

Former White Supremacist: Demons Influenced El Paso, Dayton Shooters

Although a number of contributing factors were involved in the tragic mass shootings in El Paso and Dayton by extremists from the far-right and far-left, one that should be considered more seriously is the role of spiritual warfare. This is hard to dispute in light of the fact that Dayton's leftist shooter expressed his affinity for satanism on his Twitter feed.

Demonic influence was one of the factors in my involvement in racist and anti-Semitic terrorism in the South during the 1960s. I got into it as a high school student in reaction against the civil rights movement. I was ensnared through reading racist, anti-Semitic literature which was being circulated on my campus. The main points were simple: Blacks were inferior to whites, and race-mixing would lead to intermarriage, which would corrupt and dumb down white people, making them easier to control; a communist-Jewish conspiracy was behind it all—part of a secret plot to establish a world government which they would control. As a teenager, I didn't yet have much education or experience in the world, so these ideas seemed plausible and aroused fear and then anger.

Little did I know that this was actually the devil's hook to catch me. As one old saint said, "The devil is a master fisherman. He baits the hook according to the appetite of the fish." For some it is money, for others fame, others sex, and there are many more. In my case, it was racism, anti-Semitism and far-right ideology. And this was true for people like the El Paso shooter, who was a far-right extremist, and the Dayton shooter, who was a far-left extremist and a fan of Satan. In C.S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*, the senior devil advises the novice devil that in ensnaring people, "all extremes, except

extreme devotion to the Enemy [God] are to be encouraged.”

The idea that the devil can use extreme ideologies to blind and deceive people and use them for his evil purposes may seem a stretch for some people. But Paul speaks of this tactic when he says, “the god of the world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (2 Cor. 4:4). Blinding and deceiving people is one of the devil’s main schemes to lead them into snares, temptations and ultimately damnation.

As my anger grew more intense, at some point it opened the door to demonic influence. Paul said, “Be angry but do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. Do not give place to the devil” (Eph. 4:26-27). It seems that if we give ourselves over to anger, we somehow open ourselves to greater influence by the devil. And if we don’t quickly shut that door through repenting and forsaking it, what begins as a toehold can become a foothold and eventually a stronghold, requiring not just repentance but also deliverance ministry. That is what happened to me.

I had become so filled with anger and hatred against blacks and Jews that I got involved with the Ku Klux Klan and attempted to bomb the home of a Jewish businessman one night in Meridian, Mississippi. But the plan was discovered, and a police SWAT team was concealed in the shadows waiting for us.

I was sentenced to 30 years in the Mississippi State Penitentiary, considered one of the worst in America at the time. Sitting in my cell 24 hours a day, seven days a week, I had nothing to do but read. I started with racist and anti-Semitic material, but then turned to classical philosophy—Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics. This launched me on a search for truth, starting with the Gospels.

As I was reading the Gospels, my eyes began to be opened to my

sins against God and others. Sins from the past began to come into my mind, and tears of confession and repentance flooded my heart. One night, I got on my knees and prayed a very simple prayer to Jesus, seeking forgiveness and surrendering myself to Him. As I did, something changed deep inside of me.

The next day, I awoke to find that I was spiritually alive, and God was real to me! And I had a strong desire to read the Bible, pray and live for God, which has never left me. The Holy Spirit had given me new birth and a desire to understand Scripture, become more like Jesus, and serve him. He gave me love for black people, Jews and others I had once hated, and good friendships developed.

Are there lessons here for us today? I think so. James says, "The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working" (James 5:16b, ESV), assuming of course that it is grounded in God's will (1 John 5:14-15) and led by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8: 26). This should encourage us to pray even for those who seem least likely to be saved if the Holy Spirit so leads. And we should also ask the Spirit how he would have us pray about the mass shootings and terrorism that plague our land. Who can say what might happen? We serve a miracle-working God who answers prayer, and nothing is impossible for Him! {eo}

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