

## THE SPIRIT OF STUPOR THE SEVENTH LEVEL OF DECAY

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Within the last 20-40 years of ‘watching’, there has been a recurring observation of several friends of mine being in a state of stupor. It took me a while to put this word with their behavior, but nevertheless this finally came into view. There was a slowness of thought, sort of a day-dreaming, absent-mindedness, inattentive, often accident-causing mental neglect, particularly in driving habits. One friend actually went to sleep on me at 10:30 A.M. in the middle of a very serious conversation. Others would do off-the-wall things as if in a trance while working. When I addressed the bizarre behavior, they became defensive, covering up the action as if all were OK. Others would be abnormally slow of thought as if in another world, but on a consistent basis. Something was bad wrong.

During these same years now I have witnessed a lot of pain and agony in these same fellow ‘saints’ with whom my wife and I have had varying degrees of fellowship. For the most part, they have been singular events occurring from time to time. But the other morning there appeared before me in a single screen’s view a panorama of most of those ‘saints’, and the associated losses. It was quite stirring.

Within that panorama was a spectrum of life styles; one an erstwhile friend of 30 years on death’s doorstep, with a rare terminal brain disease, about to lose his sight, sanity, continence, and will be in constant pain until he dies in less than two months. Another is in a wheelchair, unable to speak. A ‘third’ are three couples where there are mixed positives and negatives, good income, two-three decent children, but debilitating diseases and ruptured relationships that shatter the meaning of the word “blessed.” On the other end of the spectrum from the man dying is a couple with Godly seed, healthy and loved grandkids, a decent home, income, off-the-chart level of health, and blessings of all sorts. These are mostly in their late 60s-early 70s; one couple is in their mid-50s. Scattered in amongst these long-time friends are a number of equally well-known couples in the same age bracket. Their lifestyles are somewhere in the median range, with varying scripturally aberrant manifestations. Excluded are several who have died in shame, violently.

I read the same patterns throughout the Bible, from David the Psalmist to Saul, Samuel versus Eli’s sons, Joshua and Caleb versus 600,000 Israelite men, all of whom had been enslaved by Egypt; Jacob versus Esau, Abel versus Cain, Enoch versus his peers, Abraham versus the culture at Ur, Paul versus Judas, me versus my brother, and on and on the disparity of fortunes continues.

In the midst of this troubling of my mind I have been re-reading Hebrews, particularly Chapters 3-4, 10-11. Some terrifying answers to my dilemma in paragraph one are found there. Since in Hebrews Paul is addressing the Jewish faction within the *ekklesia* of Jerusalem, and the physical picture of how we are to live is found in the O.T., it would seem logical these two explain volumes about God’s treatment of us mortals.

The Book of Hebrews lists several characteristics that are pertinent:

negatively, Chapters 3 and 4, 10-11

- unbelief
- disobedience to God's Word
- rebellion
- testing God
- absence of faith
- spurned the Son of God
- profaned the blood of the covenant
- outraged the Spirit of grace

positively; Chapters 10-11, 4

- presence of faith
- accepting His plans, designs.
- a genuine love for His Word

As an example, Hebrews 10:29 mentions "outraged the Spirit of grace." Did you ever hear one of your congregation say, "We don't need that sort of spiritual hocus-pocus in our church?" This in effect is denying any 'socially unacceptable' manifestations of the Spirit, or "outraging the Spirit of grace." Misusing His gifts and Name is equally evil.

Before the time one might learn the real root of things, deceit has been accomplished, and you cannot *hear* or *see* anymore. According to Scripture, this lack of being able to hear or perceive are distinctive characteristics of the seventh and last stage before ruin occurs!! These characteristics are called Stupor, Dull, Sluggish, found in Hebrews 11.

In studying the N.T. in Acts, Hebrews and Romans, I found mention of "God giving them a spirit of stupor." One finds this in the book of Isaiah and in the N.T. where Isaiah is quoted, 'they having eyes but unable to perceive, ears but unable to hear'. Jesus told His disciples that the meanings of the parables were not given to 'them', meaning the crowd, but "only to the disciples." Now that is serious stuff. But under what conditions does God give them, or us, a spirit of stupor?

Roget's Thesaurus and the O.T. and N.T. Lexicon, the following words relative to stupor:

Vine<sup>1</sup>: Set in contrast to confident and expectant hope, **in contrast to vigorous growth and knowledge.**

Roget<sup>2</sup>:823, Insensibility; torpor, lethargy, trance, **stupor**, stupefied, languid, careless, sleepy, inattentive, absent of thought, preoccupied.

460, Neglect: carelessness, inattention, **shut one's eyes, refuse to hear**, caught napping, heedless, thoughtless, unwary, unwatchful, never mind, let it pass.

Webster<sup>3</sup>: negligent, heedless, indolent, thoughtless, and inattentive.

Zodhiates<sup>4</sup>: slow, sluggish, making a person **unfit for activities of the mind or spirit.**

Touch

Bible<sup>5</sup>: slow, sluggish, languid, dull.

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<sup>1</sup> Vine, W.E., *Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words*, Revell and Co.

<sup>2</sup> Roget, P.M., *Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases*, Grosset and Dunlap.

<sup>3</sup> Webster, I., *1828 Amer. Dictionary of English Language*, Foundation of Amer. Christian Edu.

<sup>4</sup> Zodhiates, Spiros, *Hebrew and Greek Study Bible*, op. cit.

All the above confirmed the sequence of thoughts leading to this; I asked Him what the root of stupor was, and the name of the evil spirit. The next morning I asked my wife if she knew; unprompted, she replied, “Blasphemy”. I was stunned, for she replied by the Spirit. I knew immediately that was my answer. They were one and the same.

So I looked for the meaning and root of the word blasphemy. Now get this; from Vine<sup>6</sup>, the word ‘blasphemy’ is from two sources. One is *blax*, meaning **sluggish, stupid** ! –the other is *blapto*, meaning railing, reviling, calumny, defamation, *to contemn sacred things*. Remember the comments about the Holy Spirit?

In the O.T., various;

5006, *na’ats*, to revile, scorn, despise, reject, deride, mostly of men rejecting God in light of their knowledge.

1288, *barak*, to bend the knee, curse is a Hebrew euphemism.

5344, to puncture. (interesting)

1442, to hack, blaspheme, revile, reproach.

2798, to defy, jeopardize, rail.

In the N.T.,

483, to speak against

987, to vilify, speak impiously, defame, rail.

These speak volumes regarding the behavior of the Israelites. From a vantage point of 25+ years, I **know** this to have been the behavior of some whom are in the throes of family ruptures, losses, horrible pain, diseases or even approaching death. I also know ***these in a state of stupor attended gatherings which implicitly or explicitly denied and rejected the Holy Spirit or disobeyed the Word.*** Coincidence? I think not.

The **LORD GOD** reaches out to us directly or indirectly by His goodness:

1. There is either belief or unbelief. If **active** belief, then blessings. If unbelief,
2. Self-absorption sets in, to
3. Deception, leading to
4. Disobedience, then
5. Rebellion. Increasingly God warns, chastens, and disciplines in order to stop.
6. Anger at being reprov'd, disciplined, exposed. Hand is forced w/final attempt.
7. **Stupor, sluggishness, inattentiveness.**
8. Torment, jerked about by dark spirits; in and out personality, like King Saul.
9. Separation from God’s protection and Presence. See Proverbs 1:22-33.
10. The person is given over, hears spirits’ voices, demons are active and present. *The person’s facial features take on demonic expressions, especially the eyes, black, dilated in daylight. There is commonly a stooping of the shoulders, a sloughing of the feet. The voice may change, and/or a tight pursing of the lips.*

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<sup>5</sup> Touch Bible, Copyright 2011, Patrick Franklin, included in iPad programs.

<sup>6</sup> Vine, W.E., *Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words*, Revell and Co.

Now if one were to stop here and ponder the above, there would be most likely a sense of despair, or anger, or even denial. But the Most High God, our Father in Heaven, does not stop here, but indeed out of His goodness has not only provided a way out of the mess, but outlines a systematic, logical and doable plan.

That plan is outlined both in the O.T. as well as the N.T. In the O.T., it is found primarily in the book of Proverbs in at least two places. The first place is in Chapter 1, verses 20-33. The first part is God (who takes over Solomon's pen, speaking in the first personal pronoun) crying out to His people. "Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the market she raises her voice; ...'how long, oh simple ones, will you love being simple?'...Give heed to my reproof; behold I will pour out my thoughts (spirit) to you; I will make my words known to you."

Then comes the explanation for the warning and certain consequences; 'I have called and you refused to listen, stretched out my hand (the coming Cross) and no one heeded, and you have ignored all my counsel (not read/studied/believed My Word) and would have none of my reproof (fatherly educational correction). These are the four acts of God's goodness, in the providing of ways that forestall disaster.

Then comes His edict because of our refusal to grasp His ways;

- I will laugh at your calamity
- mock you when panic strikes you, and
- your calamity comes like a whirlwind,
- mock you when distress and anguish come upon you.

Then He changes the pronoun from the personal 'you' to the impersonal 'they';

"Then *they* will call upon me, but I will not answer,  
*they* will seek me diligently but will not find me.

"Because *they* hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, would have none of My counsel, and despised all my reproof, therefore *they* shall eat the fruit of their way, and be sated with their own devices. For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency (prosperity) of fools destroys them; but he who listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of evil."

The other place in Proverbs, quoted in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews, is in Proverbs 3:11-12: My son, do not despise the LORD'S discipline or be weary of His reproof, for as the LORD reproves him whom He loves, as a father the son in whom he delights (accepts, is satisfied).

Now; I disciplined my sons while they were young and full of folly; as they grew older and wiser, there was less and less need for corporal discipline. Reason gained ground, as it should with us and our Father. In fact, the younger learned quicker than the older, so the younger, having seen the folly of disobedience, grasped the ideas sooner, avoiding a lot of pain. So it should be with us as God's kids.

A third place in the O.T. is in Deut. 7:1. Here are listed the Seven Nations of Canaan, or the entities of evil that were against Israel, and by spiritual extension, against us as spiritual Israel, the *ekklesia* of God. The **seventh**, the Jebusites, had a nature of being trodden down. **sluggish**, mopey, 'victims'. The spiritual root of the Jebusites was, you guessed it, Blasphemy.

So now we are back to where we started, the Seventh Level of Decay. We do not need to go there, be there, nor stay there. It's just that the odds are heavily against its reversal. But the answer is quite simple, found (in one of many places) in Jeremiah 3:11-14. He is addressing the treachery of Judah, even after faithless Israel has been judged some 90 years before.

But even after 90 years of His judgment, the LORD pleads with *Israel*; "Return, faithless Israel...I will not look on you with anger.....***Only acknowledge your guilt, that you have rebelled against (me). Return, O faithless children...I will take you, one from a city, two from a family,....I will bring you to Zion*** (where He dwells)."

This entire concept is reiterated in Hebrews 12-5-11, (which see). Here the gist is that the God of Heaven, our Heavenly Father, indeed loves us when He disciplines us, no less than a good earthly father (rare today indeed) would discipline his sons. The writer of Hebrews changes slightly the wording from Proverbs, by saying "...do not lose courage when you are exposed by Him." Many times this word is errantly translated 'punished'.

Why do we ask ourselves, "Why the discipline?" Duhhh!?! –it is for the same reason a Godly father disciplines his own son, to train him to be a decent human being, a Godly human being, one of whom the father can be proud he sired. It is no different coming from Our Heavenly Father. After all, did He not sire us spiritually?

April 21, 2013            Ben-Issachar

### **Postscript:**

In the midst of dealing with the conflict, two situations came to mind; one, when a car is not running right, the owner takes it to a mechanic, the mechanic makes a diagnosis, saying what he believes to be the problem, and offers his opinion as to how it may be fixed (if at all), and what it will cost. The second is when a health problem occurs, the doctor makes a diagnosis, saying what he believes to be the problem, and what it will take to solve it. In both cases, the one with the car or health problem seeks a **seasoned** person to make the diagnosis.

But when a person has a spiritual problem, made manifest by certain tell-tale surface expressions, all the dice roll the opposite way. The few admitting such are rare; even rarer are those seeking a solution. Fewer still are those seasoned heads available and capable of solving the yet-to-be-admitted problem. So the car usually gets fixed, and sometimes the body, but the spirit? Ah, the carousel continues to turn around and around, going nowhere, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. The body count continues to mount, the body bags approach zero inventory. Pretty soon the stench will get unbearable; maybe then someone will admit there is a problem. I doubt it...

The hard truth is that at some juncture, the Almighty God, our Father in Heaven, **does** harden the heart, He **does** cause a stupor to come upon His people, He **does** lead a man with whom He is not pleased into adultery. It is written when the latter happens, that man will not **ever** come out. That's pretty hard teaching, but that's what **He** said.

I personally witnessed the stages of declension of the first friend in the initial paragraph. He was tall, good looking, wealthy and educated. Ah, but he had never dealt with anger and resentment toward his father. This devolved into defiant arrogance, flipping the proverbial finger not only in his father's face, his father-in-law, thence towards his Father in heaven. *During all this he toyed with the Bible* because it lent itself to some modicum of dignity and propriety. From there he toyed with counseling, to find himself in the arms of an adulteress (it can be anything) . During all this time I was on a deep level with him, playing racquetball, long deep talks, and so forth. I knew his heart, and most every way he looked at things. During those times, he was to all intents and purposes a good friend and confidant.

Every means of prevention and warning I knew was delivered to him, to no avail. I even caught him in adultery, begging him to leave her. For a while he listened, and even made an effort to break loose. Ah, but the seductive embraces and aroma of the strange woman proved too much for a man with whom God was angry. He had a wonderful time for a spell, but then the chickens came home to roost. The abandoned wife nearly went down, the three children ran amuck, bouncing here and there. In my last phone call to him, I heard an evil spirit come out of his mouth. I was done.

Before long, the other woman lost interest, and his health began to fail, as well as his mind. Twenty -five years goes by quickly. *Once his stupor set in, his ruin was not far behind.*

Now you know the rest of the story.....