

Can A Christian Be Oppressed By A Demon?

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Raising The Questions

“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.

Can a Christian be attacked, harassed, bothered or otherwise influenced by an evil spirit – or are believers immune from the effects of evil in this world beyond our flesh? Can we be demonized or even possessed – or anything in between? Can the Holy Spirit live in the same body, soul or spirit that a demonic spirit does? All these have become burning questions in recent years – and regrettably, have yielded all manner of different answers from scholars, pastors, church leaders and saints in the pews.

This confusion is real in part because the biblical reality is that no specific passage in God’s Word *directly* states whether any of this is possible or not – the issue is simply never openly addressed in Scripture. A good question to ask at this point would be, *“Why is that so?”*

Now if you would allow me a personal word, let me confess that for most of my Christian life and ministry, I would have not said anything was demonic beyond headline-grabbing serial killers like Charles Manson or Jeffrey Dahmer. Every sin and evil that ranked ‘below that,’ I would have readily consigned to having been produced by the fallen flesh of mankind. The reality was that though I had been a pastor for many years, I had no known, first-hand experience of dealing directly with demonic oppression – although I had more than enough experience with believers who were in bondage to a whole range of sins and strongholds, whose broken hearts still held them chained and who were stuck for years and decades in virtual non-growth modes. In hindsight, I now realize that demonic finger prints were all over those situations, which was largely why little of my prayer, exhortation, biblical advice or counsel seemed to have moved them very far out of those states. Some years ago God began to show me what the real spiritual dynamics were behind these situations, what the lies were that I had believed about them, and to equip me to help become a far more effective catalyst of godly change in people’s lives. It’s been an amazing journey, and it isn’t over yet.

Witnessing The Changes

Before we get to the nuts and bolts of examining what God’s Word says about this subject, let me briefly offer you a few of the fruits of freedom from demonic oppression that I have witnessed.

- † *“My soul is prospering, my life is being transformed, I’m a work in progress – on my way to a Masterpiece I am no longer a victim, I’m not carrying false burdens or false guilt. The disappointments of the past can no longer hide the face of God. I have a measure of peace and freedom I have never known before. There is a lot more room inside me for His presence and His higher purpose since Transformation Ministry.” - W.W.*
- † *“Life seems very different since that day, especially in the realm of not having to do battle all the time with so many voices inside. Other people, who know nothing of my Transformation experience, are telling me they are seeing a positive difference in my life as well. Thanks again!” - Mary*
- † *“I can sure see a difference in my life since Transformation Ministry. I had backslidden after a divorce and it had been a long road back, not because God wasn’t forgiving, but because the devil didn’t want me to return to Him. All I can say is the blood of Jesus won again! I’ve found that the biggest differences are that I’m able to pray more, study God’s Word more and witness more – and I’ve got my joy back again!” - Liz*

Setting The Stage

Before I answer the questions raised earlier, let's first address some foundational issues. According to Gregory Boyd in his book, 'God At War,' "The Greek term 'daimonizomai' means, 'to be acted upon by a demon...or to be demonized.' The term does not mean 'to possess.' This term is too strong, for it denotes total control and even ownership, while 'demonize' admits of a wide variety of degrees (of influence)."

As Chester & Betsy Kylstra, the authors of Restoring The Foundations Manual, helpfully write, "Demonic oppression is the term used to represent the 'pressure' exerted by demons to get us to sin, or to keep us bound in limitations."

Demons apparently seek to live inside people (which is why Jesus always kicked them *out* of people) because it's easier and more effective to influence people from the inside out. Interestingly, God uses the same strategy at salvation when He comes to live inside us! Given that reality, it would make a great deal of sense that Satan would want to send his demonic spirits both into those who are lost in order to keep them that way, as well as into believers in order to keep us defeated, distracted, bound to various kinds of sin, discouraged, confused and deceived about God and His will for our lives. Why? All so that our effectiveness for Him will be largely degraded and we'll do little real harm to Satan and his kingdom. According to 1 John 3:8, Jesus came to do Satan's kingdom a great deal of harm, intending to "*destroy* the works of the devil."

Demons are by nature trespassers, 'illegal squatters' if you will in what really belongs to Jesus Christ by redemption. James gives us a helpful analogy in this case. He asks in 3:11-12, "Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring...?" The question should readily be answered "No, that's impossible." However in the verses immediately preceding this (vs. 8-11), James says that cursing and praising should not come from the same tongue – just like fresh water and salt water should not come from the same source – yet the reality is that they do! As much as we would like it not to be that way, it is. James recognizes the unsettling discrepancy between what we think should be impossible for believers, and the realities of what actually goes on in our lives.

Examining The Word Of God

If you believe in the reality of demons as Scripture does, then you must at least believe that unbelievers can be demonized (Ephesians 2:2). A good question to ask ourselves at this point would be, "*If when I was an unbeliever I was demonized, when did those spirits in me leave? At conversion? At baptism? At first communion? Or not yet – are some, most or all of them still inside me?*"

With that question hanging in our minds, let us now begin with the question of what God's Word says about the possibility of believers being demonized. Consider the following observations...

- † The authors of the Restoring The Foundations Manual write, "The concept of exorcism was well known according to Matthew 12:27, Mark 9:38, Luke 9:49 and Acts 19:13-16. As a result, the writers of the New Testament had no need to lay out the details concerning demonic deliverance for us in the 21st century. They did not know that modern Christians would define demons out of existence and ignore the reality of their presence. In 1 Corinthians 10:18-22, Paul warns *believers* against being in agreement (partnering) with demons. 2 Corinthians 12:7 reminds believers of the potential to be tormented by Satan, particularly if pride is an issue for us."
- † God's Word says that Jesus "came to His own..." (John 1:11). He did not go to surrounding countries or cultures and minister, so when He did deliverance ministry, it was among His own people!
- † According to Mark 1:21-26, 39, Luke 4:33-36, 13:10-13, Jesus went to the *synagogues (churches)* of His day to preach and deliver His own people from demonic spirits – not to pagan temples. In other words, Jesus did deliverance ministry inside the believers gatherings of His day – including for one lady He called a "daughter of Abraham," (Luke 13:16), a description Jesus did not call every Jew

(John 8:29-30), but He used of believing Jews (Luke 19:9, see also Paul's description in Galatians 3:7).

- † Similarly, in Matthew 15:21-28, Jesus refers to His ministry of deliverance as “the children’s bread,” i.e., provision particularly reserved for and given by Him to the *children of God* – not gentiles like the lady here Jesus addresses. As He says, “I was sent only to help the people of Israel...” Therefore, deliverance ministry wasn’t given for the unbelieving world – it was given for God’s own people!
- † In fact on two separate occasions, Jesus referred to spirits that may well have inhabited His whole inner circle comprising 3 of His 12 disciples! In Matthew 16:23 and Mark 8:33, we see one of Jesus’ devoted leaders being involuntarily used by Satan at the very time when he thought he was showing genuine love and care for the Lord. As impossible as it might seem for the evil one to speak through a godly, Christ-loving, well-intentioned person in such circumstances, it happened! Secondly, according to Luke 9:55 (NASB), when James and John wanted fire to come down and burn up an unrepentant village, Jesus said, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are of.” Jesus did not mean “spirit” as in simple ‘attitude,’ He was very aware of the presence of evil and demonic spirits in the world, since He kicked them out of people repeatedly. These were demonic spirits who lived inside these believing followers and leaders of Jesus’ church! But they were not alone, as Judas himself was entered into by Satan as Luke 22:3 clearly describes.
- † In addition, the Apostle Paul himself was tormented by a demonic spirit in 2 Corinthians 12:7 (“messenger” = “angel” – in this case a ‘fallen angel,’ see Revelation 12:7-9) – although there is no clear indication whether the demonic spirit doing the tormenting was inside or outside of Paul.
- † While we normally think of Jesus’ ministry being composed of teaching, preaching and healing, the reality is that He was probably first and foremost a deliverance minister! How do we know that?
 - First, in the gospel of Mark alone, over half of Jesus’ ministry is in doing deliverance, including about a quarter of His healings (Mark 1:39).
 - Secondly, about 25% of His ministry was taken up *specifically* with delivering His people from demonic spirits (including Matthew 4:24, 8:16, 31-32, 9:32-33, 12:22, 17:18; Mark 1:27, 3:10-11, 5:8-13, 7:26; Luke 6:18, 7:21, 11:14, 13:11-17, 13:32).
 - Third, deliverance is referred to as ‘being healed’ with at least one-third of the recorded healings of Jesus including deliverance (Luke 7:21, 8:1-3, 8:35-36) according to Timothy Warner in his book, *Spiritual Warfare*.
 - Fourth, Jesus refers to deliverance as ‘a miracle’ in Mark 9:39. Someone has calculated that about 25% of Jesus’ miracles dealt with deliverance from demonization.
 - Adding all this up means that anytime Jesus healed someone or did a miracle, it may well have involved throwing spirits out of them as well, even if it isn’t specifically stated. So if deliverance ministry specifically comprised about 25% of His ministry, plus at least 33% of Jesus healing ministry, plus perhaps about 25% of His ministry of miracles – then a conservative estimate would be that probably 50% or so of Jesus’ entire ministry dealt with delivering people from demonic spirits.
- † In fact, there are 106 verses (almost all in the New Testament) that directly mention demonic spirits! But Jesus not only practiced the ministry of deliverance, He clearly intended this ministry to continue on past the time of His death and resurrection. To ensure this, He first equipped the 12 disciples to do deliverance according to Mark 3:14-15, Matthew 10:7-8 and Luke 9:1. He then sent out 70 of His followers to heal and do deliverance ministry according to Luke 10:9, 17. Later, in an ever-widening circle, He conferred this ministry on His whole church. In fact, three of the four Gospel accounts of the Great Commission (all except Luke’s) refer implicitly or explicitly to the continuing ministry of deliverance in the church. Jesus implicitly ordered this ministry to continue in The Great Commission of Matthew 28 (vs. 20, “teaching them to obey everything *I have commanded you to do*”), and in the same way in John 20:21 where He stated, “As the Father sent Me, so I send you.” Jesus

was sent by the Father to “destroy the works of the devil,” (1 John 3:8), and one of the main ways He did that was by delivering people from the power and influence of the devil and his demons. We too are to do the same thing because Jesus says we have the same mission given to us that was given to Him. Finally (at the end of the earliest gospel written), Jesus spoke explicitly by asserting that the *first* thing His followers would do from His ascension onward would be throwing out demons. According to Mark 16:17, “These signs will accompany those who believe – they will cast out demons in My Name...” Since Jesus’ deliverance ministry was focused on setting His own people free from demonic influence, it only makes sense He would command and equip His church to do this same ministry as well to set people free.

- † 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 – which are Satan and his demonics. *The truth is that while Satan is defeated, neither he nor his fellow demons have ever surrendered.*
- † The Apostle Paul lists as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit the “distinguishing of spirits,” or discernment (1 Corinthians 12:10). The gifts of the Spirit are meant primarily for the “building up of the body of Christ,” (1 Corinthians 14:12) that is, for saved believers, not the unsaved world. Why would believers need this gift if it was not going to be used largely for discerning the presence of demonic spirits in saved people in the church?
- † Ed Murphy writes in *Wrestling Dark Angels*, “The presence of the Holy Spirit does not, in itself, prevent demonization just as it does not in itself, prevent the Christian from sinning (or being sick). The Holy Spirit will in fact enter the body of a person even if there are demons living there. The Holy Spirit isn’t afraid of the demons – nor do they contaminate Him by their sinfulness anymore than He is contaminated by the sinfulness of the believer’s flesh.” Most likely, the Holy Spirit (Trinity) reside in a person’s born-again spirit, while demonics live in the person’s soul (mind, will and emotions) and body.
- † For those who maintain that God and Satan can’t be together in close proximity, both Satan’s actions in Job 1-2 and Matthew 4 should put that to rest. Theoretically, if demons can’t inhabit a believer, neither should sickness, sin, filthy thoughts, evil intentions or a believer’s flesh be able to inhabit him (Isaiah 53:4). Recall that Jesus declared believers were ‘evil’ (Luke 11:13) because He “knew what was in a man” (John 2:25) – both their flesh and the demonic spirits that He regularly cast out of them!
- † As the Kylstras insightfully observe, “Some Christians have concluded that the Holy Spirit will not co-habit with demons. They believe that, at the moment of salvation when we are born again, the Holy Spirit comes into us and all oppressing demons are forced to leave. Unfortunately, there is no biblical basis for this teaching. In fact the opposite is true. We read in Ezekiel that the presence of God was in the temple with at least four groups of abominations...
 1. Ezekiel 8:5-6 – An Idol named ‘Jealousy.’
 2. Ezekiel 8:7-13 – Elders worshipping idols inside the temple in the dark.
 3. Ezekiel 8:14-15 – Women crying for Tammuz, a Babylonian god who was supposed to die annually and subsequently be resurrected.
 4. Ezekiel 8:16-18 – Twenty five priests with backs toward the temple and faces toward the east, bowing down to the sun god.”
- † Because of their sin in Acts 5:1-3, Ananias and Sapphira opened themselves up to be filled by Satan (as Judas was) – which is probably shorthand for demonic spirits of covetousness, lying and deception. The same is still possible for believers today as well.

- † Jesus demonstrated repeatedly that the only way to get rid of demonic spirits is to throw them out – they will not leave voluntarily, or by being negotiated with, they will not ‘reform,’ or leave by being ignored or turning the other cheek to them – they must be forced to leave by effective command as Jesus always practiced. Therefore if one believed that demons only inhabit unbelievers (Ephesians 2:2), and a given unbeliever gives his life to Christ and becomes a believer – how do those demons he has leave? There is no passage in God’s Word or teaching of Christ that demons leave at conversion or on their own or through any other means other than by being specifically thrown out by authoritative command. Therefore, they would need to be cast out of believers in the same way they would be cast out of unbelievers. As Frank and Ida Hammond write in *Pigs In The Parlor*, “No matter how strong you become as a Christian, the demons you picked up before your conversion will not get discouraged and leave you. Jesus never taught any other way to get rid of demons other than to cast them out in His name (Mark 16:17).”
- † Gregory Boyd writes in his book, ‘God At War’ that, “While there are only four references to exorcisms in the Book of Acts (Acts 5:12,16, 8:7, 16:16-18, 19:13-14) the way they are recorded, combined with the numerous references to exorcism in the post-apostolic church, indicates that exorcism was a standard part of early Christian life. What set the early church and Jesus apart from other exorcists of their day was not that they didn’t practice exorcism, but that they were so successful at it. Hence, the Jewish exorcists were trying to borrow their power by using their ‘formula’ (Acts 19).”
- † The presence of the demonic in the unsaved is clearly alluded to in Ephesians 2:2, “You used to live just like the rest of the world, full of sin, obeying Satan...*he is the spirit at work in the hearts* of those who refuse to obey God.” Since Satan is only a single ‘person/spirit,’ he cannot indwell or “work *in the hearts*” of all unbelievers at once without his demonic hordes being sent into them. Satan’s demons are attracted to sin and disobedience like rats are attracted to garbage. Wherever there is garbage, there will eventually be rats.
- † Boyd goes on to write, “...demonization, as Jesus and the Gospel authors understood it, was not something for which the demonized person was responsible. Nowhere does Jesus imply that the demonization of a person is his or her fault, even in the case of Mary Magdalene, out of whom Jesus cast seven demons (Luke 8:2). As Raymond Brown notes, for Jesus and the Gospel authors, ‘demonization is not so much the result of being in league with Satan as it is an expression of being in bondage under Satan’s dominion.’ The kingdom of God advanced as victims of the kingdom of Satan are freed. Toward the demonized, Jesus never expresses anger, rather He exhibited only compassion. As Langston notes, ‘Pity, rather than anger, characterizes the attitude of Jesus toward the demonized...He treats them as if they were the victims of an involuntary condition.’ Indeed, He treats them as though they are casualties of war, for this is precisely what they are. This observation strongly contradicts an assumption that many Western Christians hold – that matters in the spiritual realm are supposed to be fair. If a person is demonized, it is held that the person must have willed the evil spirit to occupy them. Demonized people, the assumption therefore goes, must be (or at least have been) fundamentally bad people. But just as evil adults can and sometimes do victimize children against their will and God’s will, just as rapists victimize women against their will and against God’s will, and just as despotic political powers victimize their subjects against their will and against God’s will, so demonic spirits can apparently victimize people against their will – and against God’s will. The biblical assumption is that the spiritual realm is not all that different from the physical realm. Indeed, the one is simply a continuation of the other.”
- † Again writes Boyd, “In almost every instance, teaching (or preaching) about the kingdom is mentioned in the same breath as healing or casting out demons are, activities that demonstrate the kingdom. Consider this in Matthew 4:23-24, Mark 3:10-11, Luke 6:17-19, Luke 7:21, Luke 11:20, Matthew 8:16-17, 9:35, Mark 6:54-56, Matthew 12:15, 19:1-2. To proclaim that the Kingdom of

God is near is virtually synonymous with pushing back the kingdom of Satan by freeing people from their sin as well as from demons and disease.”

- † Paul warns us in Ephesians 4:27, “Do not give the devil a foothold.” The Greek word translated “foothold” means “as occupied or filled by any person or thing – a place, a spot, a room. To give place to someone means to make room for them (Luke 14:9). It is used of a place where something is kept *in*, such as a sword in a sheath or scabbard,” (The Complete Word Study Dictionary). This clearly indicates that through anger (and certainly like-minded sins such as rage, unforgiveness and bitterness), we can ‘make a place or a room inside us’ for demons to live in and torment us according to Paul!
- † 1 Corinthians 10:20 Paul warns *believers* not to partner or become friends with (from ‘koinonia,’ ‘have fellowship with’) demonic spirits.
- † Paul later warns in 2 Corinthians 11:4 against receiving (into themselves), “another spirit” other than the Holy Spirit, indicating the clear possibility that a Christian’s sin could invite demons into their lives (Galatians 3:1 may relate to this as well).
- † Finally, it is very sobering that Jesus taught His disciples a prayer that most Christians repeat every Sunday which includes the phrase asking God to “deliver us (*believers*) from the evil one!” That echoes exactly what Jesus did for His people, delivering them from the evil one by kicking his evil spirits out of them – accounting for perhaps half of His ministry. Therefore, you have probably unwittingly already asked God to be delivered from the demons Jesus set others free from! Based on that prayer, God may well be directing you to a deliverance minister/ministry so that that can be done for you.

The Testimony Of The Early Church

- † Jesus’ ministry of deliverance was strongly continued in the early church (Mark 16:17). The following are some of their testimonies...
 - Irenaeus – Against Heresies, Book II, 32:4 (190 A.D.), “For some Christians do certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe and join themselves to the church.”
 - Justin Martyr – Second Apology, Ch. 6 (153 A.D.), “And now you (spoken to the Roman Senate) can learn this from what is under your own observation. For numberless demoniacs throughout the whole world, and in your city, many of our Christian men exorcising them in the Name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, have healed and do heal, rendering helpless and driving the demons out of men, though they could not be cured by all the other exorcists, and those who used incantations and drugs.”
 - Justin Martyr – Dialogue With Trypho, a Jew, Ch. 30 (150 A.D.), “For we call Him (Jesus) Helper and Redeemer, the power of whose name even the demons do fear; and at this day, when they are exorcised in the Name of Jesus Christ, they are overcome.”
 - Dialogue With Trypho, Ch. 76, “And now we, who believe on our Lord Jesus, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, when we exorcise all demons and evil spirits, have them subjected to us.”
 - Dialogue With Trypho, Ch. 85, “For every demon, when exorcised in the Name of this very Son of God...is overcome and subdued. But though you exorcise any demon in the name of any of those who were amongst you – either kings, righteous men, or prophets or patriarchs – it will not be subject to you. Now assuredly your (Jewish) exorcists, I have said, make use of this craft when they exorcise, even as the Gentiles do, and employ fumigations and incantations.”
 - Tertullian – To Scapula, Ch. 4, “The clerk of one of the courts who was liable to be thrown upon the ground by an evil spirit, was set free from his affliction (by Christians); as was also the relative

- of another, and the little boy of a third. How many men of rank (to say nothing of common people) have been delivered from demons, and healed of diseases?”
- Minucius Felix – The Octavius of Minucius Felix (210 A.D.), “A great many, even some of your own people, know all those things that the demons themselves confess concerning themselves, as often as they are driven by us (Christians) from bodies by the torments of our words and by the fires of our prayer.” (The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. IV, p. 190).
 - Against Celsus, Book I, Ch. 67, “And the Name of Jesus can still remove distractions from the minds of men, and expel demons, and also take away diseases and produce a complete change of character...”
 - Lactentius – The Divine Institutes, Book II, 16 (250-320 A.D.), “But they (demons) fear the righteous, that is, the worshipers of God, adjured by whose name they depart from the bodies (of people); for being lashed by the Christians’ words, they not only confess to be demons, but even utter their own names.” Deliverance is also mentioned in Book V, Ch. 22, and in The Epitome of the Divine Institutes, Chapter 51.
 - Cyril of Jerusalem – Catechetical Lecturer, 16:12 (350-375 A.D.) wrote, “For He (the Holy Spirit) employs the tongue of one man for wisdom; the soul of another He enlightens by prophecy, to another He gives power to drive away demons...”
- † According to Paul Thigpin 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 ministers of deliverance 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 (who would have largely rejected them), 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 (deliverance) to cleanse them spiritually. According to Christian writers such as Hippolytus (c. 170-236), Cyril of Jerusalem (c.315-386), and Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350-428) a special anointing was also given just before baptism to exorcise the devil’s influences *from the new converts*.”
 - † According to John Wimber in Power Healing (pg. 130), “The early church performed the rite of Christian exorcism on all new converts and believers, both infant and adult. Hippolytus (c. 170-236 A.D.), perhaps the most important third century theologian of the Roman Church, wrote a treatise entitled the ‘Apostolic Tradition.’ In it he encouraged candidates for church membership to be exorcised by their god-parents *at the end of each weekly instruction by their teacher and immediately before baptism by their bishop*.”
 - † According to Gregory Boyd in his book, ‘God At War,’ “The success of Christian exorcism (deliverance), as opposed to the spotty success of their contemporaries, was one of the strongest selling points of Christianity in the ancient world. As Adolf von Harnack observed, ‘It was as exorcisers that Christians went out into the great world, and exorcism formed one very powerful method of their mission and message.’”
 - † From the Restoring The Foundations manual, “It is a testimony to the powerful results of deliverance by Jesus and His followers that the ministry of deliverance was continued by the early church fathers, including Justin Martyr, Origen, Cyprian, Tertullian and Hippolytus. Justin Martyr, who was martyred in 165 A.D. recorded these words, ‘Many of our Christian men have exorcised in the name of Jesus...numberless demoniacs through the whole world and in your city. When all other exorcists and specialists in incantations and drugs failed, they have healed them and still do heal,

rendering the demons impotent and driving them out.’ Both the power and the practice were passed on in the first several centuries of the early church.”

- † 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.” We will now consider the testimony of contemporary ministry experience.

The Testimony Of Contemporary Experience

- † Christian teacher Timothy Warner wrote in *Spiritual Warfare*, “Sometimes the argument is raised that, ‘since my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, an evil spirit cannot also be in my body.’ This thinking is based on the law that two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time. The fallacy with the argument is that spirits do not occupy space. *Furthermore, if God and an evil spirit cannot be at the same place at the same time, then given the omnipresence of God, demons cannot be anywhere!* Just as there are degrees of relationship to the Holy Spirit ranging from the ‘worldly’ Christians of 1 Corinthians 3 to the mature, fruitful servant of Christ so there are degrees of relationship to Satan and demons as well.”
- † Dr. Kurt Koch (a Lutheran psychologist in Germany) wrote extensively in his book, ‘Christian Counseling & Occultism,’ about how he ministered deliverance to church people throughout the churches of Europe from the 1940’s into the 1970’s. Dr. Koch wrote, “In the history of the church, especially in medieval times, an astounding number of cases of demonization appear (Pg. 248).”
- † More recently, *Global Prayer Digest* (3/17/05) reports, “India Gospel Outreach reports that there is great openness to the gospel in Bihar. In 2003, their Messengers of Peace team received a warm welcome for their gospel message, and in one night’s meeting saw more than 1,000 people experience deliverance from demonic oppression as they committed their lives to Christ.”
- † Again, *Global Prayer Digest* (3/20/05) reports, “Started under the leadership of Dr. Lall of Allahabad, over 10,000 Dalits and backward castes now attend services each Sunday in the Indian providence of Uttar Pradesh. One man said he started coming several weeks earlier when Jesus healed his brother. Another says he comes every Sunday for a spiritual touch from Jesus. People who were demonized waited to be delivered, and the ill wait to be healed.”
- † In his book, ‘Deliver Us From Evil,’ Don Basham reports that a well known Christian teacher, Derek Prince reported to him how he commanded a demonic spirit of anger out of himself, as a longtime believer. He went on to state, “I’d estimate that 95% of the people who I have watched receive genuine, lasting deliverance are sincere, believing Christians – before their deliverance as well as after.”
- † Writes Gregory Boyd, “The terrorizing characteristics exhibited by the child (Mark 9:14-30) and by the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:1-20) are typical of demonizations and deliverances as they were understood throughout the ancient world. For that matter, they are typical of cases of demonizations and deliverances reported throughout the world today. Experiences of radically demonized people having sporadic supernatural strength, becoming mouthpieces for demons, convulsing on the ground, foaming at the mouth, becoming stiff and rigid, and so on, were frequent in ancient times and are common on the mission field today. *Indeed, the relative absence of such phenomena in our culture over the last several hundred years has been something of a historical anomaly, though even our culture seems to be experiencing more of these phenomena in recent years.*”
- † According to the *Restoring The Foundations* manual, “As we addressed the demons of deception (in Sandy), the Holy Spirit opened Sandy’s eyes and allowed her literally to see them. She gasped, ‘There

are thousands of them, all flowing together, intermeshed, holding onto each other. I've never seen so many demons in my life!" Sandy is a born-again believer.

- † Julia Mason, a woman I know who speaks to various groups of Christians wrote in an email dated April 7, 2004, "I was asked to minister at a church in Los Angeles. As I began to pray for the people...the first young woman that I called up began yelling at me as I prayed for her, "Stop it! Stop praying that!" I commanded the demonic spirit that was manifesting to leave her and her body went limp and she began to weep. She went through an inner healing that night and later told me that something in her wanted to stand up and hurt me physically but she said she had no strength to do it. I explained to her that that was the demonic spirit in her that did not want to lose her. She understood and was very grateful."
- † According to Sadhu Chellappa of AGNI Ministries (Friday Fax #10, 2002), "Solomon's parents had only recently turned from Hinduism to Jesus, and had joined a Christian church. Their 5-year-old son was very ill – among other symptoms, his liver had been damaged, and blood often ran out of his mouth and nose. Several doctors had given up hope of curing him. One even said, 'Only God can help Solomon.' The following night Solomon saw Jesus come to his bedside to send the spirits of infirmity away which had been torturing him. The following morning, he was completely healed. 'A growing number of people experience Jesus in this way,' reports Sadhu Chellappa."
- † 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."
- † Charles Kraft, former missionary and Professor at Fuller Seminary has written in Deep Level Healing, "I have over 600 such cases in my own experience (of delivering Christians), and every person I know of who has actually worked with demonized people agrees." Again as Dickason writes, "...we must note that those who deny that Christians can be demonized generally are those who have not had counseling experience with the demonized. Their stance is largely theoretical."
- † Neil T. Anderson writes from www.crosswalk.com (4/10-13/01), "A common misconception is that Christians aren't subject to demon activity. The prevailing belief among evangelicals today is that Christians cannot be severely oppressed by demons. Even the suggestion that demonic influence can be part of the problem often prompts the hasty disclaimer, 'Impossible! I'm a Christian!' Nothing has done greater damage to diagnosing spiritual problems than this untruth. If Satan can't touch the church, why are we instructed to put on the armor of God, to resist the devil, to stand firm, and to be alert? If we aren't susceptible to being wounded or trapped by Satan, why does Paul describe our relationship to the powers of darkness as a wrestling match? Those who deny the enemy's potential for destruction are the most vulnerable to it."
- † Again Mr. Anderson writes (12/13/00), "I was conducting a conference for the leadership of one of America's flagship churches. I asked the 165 leaders present if they had ever experienced a direct encounter with something they knew was demonic, such as a frightening presence in their room or an evil voice in their mind. 95% answered yes. I went one step further to ask how many had been frightened by something pressing on them that they couldn't immediately respond to physically. At least a third raised their hand. Our research suggests that 50% of Christian kids have encountered an evil presence in their rooms. In fact, most of my students at seminary have had such an experience, and by the time they complete my class on resolving spiritual conflicts, several tell about having such an experience that semester."
- † Jim Engli, writing in Cell Church Magazine, Fall 1999, said "Demons are just as real in little country churches in America as they are in Africa. In Africa they work *overtly*. In North America, they operate *covertly*. But their intent is the same – to destroy lives, marriages and churches."

- † C.S. Lewis wrote in the Screwtape Letters, “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils (demons). One is to disbelieve their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.” The former view is illustrated by the dominant mainline Protestant view widely held today which was proposed by Fredrich Schliermacher – that the devil is only an idea or a poetic construct. Mainline denominations have more or less held to the Schliermachian view since Salem, Mass., when it was said that, “those who believe in demons are foolish.” In more recent years, ‘demons’ have been ‘demythologized’ by Rudolph Bultmann and other theologians into being equivalent to what we today term ‘mental illness,’ nothing more. However, the demonic spirits that Jesus dealt with had all the marks of personality – mind, will, emotions, ability to speak, etc. – unlike an illness, an idea or mere poetry.
- † Writes Micharel Fackerell, “It was a major breakthrough for me when I discovered that demons were really at work in my life, and the lives of others around me, and that I *could* get free of them by applying the principles of God’s Word. Any Christian who learns to cast out demons will be far more effective in their service for the Lord. Certainly it helped me to get free of many negative features in my personality, which I had thought were ‘just me.’ It cleared the way for my faith to effectually operate in the gifts of healing. As a result of this, I have been able to make more impact as a witness of Jesus Christ than would have been possible otherwise.”

I can testify after pastoring for 20 years, in the mainline, evangelical and charismatic circles of Christianity that in the last decade, I have personally ministered deliverance to hundreds of people who were converted, baptized, confessing believers in Jesus Christ. I have yet to be asked to minister deliverance to a believer in whom I found no demonic spirits. But I have not only cast them out of others, I have also undergone Transformation Ministry for myself and have sensed them leave me. I have also asked others to join with me in commanding them out of me from time to time as well – each time to a successful and victorious conclusion!

For some compelling deliverance testimonies of Christians I have helped through Transformation Ministry, please see www.stronginspirit.com and click the link, “Healed In Heart.”

Conclusion – How About Me?

Ed Murphy writes in Wrestling Dark Angels, “There is not a single verse of God’s Word that states that true believers cannot under any circumstances become demonized.”

Because of a biblical misunderstanding of exactly what occurred at their spiritual rebirth, many Christians believe that they are somehow immune, or instantly free, from the strongholds, bondages and curses that accumulated during decades of living sinful lives. But it is dangerous to assume that Satan and his demons have some kind of ‘hands-off’ policy toward believers – because in fact, believers are the very objects of Satan’s wrath and demonic attack. Wouldn’t you want to neutralize and shut down the people who could do you the most harm (John 10:10)? In fact, the truth that Christians can be demonized is one of Satan’s best kept secrets in the western world!

It is sobering to realize that a divinely chosen, anointed, spiritually transformed King Saul was regularly tormented by a demon, and even after his demonic experiences, the Spirit of God came upon Saul, prophesying through him, (1 Samuel 19:9, 23)! Scripture knows no doctrine of “the Holy Spirit and demons can’t reside together.”

The effect of demons in a believer’s life is usually in one or more areas of their personality – not over the whole person. A good analogy would be the city of Chicago in the 1930’s. While Chicago had a functioning mayor and police force, it was nevertheless very clear that the Mafia ran certain portions of the city, areas the mayor and police exercised little control over. In the same way, although a believer confesses Jesus Christ to be Lord of his life, it’s very possible that certain areas of his life may be more under the influence and power

of demonic spirits than their Savior, i.e., areas of inflamed jealousy, lust, anger, fear, ongoing illnesses, condemnation, compulsive ungodly habits, etc.

It's helpful to know that Jesus threw demons not only out of people who were grossly and overtly demonized (Mark 5:8-9) but also out of people who were not affected by demons to any such dramatic degree (Mark 1:32-34, 39). The people being delivered there were orthodox, religious Jews – not Satan-worshipping idolatrous heathen – or their modern day equivalent – drug-abusing, sexually-immoral heavy rockers into witchcraft and violence! In the same way, lots of ordinary believers need deliverance from evil spirits – spirits which are producing conditions in them like fear, doubt, condemnation and sickness.

Religious excuses like the Jews of Jesus' day used such as, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves to anyone. How can you say, 'You will be made free,'" (John 8:33) turn out to be the modern day equivalent of, "I'm a believer, I can't have a demon in me!" We need to be made *really* free by Jesus, not just theoretically free, or 'free' because we have a doctrine that tells us we are free, while our lives lack much of the promised peace, love, joy and power of God (Acts 1:8, John 14:12, Romans 14:17, 1 Corinthians 2:3-4).

The general rule of thumb is that if despite self-discipline, prayer and meditation or study of the Word, a spiritual or relational problem of some sort fails to be resolved, it is most likely a case requiring deliverance from evil spirits. Many sincere Christians use a lot of energy suppressing tendencies that are due to demons which could (and should) be cast out – but will never leave voluntarily!

When the possibility of the demonization of Christians is denied, the old sin nature becomes the 'whipping boy' for all your unresolved problems and issues. These problems are supposedly due to your 'lack of commitment or surrender' to Christ, but all they do is produce large quantities of guilt and condemnation at your failings (which is precisely the enemy's plan). Worse, repeated sins may eventually get labeled "addictions," which either create despair or license for more. Then, psychology, mental health programs, and even the use of psychotic drugs are usually sought and relied upon to help 'sanctify' believers – instead of the freeing ministry of Jesus Christ in doing what He did in the gospels – deliver His people from the sick, evil influences of indwelling spirits in their lives. In this way, a spiritual problem of evil is being treated in a psychological or medical way – which is like trying to build a house with dental tools instead of carpentry tools. But you cannot 'hope a house up,' it must be built.

If you have never heard that a believer can be demonized, or sit in a church or under leadership who teach that it is impossible, your demons will never be challenged and will continue to be given legal ground to stay in you (1 Timothy 4:1). Then you are left open to be snared into religious deception by angels of light, never fully experiencing the "abundant life" Jesus promised His followers – even through well-meaning people with the best of intentions.

So let's ask the question now – do you have a demon (or demons – they normally come in 'teams') exercising influence and power over you in some area of your life? According to Don Basham in *Deliver Us From Evil*, you can get a pretty good idea if you're demonized by considering the following points...

1. The modern term 'hang up' may be descriptive of demonic activity. Are you stuck at a point in your spiritual development? Is the problem subject to prayer, Bible study, fellowship and obedience? If not, you should at least consider demons as a cause.
2. If you ever feel compelled to commit destructive acts, it may be that an evil spirit is at work.
3. An especially strong negative reaction to the idea of deliverance should raise the question, where does this reaction come from? Certainly there are realistic questions about this ministry – but are they based on realism or are they coming from another source – perhaps the demons themselves (who will do anything to keep from being thrown out!).

Whatever is holding you back, or down, Jesus wants to set you free!

According to Ed Murphy in *Wrestling Dark Angels*, "Demonized people are often defeated, disturbed or obsessed in four primary sin areas of life...

1. Illicit sexual practices or fantasies.

2. Deep-seated anger, bitterness, hatred, rage, unforgiveness and rebellion, often leading to damaging and/or self-destructive impulses.
3. A sense of rejection, guilt, poor self-esteem, unworthiness or shame.
4. A strange attraction to the occult and to the spirit world, often with a desire for illicit power over their circumstances and other people.

The evidence that I have presented here goes far beyond the bounds of “a reasonable doubt,” the standard that courts in our country use to determine what is true. From compelling biblical evidence through church history and contemporary experience, the resounding conclusion is that Christians can and do become demonized and need deliverance for it *and there is no passage of Scripture that indicates otherwise*. Indeed, the whole tenor of Scripture is summed up in the very prayer of Jesus, to “deliver us from the evil one!” Amen and amen!

A Personal Note

I know for myself that there were many years that I was ‘stuck’ at a mediocre level of faith, in my overall spiritual growth, and in sins that seemed to get the best of me – until I experienced deliverance and healing of painful experiences from the past. But now, having gone through Transformation Ministry myself, having put both my children through it to get them free, having put hundreds of confessing, Bible-believing, church-attending believers through Transformation Ministry in the last decade, I’ve seen with my own eyes and experienced in my own life the often radical, life-changing difference Jesus Christ still makes by kicking out demons and healing inner wounds. I witness and testify that while still far from perfect in every area, I am far freer, more at peace, more focused, far stronger and far less hassled in my life and heart than I have been at anytime in my life, ever.

The choice of what you do with your life is yours – but you only have two choices as a believer – either become more like Jesus Christ, or become more like the city of Chicago in the 1930’s where the Mafia ran parts of the city in spite of a legitimate government set over it by the voters. Of those two options, you will like one much better than the other – I guarantee that because I know and have witnessed the difference myself!

And recognize this – the main thing holding you back from getting free inside is not your shameful past or your silly pride (though Satan will use both), it is the demonic spirits themselves who will whisper anything into your mind to keep you from getting them kicked out! They hate you and want to destroy you (John 10:10). I’ve seen them get the best of many believers through the fears and lies they’ve spoken into their minds to keep them away from Transformation Ministry and the freedom and abundant life Jesus promised.

The bottom line is this – Jesus or Chicago during the 1930’s. Which do you want to become like – which *are* you becoming like? I encourage you, stop living out your history and begin living out your destiny because that is where the joy is – it sure isn’t in Chicago!

Can A Christian Be Oppressed By A Demon?

Pastor Bruce Koester



www.stronginspirit.com

“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 demonics.
- † Paul lists as one of the gifts of the Spirit the gift of “distinguishing/discerning” 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 prophecies 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 Thigpin 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.”