series of events that would totally alter the course of our lives. Nor that among those events would be failures quite the opposite of the victories we were currently experiencing. Failures including the friend whose difficulty would defy our ministry and eventually cost her her life.

It was long after midnight when we arrived back at the parsonage in Toronto. After taking our babysitter home, I locked the door and carried the suitcases upstairs. In the hallway, I took Alice by the hand.

“Want to take inventory with me?”

“I already have,” she smiled. “But I’ll be happy to do it again.” Together we went from room to room looking in on our five sleeping children. The first was Cindi; thirteen, snuggled deep under the covers until only the tip of a pert nose peeked through

the mass of blonde hair. Cindi was a regular attendee at the midweek prayer meetings.

In the next bedroom lay Sharon, our elfin, brown-eyed eight-year-old. “Hi, Daddy,” she mumbled sleepily as I bent to kiss her.

In the bed opposite her lay three-year-old Lisa, our second blue-eyed blonde. Alice squeezed my hands as we gazed at her, and I knew she was remembering how a few short months before, Lisa had been instantly healed of violent stomach cramps during one of our prayer meetings. Apparently God’s touch had been more than physical, for since that time she had spoken about Jesus as matter-of-factly as about playmates she could see and touch. We couldn’t understand it, but we rejoiced in it.

In the same bedroom behind the bathroom slept six-year-old Glenn, looking, as he slept, like a brown-haired angel. Only the toy rockets, airplanes and football helmet through which we threaded our way to the bedside recalled the small cyclone who inhabited our house in the daytime.

Finally, there was baby Laura, our six-month-old “Canadian” and third blue-eyed blonde, asleep in her crib in the corner of our bedroom. To look at her was to see both Cindi and Lisa as babies, the resemblance between the three was so strong.

Together, Alice and I thanked God for the five precious lives He had entrusted to our care and, minutes later, we were ourselves fast asleep.

“You know, we really got along very well without you and Alice over the weekend.” It was Earl Corbett, chairman of our church board who made the half-teasing comment to me next morning as he dropped by my office at the church. Earl and his wife, Irene, had been the first in Hillcrest to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, followed within days by a remarkable healing. Earl’s right eye, which had been crossed and half closed since

birth, was miraculously restored through prayer. The combined experiences had transformed him from a shy, retiring church member into a vital, witnessing Christian.

But with Earl's wife things were different. Quietly devoted to her husband and deeply interested in the new spiritual life swirling around her, Irene had not seemed able to enter fully into the blessings that were accruing to others. Although happier and more emotionally secure than she had been in the past, she still suffered from a physical problem that had plagued her since childhood.

Irene was an epileptic.

Competent medical care enabled her to function normally much of the time; nevertheless we were puzzled by the seeming impotence of prayer in her behalf. *Why, I wondered, had God granted Earl such a marvelous miracle of healing while Irene's condition remained unchanged?*

Even more strange to us at the time (although I was later to glimpse the sinister significance of it) was the timing of Irene's seizures. They generally seemed to occur either during the Sunday morning worship service or at the Wednesday prayer meeting.

Two weeks after our return from Sharon, we were midway through a midweek meeting when Irene began to manifest the symptoms of epileptic seizure.

"Let's pray for Irene," Alice suggested. Earl, sitting next to his wife, put his arm around her protectively as we united in prayer. Suddenly the strange, animal-like chattering noises we had come to associate with Irene's disease began to pour from her lips. Her body trembled violently and she slumped over against Earl. After a few moments she grew quiet and the trembling ceased. She sat up and for an instant I thought our prayers had brought her through to a quick recovery. Then I saw the angry glare in her eyes, like that of a caged animal. It was an expression

I was to see numerous times on the faces of people I would be ministering to in the years ahead.

“Where am I?” Irene wailed. “What place is this?” She began fumbling desperately to open the purse on her lap.

“You’re with me, Irene,” Earl tried to reassure her. “And we’re in the prayer meeting at the church.” And he reached to help her open her purse.

“Leave me alone!” Irene retorted sharply, giving his hand a resounding slap. “Who are you? I don’t know you!” And she rose to her feet unsteadily and lurched toward the door. Halfway across the room Earl caught her and looked imploringly at me.

“I haven’t seen her this bad before. Can someone take us home?”

“I’ll take you, Earl,” I replied, my own concern for Irene mingled suddenly with a strange, smothering fear I found hard to put down. “The rest of you pray!” Earl and I ushered Irene out the door, and wedged her between us in the front seat of my car. As I backed from the church parking lot and headed in the direction of their apartment, Irene continued to struggle.

“Who are you?” she screamed at Earl. “Let me out of this car!” and she lunged for the door, fumbling for the handle as she tried to crawl over Earl.

“Irene, listen to me! It’s Earl, your husband! We’re taking you home! Don’t you understand?”

At his words, I felt Irene go limp beside me. “Husband? Home? I don’t have a husband and I don’t have a home!” Earl had taken out his handkerchief and was wiping her lips and chin.

I pulled up in front of their apartment. “Would you pray once more before we go in?” Earl asked. I nodded, my own heart pounding. What was this formless fear churning within me? It did not seem directly connected with Irene’s epilepsy; it was some haunting, forgotten terror of my own.

Following the prayer, Irene seemed calmer. "I'll take her inside now," Earl said, and like a docile child Irene followed him out of the car.

"Let me know if you need any more help," I called after them and was relieved to hear Irene's own natural voice respond.

"Thank you, Reverend Basham. Good night."

Back at church I assured the people that Irene was better. Later, at home, I told Alice about Irene's continued strange behavior in the car.

"I just can't understand it!" I concluded. "Why, with all the other answers to prayer, can't she get lasting help?"

Alice nodded sympathetically. "I know, sweetheart. I've wondered about it, too. But you know, tonight Irene's behavior made me wonder if her problem isn't something more than . . ." She didn't finish the sentence.

"More than what?"

"More than just a physical problem."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm not sure," she said slowly. "But—Don, that just wasn't Irene! For a minute there I could actually imagine I saw someone else looking out of her eyes!"

"What are you trying to say?"

"I don't know." Alice lifted her hands hopelessly. "I just know I saw something evil, something that wasn't any part of the Irene I know."

"Now let's be sensible," I scolded her. "I admit her behavior was plenty bizarre, but personality change is probably one of the symptoms of this disease." I was determined to keep what had happened in some familiar context.

Sure enough, the next morning Earl telephoned to say that Irene had slept well during the night and, aside from feeling a little tired, seemed perfectly all right. And our concern over the

incident soon faded into the background behind a more personal matter.

Although Alice and I had agreed on the drive home from Sharon, Pennsylvania, that we had no desire to change pastors, I had neglected to write the Sharon pulpit committee of our decision. A few days after the episode with Irene, I received a letter from the Sharon church. At a congregational meeting they had voted to extend us the call to be their minister.

As Alice and I prayed over the matter, Earl's words kept coming back to me. "We really got along very well without you."

Perhaps this truly was God's moment for a move—just because things *were* going so well here. Perhaps when His Holy Spirit took over it was time for the minister to step aside, to stand down, to seek a place and a people where His fire had not yet fallen.

We wrote the East Side pulpit committee that we would come.