

DEMONIZATION

Of the Believer

AN UNBIBLICAL TEACHING EXPOSED

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Demonization of the Believer, An Unbiblical Teaching Exposed

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Can a believer be demonized? There is a movement within Evangelicalism today that says, "Yes." This movement is teaching that a high percentage of sin among Christians is caused by demons. Followers assent that a person can be a believer in Jesus Christ, experience fullness of salvation, and still be in bondage to Satan and demons. The popularity of this movement can be seen in the seminars being held across the country and the best-selling books being published that promote this teaching. However, upon studying this movement, I believe this teaching of the "demonization of the believer" is contrary to Scripture and is in line with the world's view of everyone being a victim. This teaching is a denial of the sufficiency of the work of Christ and Scripture.

This teaching of the demonization of the believer has not come without a forerunner. Christian psychology has brought the world's idea of victimization to the Church. Psychology has taught us that everyone is a victim. When a person has problems in his life he is often told it is the result of his past or how his parents treated him. The end result is that he does not take responsibility for his own actions. We see this today. People are suing cigarette makers because they have smoked for fifty years and are dying of lung cancer. Criminals claim that their dysfunctional families are the reason for their criminal acts. Everyone is blaming someone or something else for their problems.

Now there is a different twist. Now our deviant behavior is being blamed on Satan and demons. This is the flip-side of psychology. In both cases there is something other than ourselves to blame

for our sin. Both make the believer a victim who needs the steps and formulas of the “experts” in order to find true joy and victory.

Christian psychology’s emphasis on experience and stories also parallels this teaching on the demonization of the believer. I have found in my study of Christian psychology, that the source of authority is *experience* rather than *Scripture*. Now with the demonization of the believer movement, I find the same “theology by story” emphasis. And in the process, the biblical way of dealing with people’s sin problem has been abandoned.

When someone examines a teaching such as this in light of Scripture, he is often accused of not loving or wanting to help people. Certainly, we are to care about fellow believers and help them with their difficulties but we must make sure that we offer them solutions that are based on the truths of God’s Word. It is not enough just to care about people and their problems; we must give them the right prescription to deal with their problems.

This issue is not over whether Satan and demons exist. I believe in a literal, personal devil who is busily opposing us. We are in a spiritual warfare against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. I am not minimizing that. However, we must make sure our view of demons and how to deal with them is based on Scripture, not stories.

When filtered through Scripture, it becomes obvious that this teaching on the demonization of believers is not biblical. I believe that many of the experiences cited to support this teaching do not line up with Scripture. As a result, people are being deceived and Christians are paying attention to unsound doctrine.

This booklet is not meant to be an exhaustive study of demonology. Instead, it is an analysis of the demonization movement in light of Scripture. Throughout this booklet, I often refer to the works of two men, Neil Anderson and Fred Dickason, who have had great influence in promoting demonization teaching. I do not question these men’s salvation or motives. I believe much of their teaching is in error in light of Scripture. In studying the books of these men I have found sections that I would consider theologically sound. However, it is the mixture of truth with error that ensnares believers. Often when people promote a teaching they suspect others may disagree with, they use information everyone will agree on. Then they

wonder why their teaching is being scrutinized. However, the problem is the mixture. When a gallon of milk is mixed with a drop of poison, the product is not mostly good milk. The result is poisoned milk. Likewise, a mixture of good theology with unbiblical theology results in a poisoned theology.

In this booklet we will look at the issue of demons and their relationship to sin in the life of the believer. In doing so, we will also evaluate the current demonization of the believer movement. It is my hope in the end that the reader will have a greater and more biblical understanding of the issues involved, all to the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

C H A P T E R O N E

Sin: Who Is to Blame?

Since we are dealing with the issue of sin in the life of a believer, it is essential to look at what the Bible has to say about the issue of sin and who is responsible for it. Many of us are familiar with the phrase, “The devil made me do it.” Unfortunately, there are Christians today who are teaching that sin in the life of a believer can sometimes be traced to demons. For example, in his book, *The Bondage Breaker*, Neil Anderson gives an example of this type of thinking when he describes the case of a Christian woman who he said had been involved in all types of sin:

- Sheila is a sobering example of a dimension of spiritual vulnerability that most Christians do not like to talk about: demonic control. As a believer, Sheila had obviously lost control in her eating habits, in her sexual behavior, and in her devotional life.¹

According to Anderson, the reason for this woman’s sinful behavior was demonic control. She is not to blame for her lack of discipline or sexual immorality in her life. Anderson then states that this woman eventually became free when she renounced Satan’s control over her life.²

But can the devil make us sin? Is demonic control a reason for our sinful behavior? The Scripture is clear on what the source of sin is.

Our Lusts

Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust (James 1:13,14).

James says that our own lust is the reason for our sin, not demonic control.

The Flesh

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these (Gal. 5:19–21).

Notice that these sins are not deeds of the devil. They are deeds of the “flesh.” When we sin, our flesh is the problem. The responsibility lies with us. No outside force can be blamed.

Evil Hearts

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness (Mark 7:21,22).

The evil thoughts and deeds of men come from their own wicked hearts. It is our own lusts, flesh, and evil hearts that cause us to sin.

Sin and the Christian

What about Christians? Do they ever sin? Yes Christians do sin. First John 1:8 says that “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves.” James 3:2 says, “For we all stumble in many ways.” At the moment of conversion, a person becomes a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). The Holy Spirit now lives within him. He is no longer the person he used to be but is a renewed child of God. However, Scripture does teach that even though a person has become a new creature in Christ, he will struggle with indwelling sin in this life:

For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please (Gal. 5:17).

Within each person there remains a desire to sin which the Bible calls the “flesh.” Even believers, who possess the Holy Spirit, have this battle with the flesh. That is why there is a conflict. The Holy Spirit and the flesh are at war with each other. The unbeliever does not have this conflict since he does not possess the Holy Spirit. For him, the flesh always has its way. But for the Christian, there is a war going on inside his own body. The Apostle Paul talked about his own personal battle with the flesh:

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of good is not. For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. . . . I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good (Rom. 7:18,19,21).

The Christian's Victory over Sin

The battle with sin is a tough, life-long battle. But, provision has been made to allow us victory over sin:

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Gal. 5:24).

For the believer, the flesh has been “crucified.” This does not mean that the flesh is totally done away with or ceases to exist, for we still struggle with it. But its power over the believer has been broken. Though the flesh still exists, the believer no longer has to obey it.

Our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin (Rom. 6:6,7).

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God (Rom. 6:12,13).

Because our flesh has been crucified and its power over us has been broken, we are not to let sin reign in our bodies. We no longer have to obey our old master of sin. We are now free to serve God and do righteousness.

The Final Victory

Though the battle with sin is a lifelong battle, there will come a day when the struggle will be over:

We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23).

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet . . . the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:52,53).

When Jesus Christ comes again we will receive immortal bodies incapable of ever sinning again. Then the battle with the flesh will be over for good.

The Bible is clear on the issue of sin and where it comes from. When a person sins it is because of their flesh and sinful hearts. The responsibility lies with that person alone. Sin cannot be blamed on anyone or anything else. It is true that Christians can sin. Even though they are new creatures in Christ, there is still the battle with the flesh. However, Christ's death provided us with the power to have victory over the flesh. The final victory over sin will come when Christ comes again and grants us our sinless, eternal bodies. What a joy it is to know the fullness of salvation in Christ!

C H A P T E R T W O

A Biblical Survey of Demonology

We have looked at the issue of sin and the believer. But what is the relationship between the believer and demons? In discussing this relationship we must have a grasp of what the Bible says about Satan and demons.

Old Testament

The biblical doctrine of demonology is not complicated. The Old Testament gives insight to Satan and his activities. Genesis 3 describes his temptation of Eve. Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:11-15 portray the fall of Satan as a result of his rebellion against God.

Particularly applicable to this discussion is the case of Job. The first two chapters of Job give insight into spiritual battles and conflicts. Job was the object of Satanic attack but he was not indwelt by Satan. Job never was told to deal with the devil. He was not told to speak to Satan, bind him, or send him to the pit. What was Job's responsibility? It was to be faithful, resist, and stand firm.

The Old Testament gives considerable mention to Satan and his work. However, there are no cases where Old Testament saints spoke to him or tried to cast him out directly.

The Gospels

The Gospel Era was a unique period of time. As mentioned, in the Old Testament Period, there was no casting out of demons. With the presence of Jesus, the Son of God, on earth, demonic manifesta-

tion began. Demons openly displayed their presence so that Jesus' power and authority over the demons could be demonstrated.

1. Kingdom Truth

The casting out of demons was directly related to the Messiah's offer of the kingdom to the nation Israel:

But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you (Matt. 12:28).

Subduing demons was a demonstration of the authority and power that Jesus had as the Messiah of Israel. The King had come and the kingdom was now present in the person of the Messiah. That is why Jesus could say, "The kingdom of God has come upon you." Jesus was saying to the Jewish leaders, "I am the Messiah. I am here to establish the kingdom. The proof is I have authority over Satan and demons."

When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon possessed; and He cast out the Spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases" (Matt. 8:16,17).

When the people saw that Jesus had authority over demons, the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah should have alerted them that the King was present and the kingdom was being offered.

Then there was brought to Him a demon-possessed man who was blind and dumb, and He healed him, so that the dumb man spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and began to say, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" (Matt. 12:22,23).

"Son of David" was a Messianic title. Again, the people rightfully associated His power and authority over the demons as the work of the Messiah.

2. Binding the Strongman

A verse that has often been interpreted incorrectly is Matthew 12:29. In this passage, Jesus had been accused of casting out demons in the power of Satan. He responded by saying,

Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man?

Christ alone, as the Messiah, had the power to subdue Satan. But Anderson takes "binding the strongman" to mean a present pattern to be followed:

- Stand firm in the armor of God that God has provided and step out in Christ's authority to plunder the strong man's house for God.³

Anderson thinks that if we are going to have victory over Satan, we too have to bind the strong man. But as we have already shown, dealing with demons directly was an indicator that the Messiah was present on the earth, not something to be normative for all believers.

What makes Anderson's interpretation of this passage inconsistent is that earlier in his book he acknowledges that it is not proper to form doctrine based only on the Gospels:

- We have mistakenly formulated our methods for dealing with demonic powers from the Gospels instead of the Epistles. This is easy to do, since the only specific examples of demonic expulsion are found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts. . . . Some Christians object to making a sharp distinction between the Gospels and the Epistles. Yet all dispensational as well as covenantal theologians see at least some distinctions in moving from law to grace and from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant.⁴

Anderson admits we should not be taking our instruction and pattern for dealing with demons from the Gospels, but that is exactly what he did with Matthew 12. Matthew 12 is unique because Jesus was showing His Messianic authority by subduing the devil. Yet Anderson wrongly makes "binding the strongman" something to be practiced today.

There are those who want to base their theology of demons on the Gospels since they cannot get it anywhere else. But as we have already shown, because of the uniqueness of the Gospel Period, one should not build his doctrine of dealing with demons based on how the Son of God dealt with them. Jesus Christ's personal power and

authority over demons as the Messiah cannot be transferred to anyone else. It is true that He gave that authority to the Apostles to go out and represent Him. But that apostolic authority ended with the death of the Apostles and does not transfer over to us today.

Acts

There are three occasions in the book of Acts that deal with demons: Acts 8, 16, and 19. In each of these cases the Apostles were dealing with demons. The Apostles were specifically commissioned by Christ as representatives of Him. The power given them was for the purpose of validating their apostleship, not as an example for the Church to follow. As we have seen, because of the nature of their commission, their casting out of demons cannot be made normative for believers today.

The Epistles

The activity of demons in the Epistles is well documented. Demons promote false doctrine (I Tim. 4:1-3), are associated with idolatry (I Cor. 10:20), help cause divisions (James 3:13-16), and aid Satan in his war against God (Eph 6:11,12).

However, dealing directly with demons is never addressed in the Epistles. This is important since the Epistles dealt specifically with instructions for the Church. The Epistles were written to give the Church all the information it needed to effectively serve the Lord in this age, yet nowhere is the concept of speaking to or casting out demons mentioned. If casting out demons was so important to the Church why was it never mentioned in the Epistles?

Also, we do not find Paul running all over the country casting out demons. Even in a city like Corinth, where there was much occultic activity, Paul does not mention casting out demons. However, what is mentioned often is how to deal with the flesh (Gal. 5:16). The emphasis is clearly on the flesh when dealing with sin, not demons.

Revelation

In the book of Revelation, demonic activity picks up again. But even in the sections which are addressed to the churches (chapters 1-3), there are no directions for speaking to demons. Even with the Church living under demonic pressure, where Satan's throne was

(Rev. 2:13), there were no commands to bind Satan and demons. When Jesus spoke to the church at Thyatira, He did not say, “Bind Satan” or “You have a territorial demon, drive him out.” Even those believers who were under the influence of the wicked Jezebel were not told to break her demonic power. Revelation gives us a glimpse into the demonic world and what is taking place behind the scenes. However, we do not have any situation where believers are running around casting out demons.

To summarize, the only legitimate casting out of demons happened in the time of Christ and the apostles. This demonstrated that Jesus truly was the Messiah the Old Testament predicted would come. The Jews at that time would recognize that casting out of demons meant that the Messiah was present and offering the kingdom to the nation Israel. The apostles were given this authority to cast out demons as representatives of Christ. This authority cannot be transferred to anyone else.

Scripture has much to say concerning Satan and demons. They are real spiritual beings who actively oppose the plans of God. They are busy deceiving, tempting, and promoting false doctrine. Nowhere do we see believers being possessed by demons.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

Demon Possession and the Believer

Scripture shows us the activity of Satan and demons. But on the issue of demons and the believer there has been some question. Can a believer be demon possessed? Some teach that there is a difference between an unbeliever being totally possessed by a demon and a Christian being invaded by a demon. For example, in Bill McCloud's book, *Fellowship with the Fallen*, he makes a distinction between "invasion" and "possession":

- You will notice that I am using the word "invasion" as well as the word "possession." I am using the word "invasion" as a general term to cover the demonization of believers, and the word "possession" as a term to cover the demonization of non-believers.⁵
- No Christian can be so possessed. He can certainly be invaded to lesser degrees and in some cases to alarming degrees, but he cannot be totally possessed.⁶

Anderson agrees:

- To be demonized means to be under the control of one or more demons. Demonization is not a matter of extremes, such as the either/or idea of being completely free or totally bound; it is a matter of degrees.⁷

To these men, demonization is not a matter of extremes. It is not

either being completely free of demons or totally bound by demons. To them it is a matter of degree.

Are Demon Possession and Demon Invasion Different?

However, Scripture does not make a distinction between demon “possession” of unbelievers and demon “invasion” of believers. To claim otherwise is to play word games. Demon possession simply means that a demon resides within a person and is controlling that person. There are no other variations of demons indwelling a person. Demons can oppress, attack, and tempt from the outside but Scripture is clear that a demon cannot indwell a believer and control him. There are two terms that refer to demon possession in the New Testament. First, the Greek word, *daimonizomai* is usually translated “to be possessed by a demon.” Or when it refers to a person, it is translated, “demoniac.” The word is found thirteen times in the Gospels and is sometimes translated, “to be demonized.” The second term, *daimonion echein* means “to have a demon.”⁸ This term is used eight times.

Some make a distinction between being “demonized” and “demon possession” as if there was a difference. But this is an artificial distinction. To be “demonized” is to be “demon possessed.” In the Gospels, those who were demonized had a demon residing within them and that demon controlled them. The demon manifested his control in various ways, but he resided in and controlled the person he indwelt. The Scripture does not allow for a special category of believers who have been invaded by a demon but are not possessed by a demon.

A few examples will show that there is no difference between demon possession and demon invasion:

When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word (Matt. 8:16).

Mary who was called Magdalene from whom seven demons had gone out (Luke 8:2).

And when He had come to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him (Matt. 8:28).

These were obviously demon possessed people. The demons were to be cast out of them and into something else, for example, the herd of swine (Matt. 8:31).

And as they were going out, behold, a dumb man, demon-possessed, was brought to Him. And after the demon was cast out (Matt. 9:32,33).

It is clear that the demons mentioned in these passages inhabited the people mentioned. That is why Jesus cast them out. To have a demon and demon possession are the same thing. In other words, a person who has a demon is one who is demon possessed. There are no separate degrees.

Does the Bible Teach that Believers Can Be Demonized?

One would expect that those who promote that believers can be demonized would try to make a strong case from Scripture for their view. Yet even these men recognize that the Bible does not clearly support their view.

Anderson says:

- Can a Christian be demon possessed? No question polarizes the Christian community more than this one, and the tragedy is that there is no absolutely biblical way to answer it . . . the word translated as “demon possession” never occurs in Scripture after the cross, so we are left with no theological precision as to what demonization would constitute in the Church Age.⁹

It must be asked, if we cannot be theologically precise concerning demon possession in this Church Age, why are we making it an issue for the Church?

Fred Dickason, in his book, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, has a chapter entitled, “Biblical Evidence Supporting Demonization of Christians,” in which he examines all the Scripture passages relating to demon possession. What is interesting about this chapter is the conclusions he comes to in the passages that supposedly give support for demonization of believers. Though it is not possible to cover every passage he gives, here are samples of his conclusions to certain passages that are often used to prove that believers can be demonized:

1 Thessalonians 2:18:

- This passage says nothing of demonization in any clear sense.¹⁰

1 John 4:1–4:

- We conclude that this passage does not present any sure evidence that believers can be inhabited by demons.¹¹

2 Peter 2:1–22:

- We conclude that there is no sure evidence of the demonization of genuine believers available from this passage. Where there is a reasonable doubt of the certainty of the contribution of a passage, we cannot legitimately count on it.¹²

Matthew 8:16:

- We must again say that the weight of the facts does not bring us to an inescapable conclusion.¹³

Acts 5:1–3:

- We must again conclude that there is not sufficient evidence to determine if this is a case of believers being demonized.¹⁴

Acts 8:9–24:

- The evidence is inconclusive.¹⁵

Remember that this is supposedly the chapter that is presenting biblical evidence supporting demonization of believers. Also notice what he states in his summary of this chapter:

- We have considered the major passages and cases from Scripture that have been used or may be used to support the concept that genuine believers may be demonized. Most of these cases cannot be considered valid evidence for various reasons in the context or from other biblical information.¹⁶

Dickason does say that certain passages, such as the ones describing the daughter of Abraham who had a spirit of illness in Luke 13 and the Corinthian tongues speakers in 1 Corinthians 12, “must be considered as fairly strong evidence” (for demonization of believers).

Dickason then says about these passages:

- However, there still may be legitimate doubts that these are genuine examples of New Testament believers being inhabited by demons. Thus we cannot conclusively say that the Bible clearly presents evidence that believers may be demonized.¹⁷

In the conclusion to his book, Dickason says:

- A rather thorough examination of the biblical evidence leads us to conclude that it neither clearly affirms nor denies the reality of demonization of believers. . . . But to be fair, we must say that with biblical evidence alone, we cannot reach a definite or dogmatic conclusion.¹⁸

According to Dickason, after all the biblical evidence is weighed, the best he can say is that there is no definite evidence for demonic possession of believers. But if there is no biblical evidence, why don't we just leave the matter alone instead of trying to add experience and clinical evidence to Scripture?

What the Bible Says

Can it be true that something so important to our spiritual lives would not be addressed by Scripture? In Christ have we not received "everything pertaining to life and godliness?" (2 Peter 1:3). Is not "all Scripture inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work?" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Is the Bible incomplete on such an important issue? On the contrary, the Bible is clear that a believer cannot be possessed by demons.

God's Property

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body (1 Cor. 6:19).

Amazingly, there are those who think that the devil can live in the same temple as the Holy Spirit. Yet this body is the residence of the Holy Spirit. It belongs to Him, not to us or the devil. Titus 2:14 says

that Christ redeemed us to be “a people for His own possession.” We are God’s property. To say that the devil can live in the body of believers makes nonsense of what the Scripture teaches.

God Is Greater

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

The “He” who is in the believer is the Holy Spirit. The “he” who is in the world is the devil. The Holy Spirit who indwells us is greater than the devil whose presence is in the world. Plus, if the devil is in the world, he is not in us.

We know that no one who is born of God sins, but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him (1 John 5:18).

This is a promise to all believers. God will not let the devil have control of a believer. Jesus also prayed that the Father would keep us “from the evil one” (John 17:15).

But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one (2 Thess. 3:3).

Devil’s Power Broken

Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, so that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14).

Christ’s death rendered the devil “powerless.” To “render powerless” means that the power to control was broken. Therefore, the devil’s power over believers was broken. No matter what occultic background we or our ancestors may have had, the devil no longer has control over us. How can there be teachers who claim that when a person becomes a believer he must still contend with indwelling demons? Christ defeated Satan. We no longer have to worry about demonization or so-called ancestral demons.

Newness of Life

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with in order that we should no longer be slaves to sin, for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him (Rom. 6:4-8).

Salvation is a radical break with our old life. When we came to believe in Jesus Christ, we were identified with Him in His death, His burial, and His resurrection. As a result, those who believe in Him can now walk in newness of life. We have been set free. We are no longer slaves of sin. No matter how awful our background may have been, Christ gave us a new, fresh start. If that is true, how can we still be slaves to our past or to demons? Notice that it does not say, “buried with Him, raised with Him to newness of life, *but indwelt by ancestral demons.*” When we became believers, if we still had ancestral demons, we would not be walking in newness of life. Everything has been accomplished for us at the moment of salvation. This does not mean that we never sin. But when we sin, we are to face that sin, turn from it, and get on with our walk with God. That is the true biblical pattern.

Daughter of Abraham

Luke 13:10–16 has been used to try to show that a Christian can be possessed. In this passage a woman who was bent over because of a spirit of infirmity is called a “daughter of Abraham.” Therefore, according to some, she must have been a believer. However, in this context, being a “daughter of Abraham” simply meant that she was a Jew (John 8:33,37). It cannot be implied that she was a believer.

Should Not a People Consult Their God?

Believers cannot be possessed by demons. Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit indwells us and is greater than the devil who is in the world. The devil cannot touch us and Jesus has asked the Father

to keep us from the evil one. Plus, Christ's death has broken the devil's power over us and we have newness of life. This does not mean that a believer cannot be deceived or tempted by the devil. It does mean that the devil cannot reside within a believer or have power over him.

The Scripture is clear on this matter. But even if it was not so clear, the subject must be mute since there is no way to have any authoritative knowledge about the spirit realm apart from the revelation of God. Isaiah condemned the people of his day for going outside of Scripture for supposed answers by asking, "Should not a people consult their God?" (Is. 8:19,20). Those who say we must look to experience for the answer to this problem are saying that they are not satisfied with what God has revealed concerning this spiritual matter. Therefore, they are going to find the answer on their own. The idea that a person can turn to experience because he does not believe Scripture is clear enough is erroneous.

Christ's work was sufficient. There is no further deliverance that must take place. If there were, salvation in Christ would be incomplete. If the Church would stop and think through its theology of Scripture, we would realize that something is drastically wrong with what is being promoted by those who teach that believers can be demonized.

C H A P T E R F O U R

*The Biblical Way of
Dealing with Demons*

The glorious salvation of Jesus Christ has freed us from the power of Satan. Yet as believers, we are still involved in a spiritual battle with the powers of darkness:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12).

The battle is real and we must be prepared. Provision has been made for us to be unshakable and immovable in spiritual warfare.

Do Not Be Conformed

Do not be conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2).

Believers must keep a biblical view of dealing with sin and demons. We should not be surprised when the world buys into victimization programs. But there is no excuse for the Church to get mired down in the same sink hole. It is important that we do not think like the world on this issue.

Stand Firm

Resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7).

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith (1 Pet. 5:8,9).

The Christian's warfare tactics are primarily defensive. It is one of being alert and standing firm in our faith. Notice there is no command to engage Satan in an offensive manner.

Put on the Armor of God

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil (Eph. 6:10,11).

We do not fight the devil in our own strength, but we are strong "in the Lord." He is the One who gives us the victory. We fight our spiritual battle in His power by putting on His armor.

Take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm (Eph.6:13).

The idea of taking up the full armor of God is deficient if the devil is living in the believer. The picture of putting on the armor indicates we are going to do battle with an outer opponent who is attacking us from the outside, not from within.

Stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit (Eph. 6:14–18).

The Bible does talk about the devil and how believers are to deal with him. We fight our spiritual warfare by standing firm. We stand firm against the devil by using truth, righteousness, the Gospel, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and prayer. We are not told to deal with Satan in the unseen cosmic realm. Nowhere in these direct instructions concerning dealing with the devil are we told to speak to him, bind him, or cast him out. Also notice that nowhere

do these verses say that a demon can be in a believer. Our focus in spiritual warfare is to be on what God has provided for us in Christ. As we are on the alert and stand firm in our salvation we will experience victory in spiritual battle.

Is Speaking to Demons Necessary?

In spite of the clear, biblical instruction concerning how we are to conduct our spiritual warfare, there are those who teach that we must also speak to demons:

- As you go through the steps to freedom, remember that Satan will be defeated only if you confront him verbally.¹⁹
- If you're going to resist Satan, you must do so outwardly so he can understand you and be put to flight.²⁰

In other words, unless Scripture is spoken aloud to Satan it will have no impact on him. But where does it say in Scripture that one must speak aloud to Satan so he can hear? Isn't believing, submitting, and laying claim to the Word enough? Yet now we are told we must speak out loud to Satan. We do not know whether Satan can read our minds or not. Evidently if it was that important God would have told us in His Word. Neil Anderson cannot tell us more than God has.

In his book, Dickason tells of a time he asked a demon, who was supposedly speaking through a believer, if demons try to keep Christians from thinking that they can be inhabited by demons. The demon responded:

- Oh, yes! We use it all the time. It is one of the best tools we have ever promoted.²¹

Here is a case of a man asking a demon for information. Is that the way to find out about the spirit realm? Can a demon tell us what Scripture does not say? This sounds like the Charismatic movement all over again. Christians have regarded the pentecostal methods of dealing with demons as unbiblical. However, we now have well-known and respected Christian leaders teaching what Charismatic teachers have been teaching for years.

This teaching that believers are to speak to demons is unbiblical. Even Michael the archangel, when disputing with Satan over the

body of Moses, “did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you’ ” (Jude 9). We too, when it comes to speaking to Satan, ought to leave it to the Lord.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Fallacy of Clinical Evidence in Spiritual Matters

The use of clinical evidence has been cited as a legitimate way to evaluate whether believers can be demonized. In other words, some believe that scientific evaluation can be used to help us understand more about demonization of believers. But can clinical evidence help us understand more about this issue? Fred Dickason thinks so:

- But where Scripture is not decisive, we may gain insight from experience.²²
- We are ready to consider the contribution of clinical evidence to our search for the answer to our principal question, Can Christians be demonized?²³
- Just as science has found the truth of God's world in its research, so may genuinely evaluated and reliably documented experience find the truth in this matter.²⁴
- We have found that though there is a great deal of information to consider and though men adduce evidence of varying weight, yet we could not come to a definite conclusion. We now must seek what other valid evidence there might be that could aid us in our quest to answer this important and practical question.²⁵

Dickason claims that the Scripture is not clear enough to instruct us

on demon possession of believers. Therefore, we must also look towards experience and clinical evidence instead.

This is a serious matter. If demons can indwell and control a believer in such a way that he has no control over his own body, wouldn't God address this in His Word? Wouldn't our salvation be related to this issue? Yet Dickason is saying that there is not enough information in the Bible on this issue; therefore, we must look at clinical evidence and experience.

The mention of clinical evidence brings a white coat, medical picture to mind. We assume that since it is clinical evidence it must be valid. It is just like going to the doctor. If we have a pain, or a growth, we go into the clinic and they examine it and find out what is physically wrong. Now there are some who want to do that in the spiritual realm as well.

An Improper Analogy

The analogy of clinical evidence in regard to physical diseases has been used to try to show that demonization can also be clinically evaluated. Dickason has tried to use the analogy of cancer to show that believers can be demonized:

- If we find that a believer has such a disease, we have evidence for saying that believers can have that disease. When we are done, we do not have a biblical doctrine; but we have used biblical doctrine in application to an experiential investigation. With proper validation, our conclusion may be accepted as fact, even though it is not taught specifically in the Bible.²⁶

Dickason is saying that even though the Bible does not address the issue of believers having cancer, we can know through clinical evidence that they can have cancer. He believes clinical research can then also be applied to the issue of demon possession of believers:

- Having researched the evidence in broad fashion by proper application of both biblical and clinical parameters, we may come to the valid conclusion that Christians can be demonized.²⁷

No one will deny that we can find out about having cancer by going to a medical doctor. And no one will deny that believers get diseases. But Dickason assumes that the next step is to find out about

demonization of believers by using clinical evaluation. However, comparing cancer with demon possession is an improper analogy. Spiritual matters cannot be determined by scientific evidence. That is comparing apples with rocks. The Bible never pretends to address all the information there is on physical diseases. But it does claim to address all matters concerning sin and sanctification in the life of the believer (cf. 2 Peter 1:3). It may be factual truth and not biblical truth that a person can be diagnosed as having cancer. But there is no factual truth that is involved with sin and the spirit world that is not found in Scripture.

It is often said, “Not all truth that can be known is found in the Bible.” That may be true. The Bible says nothing about the truths of electricity. Why? It is not essential for salvation and sanctification. However, all the truth concerning salvation and sanctification is found in the Bible. Likewise, all truth for dealing with sin and Satan is found in the Bible.

How Valid Is This Valid Information?

Concerning the use of clinical evidence, Dickason goes on to say:

- When we seek what may be called “clinical evidence,” we are really looking at information that may legitimately be gathered and evaluated from clients and counselors who have been involved in handling demonic oppression.²⁸
- We hope this will be accepted as a legitimate and practical procedure in our search.²⁹

But are we really looking at legitimate information when we seek supposed, “clinical evidence?” After all, who said it is legitimately gathered? Who said God wants us rooting through the garbage cans of the world looking for a way to deal with indwelling demons in the lives of believers? Are we going to find evidence from the medical and psychological professions that has not been found in the Bible? Supposedly, we are looking for information that may be legitimately gathered and evaluated from clients and counselors who have been involved in handling demonic oppression. But how do they know they have been involved in handling demonic oppression? The Bible does not tell us this. Are we supposed to listen to the stories of people who supposedly counseled the demon op-

pressed when the Scripture does not even address the issue? In spite of these unanswered questions the findings of these experts are supposed to be valid evidence. But we do not know this.

In referring to the idea that clinical evidence can be used to determine if Christians can be demonized, Dickason says:

- When we say this, we cannot say this is a biblical doctrine or theological deduction from biblical evidence.³⁰

Notice that he admits that demonization of believers cannot be a biblical doctrine. He also says:

- We recognize the lack of conclusive evidence in the Bible on this issue, and would not elevate the conclusion to the stature of biblical truth. But we have found the factual truth to be that Christians can be and have been demonized.³¹

But it is questionable whether he truly has found the factual truth. He has moved into a realm where all he has is an experience and his own ability to discern what is really happening in the spirit world. Dickason even admits that we cannot affirm this is a biblical doctrine or a theological deduction from biblical evidence.

How can we know that we are dealing with demon oppressed people when the Bible does not tell us? According to these men, we have to go outside the Scripture for the evidence. But, when Jesus prayed to the Father, "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth," was He praying for an incomplete sanctification?

Concerning clinical evidence, Dickason also says:

- This general approach to acquiring evidence is commonly used and accepted in areas of medicine, counseling, and human services. It deals with personal, practical, and scientific approaches to everyday issues. It seeks to deal with the facts so that they may be analyzed and used in beneficial procedures.³²

It is true that clinical evidence is legitimate in medicine and human services. However, it is not a legitimate way to find out how a believer deals with sin. If it cannot be determined from Scripture whether believers can be demonized, then it must be a non-issue for believers. This is not to say demons are a non-issue. But dealing with demonic oppression of a believer must be a non-issue, other-

wise what we have in Scripture is not adequate for us to deal with the devil or to enable us to live a holy and godly life.

Experience and Biblical Truth

What is the relationship between experience and biblical truth? The issue is not whether we experience biblical truth or not, because we do. The point is that experience does not add to the truth of Scripture. It is true my experience has taught me many things. I learned how to mow the lawn. I did not learn that from Scripture. But mowing the lawn added nothing to the issue of my salvation and sanctification.

Everything necessary for dealing with sin, Satan, and living a life pleasing to God is contained within Scripture. As we live, we grow in our experiences, but our experiences do not add to the revelation of the Bible. This is similar to the trap of psychology which says, "All truth is God's truth." With this teaching the Bible became just one of many sources for truth. As a result, the Church largely abandoned the Scripture as the sole source of truth concerning sin and salvation matters and accepted so-called "truth" from secular humanists. Now we are reaping the results of that. In addition to finding out truth from secular humanists we now find out truth from demons and personal experiences.

Dickason says:

- Reason and experience may be helpful tools to extend our understanding of the facts of the world around us and to apply the truth of revelation to life.³³

Nobody will debate that. Reason and experience do help us understand the facts of the world around us. They may even help us to apply the truth of revelation to life. As we go through a variety of experiences, we have learned how to apply the Scripture in those areas. However, that is different from asserting that experience has added new revelation and information to the Scripture.

The Verdict on Clinical Evidence

I do believe in Satan and demons, but I do not believe the doctrines of men regarding Satan and demons. There is far more to the issue of demons and the spirit world than the Scripture has made

known to me. But I also believe that the revealed things belong to us and the secret things belong to God (Deut. 29:29). Scripture has given much information concerning the person and activities of Satan, but we must be careful not to go beyond the Scripture. When we do we open ourselves to all kinds of deception.

We must be alert to the invalid analogies that are used by men who want to use clinical evidence for spiritual matters. When these men cannot support their views with Scripture, they build an invalid analogy to support their views. They try to take a step off of Scripture, but when they do they are left standing on air.

The whole idea of using clinical evidence to evaluate spiritual matters is built on sand. Why? Sin and salvation matters cannot be clinically evaluated. However, some have decided that the eternal unchanging Word of God does not provide enough information on the subject. They are determined to find something. And often when people are determined to find something, the devil will make sure they do. The problem is it will not be the truth.

What then is the verdict on clinical evidence in regards to spiritual matters? It does not work. There is no valid clinical evidence when it comes to dealing with the spiritual lives of believers. The Scripture is complete when dealing with sanctification. If the Scripture does not address an issue, we should not be trying to find clinical evidence to supplement what we think is lacking in Scripture.

C H A P T E R S I X

Ancestral Demons

Those who teach that believers can be demonized claim that ancestral involvement in the occult is a major cause for demonization. One author describes ancestral involvement:

- By ancestral involvement we refer to occult or demonic practices of the client's ancestors. This has been found to be one of the most common reasons for demonic affliction or demonization.^{34, 35}

He then says:

- I have found this avenue of ancestral involvement to be the chief cause of demonization. Well over 95 percent of more than 400 persons I have contacted in my counseling ministry have been demonized because of their ancestors' involvement in occult and demonic activities.³⁶

This author says there may be an ancestral demon passed down from generation to generation in a person's family through the activity of their grandparents or parents. However, what if that person became a believer in Jesus Christ? According to Dickason, these ancestral demons do not leave when a person becomes a believer. These ancestral demons are different. In other words, being raised with Christ to newness of life was not enough to take care of these ancestral demons.

Dickason then gives an example of a woman who had been a

Christian for a few years who was a victim of ancestral demons:

- We soon found that defiant and devious spirits were present inside her body. Some had come in at birth and some thereafter. Her ancestors had long been involved in the occult and demonic activity. That is the reason they felt they could enter her, and they were stubborn in their claims.³⁷

Concerning this issue, Anderson says:

- Adopted children can be especially subject to demonic strongholds because of their natural parentage. But even an adopted child can become a new creation in Christ, and must actively renounce old strongholds and embrace his or her inheritance as God's child.³⁸
- If you have been subject to satanic ritual there is a good chance that you were assigned a spiritual "guardian" or "parent." These spiritual relationships must be specifically renounced along with any blood pacts uniting you to anyone but God.³⁹

This whole issue of ancestral demons hindering believers is unbiblical. Why does a believer who has been raised to newness of life in Christ have to worry about the sins of his ancestors? If the salvation of Jesus Christ does not set us free from the power of Satan and demons then it was not a complete salvation. We do not need to go around worrying if some relative from the past happened to be involved in the occult. That is why this type of teaching is an attack on the sufficiency of Christ's work. If we still have demons hanging around after our conversion, what good was salvation?

CHAPTER SEVEN

Experienced-Based Theology

One of the marks of true Christianity throughout history has been its emphasis on the Bible alone as the sole authority for living the Christian life. The battle cry of the Reformation was “Sola Scriptura,” meaning, “the Scripture alone.” While the Roman Catholic Church insisted that tradition was the equal of Scripture, the Reformers said, “No.” Likewise, when many in the Charismatic movement were coming up with stories and revelations that were supposedly from God, the Church refused to acknowledge them as true. Why? Because the Church has known that when stories and experiences are added to Scripture, there is no way to hold the line theologically. Who decides which stories are true and which are not? It becomes too subjective. Besides, if stories add to our knowledge of truth, what does this say about the sufficiency of God’s Word?

Yet in the Church today, there is a growing emphasis on experienced-based theology. We saw it with the integration of psychology into the Church and now we see it with those who promote that believers can be demonized.

My intention in this booklet has been to show the biblical view of demons and their relationship to Christians. In this chapter, we will see the dangers of building a theology based on experiences. In doing so, I have quoted extensively from books that have been promoting an experienced-based theology of dealing with demonization:

A survey of Neil Anderson’s, *Released From Bondage*, shows this

emphasis on experience. The opening page reads:

- Do you struggle with bad habits? Disturbing childhood memories? Compulsive behavior? Guilt? You are not alone. Dr. Neil Anderson, best-selling author of *The Bondage Breaker* and *Walking Through the Darkness* has found that thousands of Christian men and women live lives of not-so-quiet desperation, in spiritual and emotional bondage due to unresolved traumas in their past.⁴⁰

Is that an appropriate description of a believer who has been raised to newness of life in Christ? Is it biblical to think that a renewed creature of God can be habitually in desperation and spiritual bondage?

- In his seminars and personal counseling, Anderson has helped many of these people break through to dramatic, lasting freedom from bondage through just seven essential steps.⁴¹

It used to be taught that the Gospel set people free. But now we find out it is Anderson's seven steps. What has the Church done for 2,000 years without these seven steps? Does this mean that all Christians who lived before this book did not have the resources to live a victorious Christian life?

- Now you can learn from their **stories**—and from the helpful insights Dr. Anderson shares before and after each testimony.⁴² (emphasis mine)

Notice the emphasis on “stories.” Scripture is used some throughout the book, but the overwhelming emphasis of this book is learning by story.

- Best of all, you too can walk through those same seven Steps to Freedom in Christ . . . and discover once-and-for-all the absolute freedom and joy Jesus Christ has also provided—for YOU.⁴³

If we need Neil Anderson's seven steps to have true freedom and joy what does this say about the power of the Gospel and the sufficiency of Christ? As the book goes on, there is story after story. Many of the stories would not be appropriate to be quoted because of their polluted nature. In reading this book one has to wade through

the sexual perversions of people—their affairs and other illicit sexual practices. Is this what we have to do to learn about freedom in Christ? Do people have to pollute their minds with these stories to be delivered?

Mysticism All Over Again

Many of the stories given in Neil Anderson's books have a mystical, superstitious nature to them. If one did not know who the author was, he might think he was reading Roman Catholic or Charismatic material. For example, in one of the chapters dealing with female sexual abuse and freedom, a lady talks about her prior life of addiction and sexual abuse. She said:

- My stepfather died and we brought his favorite chair home. When I sat in the chair and looked down our hallway, I could see shadows darting from the kids' rooms to the bedroom across the hall. . . . One night a figure stood at the end of my bed and stared at me. It was tall and dark with a short-looking child standing beside it. These apparitions occurred off and on for several months. . . . One day I decided it was time for action, so I took my father's chair to a flea market and sold it. After that we all stopped seeing ghosts in our home.⁴⁴

That is flat out superstition. What is the difference between the apparitions the Roman Catholic Church claims to see all over the world and this account? There was a time when all Bible-believing churches would have planted their feet and preached against this. We ridiculed Roman Catholicism for putting stock in their stories. We did not accept their stories about seeing the Virgin Mary and so on. Now the Evangelical Church has its own book of stories.

Anderson gives another example of a woman with an abusive background who was currently involved in immorality:

- "Janelle, we can help you with your problems because there is a battle going on for your mind which God has given us authority to win." As soon as I spoke those words Janelle suddenly went catatonic. She sat as still as stone, eyes glazed over and staring into space.
"Have you ever seen her behave like this?" I asked her pastor and fiance.

“No,” they answered wide-eyed. They were more than a little frightened.

“Well, there’s nothing to worry about, I’ve seen it before,” I said. “We’re going to take authority over it, but it’s important that you two affirm your right standing with God in order to prevent any transference of this demonic influence.”

I addressed the demonic influence in Janelle: “In the name of Christ and by His authority, I bind you to that chair and I command you to sit there.”

I wish I could have videotaped my encounter with Janelle that day in order to show the skeptics what happens when Satan’s attempt is confronted by God’s authority.⁴⁵

Anderson then described how he bound the demons in Janelle and led her through the steps to freedom. There is no support in Scripture for this type of foolishness. If Roman Catholics or Charismatics did this we would say this was superstitious mysticism.

Past Influences

According to Anderson how does one become set free from ancestral demonic influence?:

- In order to walk free from past influences, pray the following prayer: . . . I here and now reject and disown all the sins of my ancestors. . . . I cancel out all demonic working that has been passed on to me from my ancestors. . . . I now command every familiar spirit and every enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ that is in or around me to flee my presence and never to return⁴⁶

But even then, the seven steps to freedom might not be enough:

- Once you have secured your freedom by going through these seven steps, you may find demonic influences attempting re-entry days or even months later. One person told me that she heard a spirit say to her mind, “I’m back” two days after she had been set free.⁴⁷

Again, how does this differ from Charismatic or Roman Catholic exorcisms? What was once condemned as unbiblical has now been adopted.

Victimization of the Believer

Psychology has taught us that we are victims of our past. Now there are those who say we are victims of demons:

- Lydia is a middle-aged woman who was dealt a bad hand in life right from the beginning.⁴⁸

Aren't all of us dealt a bad hand? David said, "In sin my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5).

- Memories of ritual and sexual abuse that she suffered as a young child have haunted her continually throughout her Christian life. When she came to see me her damaged self-image seemed beyond repair.

Damaged self-image? There is no mention in Scripture of a person with that problem. Anderson then asked her how she perceived herself:

- "I'm evil," she answered stoically. "I'm just no good for anybody . . ." "You're not evil," I argued. "How can a child of God be evil?"

[Anderson then explained how he wrote down some verse telling who we are in Christ. He then wanted her to read these verses out loud.]

Lydia took the paper and began to read the first statement aloud rather haltingly: I am th-the s-s-salt of the . . . Suddenly her character changed. She looked up and sneered, No way, you dirty son of a _____!

It is never pleasant to see the evil one express his ugly personality through a **victim** like Lydia.⁴⁹ (emphasis mine)

In this case Lydia is portrayed as a victim. Here is a poor Christian, indwelt, possessed, and controlled by a demon. She is not to blame for her foul language or her abusive speech. But what about the instruction from Scripture, to "let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth" (Eph. 4:29)? Does this not apply to her? According to Anderson she is a poor victim, with damaged self-esteem, indwelt by a demon. He then says:

- But I took authority over him through prayer in Christ's name

and led Lydia through the steps to freedom. She was able to gain a whole new perspective of who she really is in Christ.⁵⁰

Here is a woman who supposedly is a Christian, by his and her testimony, who is indwelt and controlled by a demon, who spews forth many obscenities out of her mouth. If this woman was saved, what was she saved from? At the most one could say only that if she died she would not have gone to hell. But she was not saved from the power of the devil. Yet, isn't that what happens at salvation? But in this situation, we find a supposed believer controlled by a demon and shouting obscenities.

Anderson says:

- Are you one of those Christians who lives in the quiet desperation of bondage to fear, anger, depression, habits you can't break, thoughts or inner voices you can't elude, or sinful behavior you can't escape? I'm not saying that every spiritual problem is the result of direct demonic activity. But you may be in bondage because you have overlooked or denied the reality of demonic powers at work in the world today.⁵¹

He does say that not every spiritual problem is the direct result of demonic activity, but later on in the book he says 85 percent of Christians have demon problems. That means most Christians are victims of demonic powers. But what did James say? Each one of us falls into sin when we are enticed by our own lusts and lured away (James 1:14). But if Anderson is right, that only applies to 15 percent of us. The rest have demon problems.

We do not want to make light of the struggles we have as believers, but we do not find support for this in Paul's letters to the churches. So how can Anderson say this could be our problem? Plus, all these things he lists, (bondage to fear, anger, depression, and habits that cannot be broken) the Bible classifies as sin.

Concerning sexual sin, Anderson says:

- Virtually every person I have counseled regarding a spiritual conflict has confessed some kind of sexual aberration. Some were in bondage to uncontrollable lust. Others were the victims of demonic sexual attack. . . . If there is such a thing as demonic transference from one person to another, I would say

that illicit sexual union is the chief means by which it happens.⁵²

But what does Paul say the terrible thing about illicit sex is? The person takes Christ and joins Him to a harlot (1 Cor. 6:16). But Anderson says it is a transfer of demons. There is direct conflict between Neil Anderson and the Apostle Paul:

Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, or adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9–11).

This passage does not say that “people who do these things will not enter the kingdom of God unless they are victims of demons.” People are responsible for their actions and those who practice these things will not enter the kingdom.

Anderson continues:

- “I received the following letter from a young woman I have never met . . . Dear Neil, . . . For the first 14 years of my life I lived with an oppressive, abusive mother who never said “I love you” or put her arms around me when I cried. I received no affection, no kind words, no affirmation, no sense of who I was—only physical and emotional abuse.⁵³

She then goes on to state that she became a believer, but then she says:

- I lost my joy and closeness to the Lord. . . . The demons attacked my sense of right and wrong, and I became involved in immorality in my search for identity and love. But that all ended yesterday when I renounced Satan’s control in my life.⁵⁴

Let us think about this statement theologically. Jesus said that “out of the heart of man proceed all kinds of immorality” (Mark 7:21–23). But her problem was not immorality coming from the heart, her immorality was coming from a demon. Who are we supposed to believe?

When we get our theology from stories and experiences instead of Scripture we get ourselves in trouble because there are no boundaries to keep us in check.

(For more on this issue of victimization, see Jim Owen's book, *Christian Psychology's War on God's Word: The Victimization of the Believer*. EastGate Publisher, Santa Barbara, California.)

Horoscope Theology

I remember sitting in a Baptist Church in Winona Lake, Indiana, while I was a seminary student. The place was filled and an altar call was given that included everyone. When it was done, my wife and I were the only ones who did not go up to the altar. When I looked up I could see the pastor looking at us as if we had done the wrong thing by not going up. Why? Because his invitation included everybody and we did not go up. The same is often true in determining the criteria for who has been demonized. In reading the material of these men the reader is likely to ask, "Who is not a victim of demonization?"

Here is an example of this type of thinking:

- Where people are plagued by evil thinking and lustful thoughts and practices, and when they find themselves lying and perhaps blaspheming God, there is very likely some degree of demonic invasion.⁵⁵

What believer has never had a lustful thought? Yet this type of thinking would have us believe it could be a demon. This sounds like the Charismatics. What happened with Jimmy Swaggart's problem with prostitutes? Oral Roberts came in and supposedly delivered him from a long-fingernailed demon that was making him do these things. If we believe these men's stories, why don't we believe Oral Robert's and Jimmy Swaggart's stories? Who decides whose stories we are going to believe?

Here is another example:

- To illustrate how human and spiritual forces of wickedness work together, ask any group of committed Christians this question: How many of you have been awakened for no apparent reason at 3 a.m? I ask that question regularly in my conferences, and about two-thirds of the participants raise their hands.

Satanists meet from 12 to 3 a.m., and part of their ritual is to summon and send demons. Three in the morning is prime time for demon activity, and if you have been awakened at that time it may be that you have been targeted.⁵⁶

Who hasn't woke up at 3 a.m. sometime in their life? Yet, this type of statement sows something in our minds the next time we wake up at that time. We may start to think we are targeted by demons. But this is totally subjective. Where in Scripture does it talk about the time Satan and his demons are sent out? But this man supposedly knows because he has talked to people who were involved with Satanism. Should the people of God "consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter, should not a people consult their God" (Is. 8:19)? The Charismatics have promoted this type of doctrine for years but now there are leading Evangelicals who are endorsing this type of foolishness.

Three Levels of Bondage

Anderson states that there are three levels of demonic bondage:

- It is my observation that no more than 15 percent of the evangelical Christian community is completely free of Satan's bondage. . . . The other 85 percent are struggling along fruitlessly at one of at least three levels of spiritual conflict.⁵⁷

The Scripture never addresses Christians as being under Satanic bondage, yet Anderson says 85 percent of Christians are not able to live fruitful godly lives because of it. What kind of salvation leaves more than eight out of ten believers under the power of Satan's bondage? How does this square with the fact that Jesus rendered the devil powerless for all who believe (Heb. 2:14)?

Plus, this 85 percent is subjective. Where does this number come from? What if someone tells him that only two percent of Christians are having this problem? Who is right? Scripture does not say. Yet many will accept this figure because the person writing this claims to be an expert.

Anderson says of the first level of bondage:

- First, a believer may lead a fairly normal Christian life on the outside while wrestling with a steady barrage of sinful thoughts

on the inside: lust, envy, greed, hatred, apathy, etc . . . I see about 65 percent of all Christians living at this level of spiritual conflict.⁵⁸

A statement like that can make us wonder if we belong on that level. Who hasn't struggled with a lustful thought, greed, envy, hatred or apathy? Even Paul cried out, "O wretched man that I am" (Rom. 7:24). These things are an ongoing struggle for all believers in this life. If Anderson is correct, Paul must have fit into this 65 percent.

The second level of conflict includes:

- Those who can distinguish between their own thoughts and strange evil voices which seem to over power them. . . . About 15 percent of all Christians fall into this category.⁵⁹

Concerning the third level:

- The individual has lost control and hears voices inside his mind which tell him what to think, say, and do. . . . Sadly, about 5 percent of the Christian community falls victim to this level of deception and control.⁶⁰

This has become so subjective and broad. It is just like psychology in that it ends up encompassing everyone. We may identify with some of the criteria and think we have a demon problem when in fact the criteria describes 99.9 percent of all people. It is like horoscopes—they all fit. When I go to an Oriental restaurant and read the horoscopes on the table, I can find something about myself in each of the sections. The same is true with this issue of demonization.

This emphasis on experience and stories in dealing with sin is dangerous. As we have seen, when we abandon the Word of God as the sole authority for dealing with sin and living the Christian life, there is nothing to keep us in line theologically. The only solution is for us to return to the Word of God as the sole source of instruction for godly living.

C O N C L U S I O N

We should praise God for a salvation that is full and complete. Salvation is more than just being saved from hell. It extends to all areas of our Christian life and that includes demons. Yes, we still struggle with sin, (and the devil wages war with us every moment of our lives) but Christ's death and resurrection have provided the victory over sin and Satan. As believers we have everything we need to live the Christian life. We go to the Word of God and stand firm. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit who empowers us. There are no forces past or present that can keep us as children of God from being everything God intended for us in Christ. It does not matter what our family background was. It does not matter what kind of occult background our ancestors may have had.

I wish there were seven steps to spiritual victory. But there are not. There is only moment by moment, day by day, reliance upon the living God, His truth, and submission to the Holy Spirit. That is all we need. We are always looking for that one formula that will lift us above the struggles, battles, and warfare, but that is not the Christian approach to life. It is an ongoing battle and warfare. "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

As impressive as the doctrines of men concerning demons may be, they do not match up with Scripture. This new teaching concerning demons is unbiblical. There should be an outcry against this in the Church. Yet there are men promoting such teachings and there are many people buying and reading their books. We cannot judge the hearts of the men who teach these things but we can question their theology. The men teaching these doctrines must be responsible for their teaching. Believers who pay to read and listen to their

material are accountable before God for their unfaithfulness as well. Believers are not to be “tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14).

The battle goes on. This doctrine of dealing with demons is just a variation of Charismatic theology which teaches that you can have an experience that will set you above it all. But God’s plan is to do battle in His strength, by His grace and provision. That keeps us depending on Him. Is that discouraging? No. Jesus said, “I will never leave you or forsake you” (Heb. 13:5). He has given us the Spirit of God to dwell in us as a seal. I do not need to go through someone’s seven steps to get the devil out of my life. I am opposed to any teaching, regardless of the sincerity of intentions, that would undermine, discredit, or attack the finished work of Christ and its effect in the life of the believer.

(For those who would like to further pursue this issue of believers and demonization I suggest Thomas Ice’s and Robert Deans’ book, *Overrun By Demons*, Harvest House, 1990.)

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