

Dealing With Demonic

Pastor Bruce Koester – Strong In Spirit Ministries



www.stronginspirit.com

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The Question – How Much Respect Should We Show Demons?

The question is often raised about how a believer or deliverance minister should deal with demonic spirits. The short answer for this, as in everything, is “like Jesus did.” In this case, about 25% of His ministry dealt with kicking demonic spirits out of people.

One of the questions that is often raised in any such discussion is how ‘deferentially or respectfully’ we should treat demonic spirits we encounter. Any such discussion often comes to involve two related passages of Scripture that are habitually both misunderstood and misapplied. They are...

“Even the archangel, Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you’” Jude 9 (NIV).

“This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings...” 2 Peter 2:10 (NIV).

The Answer – As Much As They Deserve

According to Gregory Boyd in his book, **God At War**, “Beliar or Belial is frequently mentioned in Jewish literature (and by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:15) as an alternative name of Satan. The root meaning of the word is...‘worthlessness.’” I would certainly agree with that assessment of Satan and then add the obvious conclusion that that description naturally extends to the essential nature of his fellow fallen angels (demons) as well. This should go a long way to determine what they deserve from us as unredeemable, unremittably evil, worthless creatures who are God’s enemies, not made in His image and are ultimately damned to the abyss and the lake of fire.

People often draw from Jude 9 and 2 Peter 2:10-12 that we should treat demons deferentially and with great respect, but that is not what these passages are teaching at all. I believe this is true for the following reasons...

- † To fully understand these passages, we must first look at the context in which they were written. When we read a few verses before and after each of the verses, we find out that the people both Jude and Peter are rebuking are not faithful ministers of the gospel, but arrogant, willful, self-appointed ministers who are walking in great disobedience to Christ and may well not even be saved at all! Jude compares these ‘deliverance ministers’ to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (vs. 7), describing them as “dreamers who pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings...” (vs. 8) and “speak abusively against whatever they do not understand.” Finally, Jude lowers the boom and concludes in vs. 11, “Woe to them, they have taken the way of Cain...Balam...Korah...” and in vs. 12,

finishes off with, “they are blemishes...” If you look at 2 Peter 2:10-12, you will find this same type of description, the bottom line of which is this: These men are condemned because they didn’t respect anyone – neither God, nor man nor angels. The point of Jude and Peter’s teaching is not that we should treat demons with greater deference and respect – but that we should not be like these false believers who are disobedient, arrogant people!

- † The second reason Jude and Peter are not telling us to respect evil, or treat it ‘politely,’ is because they are telling us not to slander (which is to lie or bring a false accusation or charge against) a spiritual being. In fact, the Greek word for ‘slandorous accusation’ is “blasphēmia,” which, as you already guessed, is the word for blasphemy! No deliverance minister or saint should need to resort to blasphemy to deliver God’s people from the power of Satan! Saints don’t work to help set people free by the pronouncing of blasphemy or lies – it is done by the power and truth of God. When we call a demon a liar or a thief, it’s nothing more than Jesus already said about Satan in John 8:44 or 10:10. In fact, it’s the truth. If we even call them ‘idiots’ (for instance) it’s little more than Jesus calling His people ‘sheep,’ which is spiritual shorthand for ‘spiritually dimwitted and stupid,’ (i.e., a bit of an idiot). Demons are pure evil, people are not, we are made in God’s image, they are not. If we sometimes act like idiots (sheep) for being spiritually slow and dull (Matthew 13:15, 15:16), then demonic spirits are idiots for sure for rebelling against God in heaven as Revelation 12 describes. That accusation is no slander; that is a true and honest evaluation!
- † Thirdly, even though Michael is a high ranking archangel who is greatly powerful, he doesn’t rank as high as man does in God’s hierarchy. David acknowledges that in Psalm 8:4-5, where he writes, “What is man that You take thought of him...Yet You have made him a little lower than God...You make him rule over the works of Your hands (i.e., angels, both godly and fallen), You have put *all things* under his feet” (NASB). This means both angels and Satan are to be “under our feet” (Genesis 1:26, Luke 10:19). In addition, angels are not made in the image of God, but man is. In fact, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:3 that the saints will judge angels on the last day! So, although Michael may have treated Satan somewhat gingerly, that does not mean this method of treating fallen angels extends beyond his lower class of being (angels) to how the higher ranked saints are to deal with the enemy.
- † Fourthly, both Peter and Jude are likely alluding to unsaved and/or arrogant believers who felt they could deliver people from demons with their self-important swagger, threatening, intimidating, bellicose and vile in rudeness – by ‘going off unhinged’ at them and the like. No passage of Scripture teaches that. That’s a very poor, not to mention unbiblical deliverance ‘technique,’ to say the least! These godless men were like the seven sons of Sceva in Acts 19:13-20, people who did not have authority over Satan or demons and who are disconnected from Christ.
- † Fifthly, note that Michael *did* dispute with Satan in Jude 9, he just didn’t lie or slander him – because lies are not God’s language, it’s the devil’s (John 8:44). Michael did in fact directly confront the enemy, but he did not stand on his own merit or authority, but on the Lord’s (as we also should). In addition, the archangel Michael who was created on the same level as Lucifer was, did not have authority to rebuke the devil in the dispute about Moses’ body. Michael was on an assignment and stood firm in taking the body of Moses as the Lord dictated, but left to Him to judge (i.e. rebuke). While he doesn’t have authority over Lucifer, believers do (Luke 10:19).

- † Finally, the people both Jude and Peter describe were not involved in deliverance ministry anyway – which is the work Jesus both gifted and commanded His disciples to do in Matthew 10:8, Luke 9:1 and Mark 16:17. This work is close to Jesus’ heart and mission as it was prophetically described about Him that He would, “Heal the brokenhearted and set the captives free” (Isaiah 61:1-3, Luke 4:18-19). Demons certainly help cause broken heartedness in relationships and bondage to sin, fear and strongholds as they carry out their master’s work to “steal, kill and destroy,” John 10:10.

For all these reasons I believe it becomes clear that neither deliverance ministers nor any other saints of God’s need to refrain from addressing Satan’s demons truthfully and boldly, or need to treat them respectfully in any way. Jesus certainly didn’t – He commanded them out of people all the time – and instant eviction shows little in the way of concern or deferential treatment!

While we should certainly be cognizant of the reality of their spiritual power and mission to destroy people’s lives, we have no need to fear or respect their persons or rank (since “He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world,” 1 John 4:4). Again, it would certainly be foolish to attack demonic spirits in our own flesh with prideful swagger or reckless and foolish verbiage. Finally, let us not think that we’re invulnerable to their lies, powers to tempt or harass, and then underestimate the power of such counter-attacks. However, if we do deliverance as Jesus did (and as He commanded us to), then we shall certainly help eradicate evil and many of its destructive effects from people’s lives – and that is always a good and godly thing! As Jesus taught His followers to pray, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done...deliver us from evil.” He does, usually through the kind of deliverance ministry He Himself practiced and gave to the church.

Conclusion

Finally, for those who believe that Christians should be above all circumspect, nice creatures who wouldn’t hurt a fly or call anyone a name – and apply those characteristics to our interactions with the enemy – please consider the following points.

1. Jesus didn’t live that way – He called a spade a spade (Matthew 23), and was so ‘un-nice’ to people that He was murdered for it. You don’t kill nice people.
2. We are in a spiritual war (Ephesians 6:12), and passivity and niceness don’t get soldiers very far on either the physical or the spiritual battlefield.
3. According to Colossians 2:15, God made a ‘public display’ of the evil powers, holding them up to public derision and ridicule. The New Living Bible translates it this way, “...He shamed them publicly by His victory over them on the cross.” The Bible Background Commentary says, “On ‘rulers and authorities’ in Colossians 2:8, Paul used a word that could mean ‘take as a prisoner of war;’ here the cosmic powers themselves are shown off as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession, an image familiar to Romans and presumably known to others throughout the Empire. In Roman triumphs, the general dressed as the chief god Jupiter and led behind him humiliated captives, stripped of their possessions; prominent captives were the most impressive.” Here Christ displays His triumph over the most prominent captives possible (the entire demonic realm), in a highly ‘disrespectful’ way!
4. In Psalm 2, we read that His Father “laughs...scoffs...holds them in derision” at the ungodly kings of nations who refuse to obey Him. How much more would He do so with

those who stood in His very presence and served Him at one time, but later turned their backs on Him, attacked Him in heaven and have continued to do so ever since on earth!

5. Finally, note how saints in the Bible called people disrespectful names – because they were true! Both Jesus and John the Baptist called the Pharisees a bunch of poisonous snakes (Matthew 3:7, 23:33). Jesus called King Herod a fox (Luke 13:32), which was probably not meant as a compliment, and later called the Pharisees hypocrites, blind guides and whitewashed tombs (Matthew 23). Years later, the Apostle Paul called the Judaizers ‘dogs’ (Philippians 3:2) and wished the agitators at Galatia would go ahead and castrate themselves (Galatians 5:12). All this goes to show that God’s Word, while wholesome and not crude, is also not Pollyanna or as ‘religiously appropriate’ as we might think (or want) it to be.

For all these reasons, I believe we should treat demonic spirits with the level of respect that they deserve from God’s people – none. Their nature of pure, unredeemable evil and work of unrelenting attacks making billions of people miserable on planet earth render them fully as ‘worthless’ as Paul himself describes their leader to be!