

"SPIRITUAL WARFARE"¹

INTRODUCTION: Today many claim the power to cast out demons. Many also declare that Christians can be "demonized" i.e. have demons inside of them that need to be cast out. **I believe this is totally unbiblical!** Here are some general observations on this subject:

1. **"BINDING & LOOSING."** (Mt. 12:29; 18:18-20). This has nothing to do with people running around trying to boss Satan & demons. "While Jesus did say the strong man must be bound in Mt. 12, this happens by the arrival of God's more powerful kingdom...this (figure of speech) in no way instructs believers to change the world through verbal rebuke" (Eric Villanueva, "*Territorial Spirits & Spiritual Warfare: A Biblical Perspective.*" CRI Journal, summer, 1992, p. 39). The Mt. 18 passage is talking about church discipline, encouraging church leaders not to fear disciplining disobedient believers! Eph. 6:12 does talk about battling with Satan & the powers of darkness, **but notice it's an external warfare.** The armor is to protect you from attacks from *OUTSIDE*, not inside! Daniel 10:10-13 talks about spiritual warfare. **But it was fought in heaven, NOT on earth, & involved two angels and a demon, NOT humans!** Daniel was not involved in the battle at all!
2. **TERRITORIAL (REGIONAL) & GENERATIONAL SPIRITS.** Dan. 10 does give some support to the idea that certain demons are set over areas. But there is nothing anywhere that teaches that believers are to talk to demons, rebuke them, etc. We should pray to God and He and His angelic hosts will battle them in the heavenly places. The idea that "generational" (i.e. ancestral) spirits can pass down to you through your relatives, is unbiblical. Five verses are often quoted in support of this idea: Ex. 20:5; 34:7; Lev. 26:39; Num. 14:18 & Jer. 32:18. However no one ever seems to point out that **later on in the Bible God makes it clear that every person is responsible for their own sins (Dt. 24:16 cf. II Kings 14:6; Ezek. 18:2; Jer. 31:29). In other words, they can't blame their ancestors!** In addition, the Bible *NEVER* says that the phrase "visiting of sins" on children & grandchildren means that they will have demons inside of them! Those verses refer rather to the fact that sinful habits & behaviours by earlier generations can be picked up by younger generations, who then copy those same sinful habits (e.g. II Kings 17:40-41)!
3. **ARGUMENTS BY SPIRITUAL WARFARE ADVOCATES.** People like Neil Anderson, Mark Bubeck, C. Fred Dickason, C. Peter Wagner & John Wimber attempt to show that the Bible teaches that Christians can be demonized. **IT DOES NOT!** Even some of *them* admit that the evidence is not conclusive (see below). Some of their examples include:
 - a. **King Saul** (I Sam. 16:23; 18:10; 19:9). **Answer:** (1) **It's unclear whether Saul was even a true believer!**, (2) Even if Saul was a believer, it doesn't mean believers today can be demon possessed, **since the Holy Spirit did NOT permanently indwell OT believers, as He does NT believers (I Cor. 6:19; II Cor. 6:16; Eph. 1:13; 4:30)**, (3) The Hebrew text says the evil spirit came *UPON* Saul, it is *never* said to have entered *into* Saul.
 - b. **The Woman Bent Double** (Lk. 13:10-17). **Answer:** (1) Her being called a daughter of Abraham doesn't mean she was a believer, but simply that she was a Jew, (2) It says she attended synagogue, but lots of synagogue attendees weren't true believers! e.g. the Scribes & Pharisees, (3) It's unclear whether the woman was even demon possessed-she may have simply had a sickness.
 - c. **The Christian's Armor** (Eph. 6:10-17). **Answer:** Yes, we are in a battle, but it's *external, not internal!* The armor is for fighting attacks from the outside!
- d. **Ananias & Sapphira** (Acts 5:1-11). **Answer:** The statement "*Why hath Satan filled thine heart...*" **does not necessarily indicate demonization.** Peter was simply saying, "why did you listen to Satan's

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¹ Compiled by: Rev. Mike Edwards, Baptist Chaplain., Univ. of Goroka, Papua New Guinea, 7 Feb. 1998, revised, Sept. 2006 & Oct. 2013. **Recommended Reading:** Thomas Ice & Robert Dean, "*Overrun by Demons,*" (Harvest House Publishers: Eugene, Oregon, 1990); John MacArthur, "*How to Meet the Enemy,*" (Victor Books: Wheaton, Illinois, 1992); Gil Rugh, "*Demonization of the Believer-An Unbiblical Teaching Exposed,*" (Indian Hills Community Church, 1000 South 84th St., Lincoln, Nebraska, 1994); Alex Konya, "*Demons: A Biblically Based Perspective*" (Regular Baptist Press: Schaumburg, Illinois, 1990).

deception and lies?" There is no need to read anything more into it than that! Alexander comments: "*Filled thy heart!...this influence is never represented as coercive (compelling), but as persuasive and resistible (James 4:7)*"(J.A. Alexander, *Acts*, p. 189). MacArthur: "(Though Ananias)...was surely strongly tempted by Satan (v.3), the responsibility for the sin rested on Ananias... The Bible nowhere places the blame for a Christian's sin on Satan" (MacArthur, *Acts* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1994], p. 154).

- e. Even Dickason (a diehard spiritual warfare advocate) admits: "**we cannot conclusively say that the Bible clearly presents evidence that believers may be demonized.**" (Dickason, "*Demon Possession & the Christian*" [Chicago: Moody Press, 1987], p. 127)

4. **THE TRUE BIBLICAL TEACHING ON DEMONIZATION.** Here are some reasons why I believe Christians can NEVER be "*demonized*" or "*demon-possessed*":

- a. **THE MEANING OF "DEMONIZED" or "HAVING A DEMON."** Every demonized person in the Bible is an unbeliever! **There is no clear biblical evidence anywhere of a believer having a demon residing in him.** Furthermore, the Bible does not differentiate between being "*demonized*" & being *demon possessed* (i.e. "*having a demon.*") The current idea that a Christian can be *indwelt* by a demon, yet not be *possessed* by that demon, is false! Biblically speaking, to be "*demonized*" is to "*have a demon!*" There is no difference. There is NO support for this idea that a true Christian can nonetheless have a demon residing in him. **This third category simply doesn't exist!** (e.g. Mt. 4:23-24; 8:16; 28-31; 9:32; etc.)

- b. **BIBLICAL PROMISES FOR CHRISTIANS!** There are many wonderful promises given to believers to tell them that once they are born again they cannot be *possessed* by demons or be "*demonized.*" Here is a list of some of them: Acts 26:18 cf. Col. 1:13; I Jn. 4:4; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Rom. 8:31-39; Eph. 1:13-14; Heb. 2:14-15; I Pet. 1:5 cf. I Jn. 5:18-19; II Thess. 3:3 I Cor. 15:57; II Cor. 2:14; II Tim. 3:17; James 4:7.

c. **AN OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE'S TEACHING ON DEMONS:**

- 1) **O.T.** - We see a few glimpses of Satan & his activity (e.g. Gen. 3; Job 1-2; Isa. 14; Ezek. 28) but little else. **You don't find Old Testament prophets running around casting out demons!**
- ii. **THE GOSPELS** (Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John). At this time demon activity & demon possession was at its height. Why? Because Christ was on earth. And Christ's total domination of the spirit world showed that He was the Messiah! (Isa. 35:5; 61:1 cf. Mt. 8:16-17; 12:22-ff cf. v. 28, etc.)
- iii. **ACTS.** There is very little demon activity (Acts 8; 16; 19), and where demons are cast out, it is done by the apostles whom Christ endowed with extraordinary powers to do such things (note Mk. 16:17-18; Rom. 15:19; II Cor. 12:12 & Heb. 2:3-4).
- iv. **THE EPISTLES.** "From Romans 1:1 until Revelation 22 there is **NOT ONE WORD** of instruction or command to engage in exorcistic ministry (i.e. casting out demons)! ...It is never addressed in the epistles where we are told how to live sanctified lives... Anderson says...'we have taken Christ's authority over the demonic world. That's a lie... Christ didn't transfer it to anybody (but the apostles)" (Berg, p. 18). In the OT Job was never told to do this. Paul had a serious problem, yet never cast a demon out of himself! Peter's failures are not blamed on demons (Lk. 22; Gal.2).

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- v. **REVELATION.** In this last book we see demonic activity increasing again, because Christ is about to come back. But "even there, there are no instructions on how to cast out demons" (Rugh, audio tape). The churches in Revelation were in terrible locations. One dwelt "*where Satan's*

throne is (Rev. 2:13)"!! But they were never told to "take their authority & cast out those territorial spirits!"

5. **PRAYERS OF REBUKE & CANCELLATION HAVE NO BASIS IN SCRIPTURE.** It's kind of like putting hexes (curses) on those who put hexes (curses) on us. It's false! It's bogus.
6. **POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR MUCH OF WHAT WE ARE SEEING.** So how do we explain stories being told of alleged "*Christians*" who are having demons cast out of them? Answer:
 - a. **PSYCHOLOGICAL SOURCES.** If you believe something enough, it can happen.
 - b. **SATANIC DECEPTION.** Satan & his demons love to deceive. In fact, when people like Neil Anderson talk to demons, how do they know those demons are telling them the truth? After all, Satan is the father of lies. (Jn. 8:44)
 - c. **POSSESSED BUT NOT REGENERATE.** Some who claim to be Christians may be truly demon possessed, but if so, were never truly born again!
7. **SOME SERIOUS DANGERS OF THE "SPIRITUAL WARFARE" MOVEMENT.** There are several potential problems of the current "*spiritual warfare*" movement, including:
 - a. **BASING TRUTH ON "EXPERIENCE."** We must base everything on the Bible (Isa. 8:20)! Some of Anderson's teachings are clearly unbiblical, & even vulgar!
 - b. **TEACHING A FALSE VIEW OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE.** "...a Christian defeats Satan by submitting to God and resisting satanic temptation... (it is) moral warfare-the armor of God consisting of those moral qualities that the Holy Spirit produces in a believer's life." (CRI, 1993, p. 38)
 - c. **REMOVING INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR SINFUL BEHAVIOUR.** It's nice to blame demons for our sin problems, but it is false! (e.g. Gal. 5:16)
 - d. **IT CAN MISDIRECT A CHRISTIAN'S PROPER FOCUS.** These folks often focus on Satan, rather than God. They begin to fear what a demon may do to them.
 - e. **IT CAN LEAD TO MISGUIDED THINKING & MISDIRECTED PRAYERS.** Spiritual warfare advocates often spend more time talking to Satan than to God!
 - f. **IT CAN PRODUCE PRIDE.** Those casting out demons often exhibit a serious problem with pride (e.g. "*Not everyone can do this!*").

CONCLUSION:

*"May God deliver us from this divisive teaching,
and may we use our spiritual resources in Christ and retain the sound teaching of our...heritage!"
(Villanueva, CRI Journal, 1993, p. 38)*