

Can A Christian Be Oppressed By A Demon?

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"Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete purity because we fear God," 2 Corinthians 7:1.

The Testimony Of God's Word

- † Nowhere is there any passage of Scripture that says directly whether a believer can or cannot be demonized – although there are numerous examples of believers who very much appear to be demonized at one level or another. These include the Apostles Peter (Matthew 16:23), James and John (Luke 9:55, NASB), Judas (Luke 22:3) and Paul (2 Corinthians 12:7). Church members Ananias and Sapphira also appear demonized in Acts 5:1-3.
- † Jesus' deliverance ministry (which comprised about half of His total ministry) was done "among His own people" (John 1:11), including repeatedly in the synagogues (churches) of His day according to Mark 1:21-26, 39, Luke 4:33-36, 13:10-16. This last passage speaks of a woman He delivered of demonic spirits who He called a "daughter of Abraham," i.e., a true believer in the living God (Luke 19:9, Galatians 3:7).
- † Jesus called deliverance the "children's bread," in Matthew 15:21-28, meaning deliverance was given for the children of God – not for pagans and unbelievers.
- † To ensure that Jesus' ministry of deliverance continued, He not only trained His 12 disciples to do it (Mark 3:14-15, Matthew 10:7-8, Luke 9:1), He also trained 70 more of His followers for this same ministry (Luke 10:17). Then in three of the four Gospel accounts of the Great Commission, Jesus commands deliverance ministry to continue in the church (Mark 16:17, Matthew 28:20, John 20:21).
- † According to Philippians 2:12-13, God is "at work in you (believers)," but the salvation spoken of is not completed. It needs to be 'worked out.' The word for 'salvation' in this passage is 'soteria.' Thayers Lexicon gives as the primary meaning of this word "*deliverance from the torment of enemies.*" While we are transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light at salvation, we are also to continue to "work out our deliverance (salvation)" from the torment of the enemies of God who are defeated but not yet vanquished – Satan and his demons.
- † Paul lists as one of the gifts of the Spirit the gift of "distinguishing/discriminating" of spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10). Since the function of the gifts of the Spirit were "to build up the body of Christ," i.e. believers, (1 Corinthians 14:12), it would seem that this gift was in large part given in order to effectively do deliverance among believers.
- † Paul warns believers against giving the devil, literally, "a place inside you," in Ephesians 4:27 through ongoing anger. 1 Corinthians 10:20 warns believers against becoming involved in a "partnership" ("fellowship") with demons, and later warns in 2 Corinthians 11:4 against believers "receiving another spirit," other than the Holy Spirit.
- † And it is sobering that Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Deliver us (believers) from the evil one!" in Matthew 6:13, echoing the deliverance ministry Jesus spent most of His ministry doing!
- † Regarding the oft repeated assertion that, "Demons cannot live together with the Holy Spirit in a believer," there are at least five biblical examples that clearly indicate otherwise. First, God and Satan

speak face to face twice in God's very presence in Job 1-2. Secondly, Jesus speaks face to face with Satan in Matthew 4. Third, the Holy Spirit came upon King Saul and prophesies through him *after* he's become demonized (1 Samuel 19:9, 23). Fourthly, various idols and the idol worship of God's people occupy God's very temple in Ezekiel 8 along with His presence. Fifthly, David writes that even if he "makes his bed" in Sheol, the place of the dead (i.e., farthest place from God; New Testament equivalent to 'hades' or hell), God is still there, according to Psalm 139:8. And of course finally, if God is omnipresent (everywhere present) and if demons can't be together in the presence of God, they would all have had to pack up and head out of the universe (or beyond) somewhere – and they haven't if Jesus told the church to keep doing deliverance ministry!

The Testimony Of Church History

- † According to Paul Thigpen in Discipleship Journal (5/94), "The task of spiritual warfare was taken so seriously by the early church that a special office was developed to deal with it *in the church*. Trained deliverance ministers served on the local church staff alongside presbyters, deacons, and others. *The third century congregation at Rome, for example, employed 52 exorcists to cast out demons!*" It is unlikely that the church in Rome employed these people to minister to the unsaved, rather they would have been hired to minister to the saved, as were the other church staff (presbyters, deacons, pastors, etc.). He continues, "Exorcism was also a part of initiation into the ancient Christian community. Society was so saturated with demonic influences through pagan worship and immorality that those who wished to receive baptism and join the Church were expected to undergo a number of exorcisms to cleanse them spiritually."
- † During the fourth century, Lactantius (c. 240-320) and Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-386) spoke of exorcism as a continuing ministry. In fact, it was so common a part of *church life* that when the apostate emperor Julian wanted to satirize the Christian community, he taunted that, "these two things are the quintessence of their theology – to hiss at demons and to make the sign of the cross."

The Testimony Of Contemporary Christian Experience

- † C. Fred Dickason, whose book, 'Demon Possession and The Christian,' (1987), states... "I have encountered from 1974 to 1987 at least 400 cases of those who were genuine Christians who were also demonized... I would not claim infallible judgment, but I know the marks of a Christian and the marks of a demonized person. I might have been wrong in a case or so, but I can't conceive that I've been wrong in more than 400 cases."
- † For some compelling deliverance testimonies of Christians, see www.stronginspirit.com and click the link "Healed In Heart."