The world seeks a Christianity without a cross, without the need for repentance, without the certainty of a coming judgment, without a just and holy God, without a divine Savior, without any prohibition or definition of sin, where any practice is permissible, where there is no divine contribution in this life or Eternity, and where good and evil are only relative terms which are redefined by each new generation….The enemy has manipulated the national conscience to such a degree that society now regards the worst crimes to be insensitivity, intolerance, and causing offense. If anyone dares believe something different than the accepted politically correct ideology, they are deemed guilty of hate crimes and worthy of punishment.

John Parish in *The Goshen Factor*

* *

First Love Ministries of Perry, Georgia USA

Prayer Study 557

SERPENTINE SPIRITS

They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Mark 16:18

(In the first part of this lesson, I have quoted extensively from the delightful book *The Goshen Factor: Moving into the Curse Free Zone* written by John Parish. Of course I give him credit for the quotes taken from his book. He has keen insight into some controversial scriptural areas, which are rarely discussed in most

spiritual settings, such as "Are we literally supposed to take up serpents?" This question will be dealt with in this lesson.)

<u>FIVE THINGS JESUS COMMANDED HIS FOLLOWERS TO TAKE UP</u>

John Parish tells us that there are 5 things the Lord commands His followers to take up:

1. **Take up Your Bed** (**Rolling up the Yesterdays):** Matthew 9:6b-*...then He said to the paralytic, **"Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."***
2. **Take up Your Cross (Entry Level Christianity):** Luke 9:23-*And He said to them all, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."* Parish writes: "A common misconception has endured through the years that hardships, handicaps, and chronic misery constitute our cross. But most adversity is either the result of satanic attack or reaping for unrepented sins. The real cross of the believer is personal and practical. It means to set the will of God above our own desires and ambitions. It means a life void of lust and sinful yearnings. It means commitment and obedience to the Word of God. It means to serve Him with all our heart. It means to be spiritual instead of carnal. It means a life controlled by the Spirit instead of ruled by the flesh."
3. **Take up My Yoke (From Burdens to Blessings):** Matthew 11:29-***"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*** This passage of scripture is a paradox in

many ways. Jesus is speaking to the already heavy laden and asking them to take His yoke. John Parish writes this about this passage: "The Lord incorporated a yoke in His marvelous invitation to the tired, weary, oppressed, and heavy laden. It was not just any yoke, but His yoke is offered to alleviate unbearable stress. The unregenerated mind will not be able to comprehend the logic of the Lord's statement. A yoke is indicative of bearing a burden and pulling a load. The question arises, 'how can the already overloaded bear anymore burdens?' But remember that His yoke is offered as a replacement, not an addition, to the weights which crush and press upon us. Taking up the yoke is exchanging our burdens for His blessings."

"The Lord wants to harness the believer to 'peace that passes all understanding,' to 'joy unspeakable and full of glory,' to 'victory that overcomes the world,' and 'to the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost.'"

4. **Take up the Fish (Money Miracles in a Time of Crisis):** ***"Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you."*** Here the Lord is telling Peter to go fishing. He adds that the first fish he catches will have money in its money. They needed the money to pay their taxes. This particular species of fish found in the Sea of Galilea actually pick of shiny gold pieces that have been dropped in the water and hold these things in their mouths. Today you can go to Israel and eat at a tent near the Sea of Galilea, which is actually a large lake. Be

sure to ask for St. Peter's fish. Maybe you too will find some gold!

We must render to Caesar what is Caesar's, but also to God, what is God's (Matthew 22:21, Mark 12:17, Luke 20:25). Even though it is an Old Testament concept, we believe in the tithe as not being an option for modern day believers. Malachi 3:8-11:

8 *"Will a man rob God?*
Yet you have robbed Me!
But you say,
'In what way have we robbed You?'
In tithes and offerings.
9 *You are cursed with a curse,*
For you have robbed Me,
Even this whole nation.
10 *Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,*
That there may be food in My house,
And try Me now in this,"
Says the Lord of hosts,
"If I will not open for you the windows of heaven
And pour out for you such blessing
That there will not be room enough to receive it.
11 *"And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes,*
So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground,
Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,"
Says the Lord of hosts;"

John Parish states this about the tithe: "Obedience to this command places the Lord as the supreme financial counselor. He orchestrates circumstances and situations that bring favor

and breakthroughs for His people. He rebukes the devourer. He protects the harvest. He dispatches the heavenly host to bring blessings from unexpected places."

5. **Take up Serpents (Overcoming Demonic Opposition):** Mark 16:18a-***"…they will take up serpents…."*** Mark 16 is one of the most controversial passage in scripture. Many Biblical scholars will tell you that this passage was not in the original manuscripts but added later and thus not authentic. However, if they honestly investigate this, they will realize that of the 618 ancient Greek manuscripts in existence, only two have omitted the final verses of Mark's Gospel. Besides all that, there are about 100 ancient Christian writers who wrote *before* the oldest surviving Greek manuscripts of the Bible, and they all referred to these last verses (Mark 16:9-20). Thus, we can trust that these words are authentic and the words of Jesus.

   So, how should we interpret ***"They shall take up serpents"*** in Mark 16:18. The Greek word translated "take up" in our English Bibles means "*to remove*, *to take away*, *to destroy*, *to put away*, *and do away with*." Thus Parish believes we could translate the phrase "*they will take up serpents*," as "*they will destroy or remove serpents*." The serpent represents those demonic beings who are hostile to God. For example, the Lord Himself, on three scripturally recorded occasions, called the Pharisees and hypocrites a "generation of vipers" and "you serpents."

   The Greek scholar Rick Renner believes that Jesus was trying to tell His disciples that they were divinely guarded by the power of God when they were going somewhere on

the Lord's business. An example of this is found in Acts 28:3-6 when Paul was on the island and bitten by a deadly viper. Paul merely shook off the snake into the fire and went away unharmed. Renner says that when we believe that God's promises of protection will work for us, we can enter dangerous territories believing and claiming that God's protection is ours and that the enemy cannot do anything to hurt us. He insists, and rightly so, that this passage of scripture has nothing to do with passing rattlesnakes around in a congregation! Renner notes that the people living in Israel during that day were deathly afraid of snakes because the road system was very much undeveloped and people often had to blaze their own trail through grass and rocky terrain and usually were walking by foot. Snakes hiding in these grassy and rocky areas frequently bit travelers, causing death since there were no hospitals or anti-venom near at hand. Again Jesus is saying that disciples sent by Him to do His work were supernaturally protected.

John Parish tells us that the Israelite priests had to periodically clean the temple, since massive crowds would come there. But this was more than just a natural cleaning. They also had to do a spiritual cleaning. To do the latter, they would walk through the temple quoting Psalm 91. They believed, as I do, that speaking the Word in the atmosphere drove away demons or serpents, as symbolic of demons. Thus Psalm 91 became known as "The Psalm that makes the demons flee."

Parish goes on to tell us that, “although there are dozens of different species of snakes, the Word of God speaks of only three: the adder or asp (the modern day cobra), the viper, and the python.

The adder-asp-cobra first spits a stinging solution into its victim’s eyes, blinding it. Then it attacks by sinking its fangs deep into its prey. The venom of this snake attacks the nervous system causing muscular paralysis and is symbolic of demons that blind and paralyze people. This particular snake was the preferred snake of Pharaoh’s magicians. They would somehow hypnotize these snakes into a stiff position so that they appeared to be a staff. Then they would throw these snakes to the ground where it looked like the stick turned into a snake.

The cobra was adorned on Pharaoh’s headband to create fear in his subjects, because these snakes in real life were instruments of death. Moses’ rod, however, was an instrument of deliverance and life and swallowed up satan’s serpents of death. The power to take up serpents is the ability of God’s people to defeat the enemy on his own ground.

The viper, according to Parish, was the snake that “gave no warning, struck without notice, and crawled into places where no one would suspect a serpent was hiding.” This snake has a knack for hiding in places were people gather. It hid in the sand and struck horses, camels, donkeys, and any other creature that carried riders, thus preventing people from arriving at their destination. So the viper as a demonic force tries to throw the believer backward to keep

him from entering into his purpose, call, and divine destiny. The venom of the adder attacks the circulatory system, going directly to the heart. Proverbs 4:23 warns us, "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*." When our hearts are negatively affected, we lose our first love for the Lord and grow cold.

In the case of Paul in Acts 28, the viper could not stand the heat. Fire always disturbs snakes. The baptism in the Holy Spirit and with fire (Luke 3:16) is the best demon repellant available. Parish puts it this way: "It is in those uncompromising churches, ablaze with heavenly anointing, that hidden things which block answers to prayer come to the surface. It is in the atmosphere of total worship, praise, and ministry, that serpents are shaken off and their intended victims feel no harm."

Perhaps, the python causes the most damage in many ministries today. The Hebrew and Greek words translated "divination" actually mean a python spirit. Thus, python is witchcraft. Unfortunately, witchcraft is alive and well in our country and all over the world. Witchcraft is birthed out of rebellion, manipulation, and control.

In the natural, the python wraps itself around its victim and crushes the victim to death. Then it unlocks its jaws and swallows the carcass. Sometimes these carcasses are much bigger than the snake itself.

In the spiritual realm, the python spirit tries to suffocate the life out of a believer. I believe that this spirit often comes from prayers of witches, and through rebellion,

especially rebellion of the leadership (1st Samuel 15:23a: *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft…*)

Python comes from the name of the region where Delphi is located. Delphi was the home of the famous witch who practiced divination or soothsaying or, what we more commonly call today, fortune telling. Divination is the art of obtaining secret knowledge, especially as pertains to the future, in a demonic counterfeit to the gift of prophecy. The scripture is very adamantly clear that believers are not to engage in any form of divination, manipulation, mind control, or witchcraft whether through consulting of mediums, psychic readings, hypnotism, horoscopes, tarot cards, crystals, satanic music, TM mediation, drugs, spells, se'ances, 8 balls, Ouija boards, palm readings, etc. I will give you just one of many scriptures dealing with these subjects: Deuteronomy 18:10: *There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire or who practices witchcraft or a soothsayer or one who interprets omens or a sorcerer*.

In Greek mythology, Python was a snake that lived in the caves of Mount Parnassus. This snake was slain by Apollo. Apollo founded the oracle at Delphi. This oracle or fortune teller took over the guardianship of the python which he had killed. Christian sources believe that this priestess at Delphi was intoxicated by fumes escaping from the underground cavern from which she spoke. They say that she really spoke gibberish which had to be interpreted by a priest, and any questions asked had to have a "yes" or "no" answer. People came from all over the world to get

direction and revelation from this oracle who was obviously possessed by demons.

Paul and Silas ran into a slave girl who had a spirit of python in Philippi, the main city of Macedonia which is in Europe. Acts 16:16-19 tells us: *Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.* This spirit was trying to confuse the Philippians by identifying the slave girl with the evangelistic ministry of Paul and Silas and by drawing attention to the girl.

<u>What does this serpentine spirit do?</u>

1. Python tries to keep you from doing what God wants you to do by crushing your hopes, dreams, faith, vision, drive, motivation, and fight. This is often done by Python filling your head with lies, accusations, condemnation, fear, unbelief, and shame.
2. Python brings a spirit of apathy, despair and depression.
3. Python often is the spirit behind addictions.

4. Python also is often the spirit behind unusual problems with choking, gagging, tightness of the chest, etc.
5. Python squeezes the life out of people, making them feel unusually tired and down, apathetic, joyless, and hopeless.
6. Python is closely linked to the spirit of suicide, infirmity, and death.
7. Python wants to control, much like the spirit of Jezebel.

How do we get rid of this Python spirit?

1. Break all generational curses involved in any ancestral involvement in any form of witchcraft.
2. Repent of any, even innocent, involvement in any kind of divination (fortune telling) or witchcraft.
3. Ask the Lord is there is any witchcraft being directed at you, and break its power in spiritual warfare.

Daily Declarations for Those Who are Being Tormented by Serpentine Spirits (from *Prayers that Rout Demons* by Apostle John Eckhardt)

1. Lord, bruise the head of every serpent that would attack my life, in the name of Jesus.
2. Punish the piercing serpent, in the name of Jesus.
3. I bind and rebuke any serpent that would try to deceive me (2nd Corinthians 11:3).
4. I release the rod of God to swallow up every serpent that would come against me, in the name of Jesus (Exodus 7:12).
5. Protect me from fiery serpents (Deuteronomy 8:15).

6. I bind and rebuke every serpent that would try to twist or coil around my life, in the name of Jesus.
7. I bind and rebuke every python that would try to squeeze out my prayer life, the name of Jesus.
8. I bind and rebuke every cobra that would come against me, in the name of Jesus.
9. I bind and rebuke every cockatrice that would come against me, in the name of Jesus (Isaiah 14:29).
10. I bind and rebuke every flying serpent that would attack my life, in the name of Jesus (Isaiah 27:1).
11. I bind and rebuke every sea serpent that would attack my life, in the name of Jesus (Isaiah 27:1).
12. I have authority to tread upon serpents (Luke 10:19).
13. Let the fire of God drive out every serpent from my life (Acts 28:3).
14. I cast out every viper that would operate in my life, in the name of Jesus.

"The blood of Jesus constitutes the border surrounding the believer…It is a boundary that demons can't cross. The power of the blood, the authority of His Name, the anointing of the Spirit, and the promise of His Word provide effective energy in removing, destroying, and putting away all serpents."

John Parish

LEVIATHAN

(*I do not consider Leviathan a serpentine spirit. Leviathan in scripture is compared to a creature much like the crocodile, not like a snake. I do want to mention Leviathan, however, since we have seen this spirit in operation, along with Python, in this ministry*.)

Leviathan is a very strong spirit affecting great numbers of the Body of Christ. Its primary task is to cause miscommunication in order to separate relationships because it knows that there is great power in agreement in the Body of Christ. (Matthew 18:19: "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.") Pride, especially in one's competence, is an open door for this spirit to come in. It seeks control and often partners with Jezebel. Some think that Leviathan is often most prominent around areas of water, such as seacoast towns and islands. This creature seems to be related to the crocodile or alligator or dragon or water serpent-like creature.

Job 41:34: *He beholds every high thing; He is king over the children of pride.* (For a complete description of this creature, read all of Job 41.)
Isaiah 27:1: *In that day* [the Kingdom Age] *the LORD with His severe sword, great and strong, will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan, that twisted serpent; and He will slay the reptile that is in the sea.*

<u>More specifically, what does this spirit do?</u>
According to Paul Cox, in <u>Guidelines to Deliverance:</u>

1. It works against worship.
2. It affects thoughts and emotions.
3. It changes how people see things or how they hear things.
4. It twists communication to cause damage to relationships. (Often the hearer disregards the words that are said

because he feels he knows the motives behind the words. Sometimes the hearer simply mishears what is spoken.)

5. It causes the hearer to keep from connecting a current comment with the big sequence of events. The mother says, "Sally is sick and can't bring Johnny home from soccer practice, so I will have to go get him myself." In her mind, the mother has just told her husband that dinner will be late, but he may not hear that at all.
6. It causes a person to be unaware of the need to tell others when he has changed their mind about something, leaving the possibility that this minor change might affect someone else's day in a major way.
7. It causes division between Christian leaders because of miscommunication.

<u>To deal with Leviathan, you need to look at three areas:</u>

1. Territorial areas
2. Generational patterns
3. Personal attachment

Prayer Against Leviathan by Paul Cox: *I break, shatter, cut-off, dissolve, and destroy Leviathan. I ask Lord that no parts of Leviathan be left behind or be allowed to reconnect to me in any way. I break, shatter, cut-off, dissolve and destroy any curses against worship, my throat, stomach, emotions and thoughts. I break, shatter, cut-off, dissolve and destroy any demons affecting my Godly spiritual giftings or spiritual death. I command all demons leave my presence now and go to the place that Jesus sends you.*

These serpentine spirits and Leviathan oppress us when we leave doors open. Among those doors are the following:

1. Unforgiveness (Mark 11:25; Matthew 6:14-15; 2nd Corinthians 2:9-11)
2. Prolonged voluntary sins (John 14:30 where Jesus is saying that the devil can find no area of agreement with Him because there is no sin in Him, and thus there are no open doors.)
3. Idolatry (Revelation 9:20; Colossians 3:5)
4. Religious sin (Isaiah 1:10-20): Legalism, pharasaicalism, tradition, religious practices which become more important to a person than God Himself, idols in the church (the choir, the previous or present pastor, organ), not believing in the inerrancy of scripture, reading the Satanic Bible or Book of Mormon, Abuse of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Universalism.
5. Sexual sin: sexual abuse (Leviticus 18:22-28), fornication (Ephesians 5:5), adultery (Deuteronomy 22:22-29), perverted sex (Ephesians 5:3-12), homosexuality (Romans 1:26-27), fantasy (Psalm 101:3, James 1:13-14), pornography (1st Corinthians 6:18, Colossians 3:5, Ephesians 5:3, 1st John 2:16, Job 31:1, Matthew 5:28), beastiality (Deuteronomy 27:21), prostitution (Deuteronomy 23:17), Incest (Leviticus 18:6-18), etc.
6. Traumas and Accidents (1st Peter 5:7, Psalm 34:4, Isaiah 41:10, Proverbs 1:33): unwanted pregnancy, physical or emotional or psychological-mental or sexual abuse, major illness, accidents, miscarriages, abortions, shock, etc.
7. Fears and Phobias (2nd Timothy 1:7, Proverbs 29:25, Luke 12:32): rejection, fear of man, fear of death, etc.
8. Fatigue (Psalm 37:7, Jeremiah 6:16, Matthew 11:28, Hebrews 3:11 & 4:9)

9. Cursed objects in the home (Deuteronomy 7:26
10. Rebellion against authority (1st Samuel 15:23 & 12:14-15, Proverbs 17:11, Isaiah 63:10)
11. Rock music, ungodly movies, soap operas, sensuous and erotic media, etc. (Colossians 3:2, 1st Corinthians 10:21, Psalm 11:5, Galatians 5:19-21, Philippians 4:8, Psalm 101:3, Ephesians 5:11)

The Promise by the Martins

I never said that I would give you silver or gold
Or that you would never feel the fire or shiver in the cold
But I did say you'd never walk through this world alone
And I did say, don't make this world your home
I never said that fear wouldn't find you in the night
Or that loneliness was something you'd never have to fight
But I did say I'd be right there by your side
And I did say I'll always help you fight
'Cause you know I made a promise that I intend to keep
My grace will be sufficient in every time of need
And my love will be the anchor that you can hold onto
This is the promise, this is the promise I made to you
I never said that friends would never turn their backs on you
Or that the world around you wouldn't see you as a fool
But I did say like me you'll surely be despised
And I did say my ways confound the wise
I didn't say you'd never taste the bitter kiss of death
Or have to walk through chilly Jordan to enter into rest
But I did say I'd be waiting right on the other side