

CHAPTER 9

USER-FRIENDLY DELIVERANCE

When we begin to cultivate an openness to the supernatural power of God's Holy Spirit in our lives and in our churches, we should expect that God's work will be opposed. There will be some pushback. And it won't just be the people who don't like the changes or those who feel uncomfortable and leave. We must never forget that we live in a world at war and a spiritual battle rages on all around us each day.

As J. I. Packer once said, whenever God moves, Satan keeps pace. The enemy of our faith will do whatever is in his power to discourage you, to frighten you, and to enslave as many as he can in fleshly bondage and spiritual darkness. And one of the most significant ministries of the church is to liberate people from this bondage, from their enslavement to the demonic. My aim in this chapter isn't to persuade you that born-again Christians can be demonized. I believe that believers can be demonized, and I've addressed that issue in detail in a chapter in another book I've written called *Tough Topics*.¹ In what follows, I take for granted that we are engaged in a serious spiritual battle and that demonic assault of God's people is a daily reality that we ignore to our great harm.

There is no explicit reference in the New Testament to a spiritual gift of deliverance. I must say, however, that I have known several individuals who have demonstrated a powerful, extraordinarily authoritative,

¹ *Tough Topics: Biblical Answers to 25 Challenging Questions* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2013), 166–183.

ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." (Jude 8-9)

At first glance, it might sound like Peter and Jude are warning us against confronting or speaking against angelic beings, even fallen, demonic ones. But a careful reading shows that these texts do *not* mean that we, as Christians, are forbidden to rebuke or verbally resist or pronounce judgment against demonic beings. Neither unbelievers (the "false teachers") nor even the holy angels have the authority that we have received by virtue of our being in Christ. In Christ, with his authority, we both can and must resist and rebuke the enemy (see Luke 10:1-20; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16-18; 19:12). Jude does not extend to Christians the restriction he places on Michael.

Still others avoid deliverance ministry because they wrongly assume that Christians cannot be demonized. While I've addressed this elsewhere, I will make a few brief points here. First, we should observe that every case of demonization described in the New Testament involves someone under the influence or control, in varying degrees, of an indwelling evil spirit. The word "demonization" is never used in the NT to describe someone who is merely oppressed or harassed or attacked or tempted by a demon. In every case, reference is made to a demon either entering, dwelling in, or being cast out of the person. Matthew 4:24 and 15:22 at first appear to be exceptions to this rule, but the parallel passages in Mark 1:32-34 and 7:24-30 indicate otherwise. *To be "demonized," in the strict sense of that term, is to be inhabited by a demon with varying degrees of influence or control.*

Even if it should be proven that a Christian cannot be indwelt by a demonic spirit, almost everyone would concede that the born-again can be oppressed, tormented, and in a variety of ways

spiritually and mentally assaulted by the powers of darkness. I raise this to point out that *regardless of where the demon might be, believers are often in need of deliverance and the freedom that Christ died to obtain for them.*

We must also honestly acknowledge that some avoid deliverance ministry because they are afraid of encountering the demonic. Hollywood portrayals of ritual exorcism have not helped in this regard. And of course Satan himself loves nothing more than to intimidate Christians with offensive images, sounds, and a variety of physical manifestations for which they feel altogether ill equipped. But none of the preceding excuses would ever have Satan's desired effect on Christians if the latter were fully aware of their identity in the risen Christ and the unchallenged authority that is theirs in Jesus' name. So that's where we must begin. The foundation of biblical deliverance ministry is a clear understanding of Christian identity and the authority believers have in Christ.

The Believer's Identity and Authority in Christ

Of the many biblical texts that address the availability of Christ's power over evil beings to believers, none does so with the clarity and conviction of Luke 10. In the first verse of that chapter, we read: "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go" (Luke 10:1). By "others" Luke means other than the twelve apostles. These were non-apostolic disciples, followers of Jesus. Luke 10:1 stands in contrast to Luke 9:1 where Jesus "called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons." I mention this distinction because some Christians try to excuse their lack of engagement in deliverance ministry or their feelings of spiritual impotence by pointing to the fact that "the twelve" were given "power and authority over all demons" but not themselves.

and undeniably effective ministry in helping others find freedom from demonic oppression. Whether or not they were operating in the power of a spiritual gift or simply taking advantage of that authority given to all Christians in the name of Christ is of little concern to me. What matters is that we, as individual believers and as a church, come to understand the importance of this ministry and how to effectively facilitate the deliverance of those who suffer from demonic attack.

Six Reasons Why Christians Avoid Deliverance Ministry

I know that some of you reading this book will be tempted to skip this chapter. (Others may have turned immediately here.) For some people, it's just not something of interest. But my suspicion is that most who quickly turn the page do so because they are frightened by the subject of spiritual warfare and feel ill-equipped to handle the ugly and often disruptive outbursts that occur when the Holy Spirit confronts the realm of principalities and powers. But it is essential that we enter and engage in these spiritual battles. We cannot stick our head in the sand and ignore this reality. Evil beings have the power to affect our relationship with God—if we are ill equipped to engage with them.

If we ever hope to encourage people in our local churches to deal courageously and effectively with demonic activity, we need to educate them on why they feel so reticent to get involved in the first place. Many Christians avoid deliverance ministry because they have been offended by those who have taken it to unbiblical and damaging extremes. Make no mistake, the professing church has been damaged by the so-called ministries of men and women who argue that every sin is demonically induced. We hear them speak of the “spirit of nicotine” or the “spirit of greed” or the “spirit of anxiety.” Virtually every moral weakness, addiction, or spiritual failure, together with every other grievous transgression, is attributed by such folk not to the fleshly impulses of our selfish, fallen selves but to

some demon who is responsible for its presence and enslaving power in our lives. Can Satan or one of his demons aggravate and intensify our chosen acts of rebellion and unbelief? Yes. Can he cripple us with feelings of shame and guilt and blind us to the liberating grace of the cross of Christ? Yes. But no one can justifiably exonerate their bad behavior by insisting that “the devil made me do it!”

Lingering in the memories of some people are horrible scenes of a helpless man or woman being angrily berated by a deliverance expert or having a crucifix pressed painfully on their forehead. One thing I do know about the devil: he's not hard of hearing. Increased decibel levels spewed from the mouths of spiritual showmen accomplish nothing. Sadly, this type of manipulative excess has turned off many believers from ever giving serious consideration to what can be done to serve and set free those who are genuinely and grievously afflicted by the demonic.

Others avoid deliverance ministry because they wrongly believe that deliverance is a special ministry for special people with special spiritual gifts. Whenever there is a manifestation of demonic activity, they instinctively turn to see if that especially “spiritual” person is available to deal with the problem. They feel inadequate and often excuse their withdrawal by insisting that they simply don't have that particular spiritual gift. At the bottom of this hesitation is a failure to understand the full extent and efficacy of the authority given to all believers by Jesus himself.

I've also come across some Christians who avoid deliverance ministry because of a wrong interpretation of 2 Peter 2:10–11 and Jude 8–9. Peter speaks of holy angels who, “though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them [fallen angels / demons] before the Lord.” Even more daunting is what we read in Jude:

Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious

"I'm not an apostle," I've heard on countless occasions. "What reason do I have for believing that I might have that kind of authority?" Well, the reason is Luke 10, where average, non-apostolic followers of Jesus are given the same authority as the apostles over Satan and his forces.

Jesus sent these disciples out "two by two" to provide mutual protection, encouragement, and support, and also to establish legal attestation and binding testimony to what might subsequently occur (see Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15). It would appear that the commissioning, authorizing, and empowering of the seventy-two (some texts read "seventy") is a prelude to the ministry of the larger universal body of Christ. As Susan Garrett explains, "Luke may have conceived of the mission by 'seventy (-two) others' as foreshadowing the period of the church, when not only the twelve but *many* sons and daughters would receive the Spirit of the Lord and prophesy, and would thereby be enabled to carry out Jesus' work."²

The narrative of their experience picks up in verses 17–20 of Luke 10.

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

In my opinion, this is the most important passage in all of Scripture when it comes to equipping and encouraging average Christian men and women to engage the enemy. Here's why! For starters, you can't escape the obvious excitement shown by the

² Susan Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 48.

seventy-two when they return. "Even the demons are subject to us in your name!" (emphasis mine). In other words, "Wow!" Perhaps they had low expectations for the outcome of this ministry journey and were genuinely surprised by the effectiveness of the power they were given. But notice the clear excitement they have afterward. They understand that what they've experienced is something new.

We should also notice that they do not simply say the demons are "subject to us." No, they are "subject to us" only "in your [Christ's] name." The authority and the power that produced results belonged to Christ. His name empowered everything they did. Jesus had imparted it to or invested it in them.

It is unlikely that the "fall" (v. 18) of Satan referred to in Luke 10 is a reference to his original, pre-temporal, fall into sin, since Jesus' comment was directly in response to their report concerning the success they had experienced in casting out demons. As Sydney Page points out, "the context demands a reference to a fall that is the result of being defeated, not a fall that is the result of sinning."³ So when Jesus tells them that he "saw" Satan fall what does he mean by this? The verb used here (*theoreo*) is not used elsewhere for visions Jesus had (although it is used to describe the visions that others experienced: see Acts 7:56; 9:7; 10:11). Whether or not Jesus experienced a vision or simply is using figurative language is unimportant. Of more significance is the nature and time of this fall of the enemy.

This fall that Jesus speaks about could refer to a visionary experience in which Jesus "saw" the impending fall or demise of the devil, an event yet to be fulfilled (cf. Daniel 7:2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13). Perhaps Jesus was looking forward to the judgment Satan would incur by virtue of the atoning sacrifice of the cross and the subsequent resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Other biblical interpreters see here a reference to Satan's fall that occurred because of

³ Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 109.

his defeat in the wilderness when he failed in the tempting of Jesus. Still another possibility is that this fall is a reference to his defeat each time his house is plundered (Matthew 12:22–32) as a result of successful deliverance ministry. Whichever view is correct, Jesus is not saying that because of this fall from heaven Satan is no longer active or a threat. In fact, in verse 19 Jesus issues a promise that makes sense only if there are real dangers from which his disciples need to be protected. He says to his disciples: “I have given you authority” (Luke 10:19a).

Authority simply means delegated power. This not only refers to responsibility (the prerogative) but also entails *the spiritual power to enforce compliance*. Authority is the right and power to act and speak as if Jesus himself were present (v. 16). I once heard author and pastor Neil Anderson say something about authority that bears repeating here: “Spiritual warfare is not a horizontal tug of war but a vertical chain of command.” In other words, we must never envision ourselves as operating on a level playing field with Satan and his demons. Alone and in the power of our own identity, we don’t stand a chance against him. But in Christ and on the basis of who we are in him and in light of the authority of the risen Lord that has been bequeathed to us, Satan and his demons are a defeated lot. They must obey us. Don’t ever think of yourself as at one end of a rope and Satan at the other, both of you struggling to overpower the other. No! You are in Christ who is over all. Satan is beneath you, in Christ’s name.

Over what or whom have we been given this authority? What are the “serpents” and “scorpions” mentioned in Luke 10:19? These references are not to be taken literally but are a vivid and symbolic way of describing demonic beings. Serpents and scorpions were familiar sources of evil and pain in Palestinian life and frequently symbolized all kinds of adversity and affliction (see Numbers 21:6–9; Deuteronomy 8:15; Psalms 58:4; 140:3). The scorpion was also a means of divine chastisement in 1 Kings 12:11, 14 (see also Luke

11:11–12). And we are all familiar with Satan’s identification with the serpent (Genesis 3; 2 Corinthians 11; Revelation 12 and 20). Satan’s domain is that of snakes and scorpions (see especially Psalm 91:12–13).

If you still have doubts, notice that Jesus explains the meaning for us. He connects the “serpents and scorpions” of Luke 10:19 with the “demons” of verse 17. “Serpents and scorpions” are parallel to “all the power of the enemy,” an undeniable reference to Satan and his hosts. And in verse 20, Jesus again indicates clearly that “serpents and scorpions” are a reference to demonic “spirits” (Revelation 9:3, 5, 10 lends support to this interpretation).

Jesus’ warning in verse 20 isn’t suggesting that it is wrong or sinful to rejoice in the authority we have over the demonic. If it were, Jesus would never have given such authority to his disciples in the first place. The point of this verse is that *in comparison with* being saved, such power is far less significant. Authority over the demonic spirits is great. But being saved, forgiven, and having one’s name recorded in the book of life is greater!

So what is the significance of all this? Do we, the church, have this same authority today? Or was this a temporary endowment? My answer is not that we have the *same* authority, it’s that we have even *greater* authority! I say this for several reasons. First of all, remember that this commission and the authority and power it entailed was given to the seventy-two, not simply to the twelve. It isn’t possible to restrict this authority to a select few. Jesus’ selection of seventy-two is done in anticipation of the worldwide mission of the entire body of Christ. The seventy-two were not uniquely gifted or specially called people with high office or position in the body of Christ. They were ordinary followers of Jesus, just like you and me.

In addition, we now live and operate on *this* side of the cross, subsequent to the defeat of Satan. In other words, their authority and power, prior to the cross, can hardly be regarded as equivalent to ours, subsequent to the cross. We also live and operate on *this* side

of Pentecost. We operate with the fullness of the indwelling power and presence of the Holy Spirit. They did not have that indwelling presence. We have the fullness of divine authorization as stated unequivocally in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–19).

Christians often forget this. We fail to fully appreciate the fact that we have been raised up and seated with the exalted Lord, under whose feet all principalities and powers have been subjected (Ephesians 1:19–2:7; Colossians 2:9–10). The proof of the pudding is in the eating. In other words, the *evidence* of authority is the *exercise* of authority. One need only read numerous texts of the authority and power operative in the early church, following the ascension of Jesus, to see confirmation of this point. (I suggest you read closely Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:18; 19:12–16; 2 Corinthians 10:3–4; Ephesians 6:10–13; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 2:13–14.)

The Exercise of Authority: Binding, Resisting, Rebuking

To this point I've labored to establish that every believer possesses authority over the demonic by virtue of our relationship to Jesus Christ. But how is this authority manifest? Some people use a variety of different words—a diverse vocabulary—when they engage in deliverance ministry. They speak of “rebuking” the enemy or “binding” the demonic. So is the use of these terms a legitimate biblical expression of our authority over the enemy? Some say no. They argue that we should simply pray and ask God to do the work of deliverance. “Why not just pray, ‘O God, please resist, rebuke, and bind this evil spirit for me?’” They insist that we should always defer to God and never personally confront or resist the enemy ourselves.

But consider Ephesians 6:10–20. Here, Paul calls upon the church to take an active role in standing firm and struggling against the enemy. We should pray and ask for God to work, of course, but

we must not stop there. We also need to avail ourselves of the power and weaponry secured for us by Christ's victory. Let us not forget that, as we've just seen in Luke 10, God has *delegated* his authority to us. It is not God's plan to settle all our spiritual disputes apart from our involvement. He wants us to *utilize* the authority he has invested in us. One reason may be that God wants us to share in and to enjoy the thrill of victory (Jesus is obviously pleased with the response of the seventy-two in Luke 10).

Another way of saying this is that God is pleased to utilize *means*, namely us, in the pursuit of his ends. In other words, God wants to involve us in the work of the kingdom. We are his representatives, spokesmen, ambassadors in evangelism, ministry, and so too in spiritual warfare. No one would ever think of saying: “O God, preach the gospel to the lost,” or “O God, teach the truth to your people,” or “Lord, would you please visit the sick today as I'm simply too busy.” We would rightly consider a person who prays and does nothing to be disobedient. Rather, God desires to use us in proclaiming the gospel and in teaching the principles of Scripture and in ministering in mercy to those who are hurting. We have been entrusted with his authority, his power, and his gifts to minister to his people in his name and to participate in expanding his kingdom.

“O.K.,” you say, but “is it biblical to *bind* the enemy?” Should we use that term? Well, let's take a look at where that term comes from. The only texts in Scripture where the term “bind” is used are in Matthew 12:29; 16:19; and 18:18. In the first of these it is Jesus who bound the devil, most likely a reference to his victory over him in the wilderness. Whereas Jesus is nowhere recorded as saying, “I bind you,” he did, in point of fact, “bind” or restrict or inhibit the ability of the enemy to keep people in bondage.

In Matthew 16:19 we read of the “keys” (see Luke 11:52) granted to the leadership of the church. These are likely a reference to the power to know, understand, and proclaim the terms on the basis

of which entrance into or exclusion from the kingdom of God is granted. Whatever we “bind” (prohibit) or “loose” (allow) through the proclamation of the gospel will prove to be an earthly application or confirmation of what heaven has already decreed. We have been given authority to pronounce forgiveness or judgment depending on a person’s response to the truth (cf. John 20:23). The context of Matthew 18:18 is church discipline. Jesus is speaking about the decision of the church in adjudicating a dispute between two people. In this context, to “bind” is to declare someone guilty. Conversely, to “loose” is to declare them innocent. The decision of the church on earth reflects the decision already made in heaven. That is to say, when we conform to biblical guidelines and accurately declare the terms on which membership and fellowship in the church are possible, our decisions will be an earthly expression of heaven’s prior decree.

In studying these passages, I find nothing in these three texts that gives explicit endorsement to the practice of saying, “Satan, I bind you in Jesus’ name.” However, before we dismiss this as an unbiblical practice, we need to observe a few other explicit commands of Scripture. In Ephesians 6 we are told to “stand” (v. 11) against the schemes of the devil. We have also been equipped with this spiritual armor that we might “withstand” in the evil day (v. 13). More explicit still is the statement by James that we should “resist the devil,” together with the assurance that if we do “he will flee from” us (James 4:7). Likewise, Peter says, “Resist him,” that is, our “adversary the devil” (1 Peter 5:8–9). To “resist” means to stand against or to oppose, to set oneself against someone or something. To resist Satan or his demons thus means to employ the authority and power given us by God to restrict his/their activities, to restrain his/their efforts, to thwart his/their plans.

So, while there is nothing in Scripture that requires us to use the term “bind” or speak of “binding” the demonic, there are plenty of passages that speak of resisting, opposing, and employing the

authority Jesus has given us over the demonic. And because “bind” means to inhibit or to restrain someone from an action or activity, I think we have sufficient warrant to use the term if we wish to. So it is true that neither Jesus nor anyone else in the New Testament ever says: “Satan (demon), I bind you.” On the other hand, both Jesus and Christians do, in terms of practical and experiential impact, “bind” him/them, primarily by the truth of God’s word spoken (Matthew 4:1–11) and moral resistance (Ephesians 6:10–20). To put it simply, while we should not be too dogmatic about terms and should avoid appealing to the three texts cited above in Matthew’s gospel to support our practice, I believe it is theologically permissible to use the terminology of “binding” when we resist the enemy.

What about “rebuking” the enemy? Is this biblical? The term “rebuke” (*epitimao*) is used frequently by Jesus in his encounters with demonic spirits (Matthew 17:18; Mark 1:25; 3:12; 9:25; Luke 4:35, 41; 9:42). The term functions as a word of command by which evil forces are brought into submission. Thus “it combines the idea of moral censure expressed by the word *rebuke* with the notion of the subjugation of demonic powers. It shows that Jesus has authority over the evil spirits and that they are powerless to resist his control.”⁴

As an example of “rebuking” a spirit, consider Paul’s deliverance of the slave girl in Acts 16:18—“And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And it came out that very hour.” Clearly, the apostle didn’t say, “Evil spirit, I bind you,” or “I rebuke you.” But notice what he *did*. He effectively bound and rebuked the spirit when he said, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” Paul’s words were a rebuke to the demon, which bound (restricted or restrained) the evil spirit’s activity as it pertained to

4 Page, *Powers of Evil*, 143.

the slave girl. That's my point here. Whatever term we choose to use to describe it, this same power and authority exercised by Paul has been given to all Christians by the risen Lord.

Jesus' Approach to Deliverance

Jesus provides the best model for us in learning to interact with the demonic. There are numerous instances in the gospels where Jesus encountered the demonized, but one of the more helpful is Mark 5. There are several things that we learn from this passage (as well as a few others in Mark's gospel) that characterize Jesus' approach to deliverance. Not all of these are employed in every instance where Jesus encounters a demon, but each of them is important to remember for our own ministry.

The first thing we should notice in Mark 5 is that Jesus secures the name of the demon, or seeks to identify the spirit. In this case, it is a man who is indwelt by a "Legion" of demons. Jesus asks him, "What is your name?" (Mark 5:9). Why did Jesus do this? Some scholars point out that in the ancient world people believed that to know and speak someone's name was to gain spiritual authority over them. But Jesus already had this authority. Perhaps he did this to let those watching know the full extent of demonic power he was confronting. By asking for a name, Jesus makes it known that this man was under the influence of a virtual army of demons. The word "Legion" referred to a contingent of Roman soldiers, numbering upwards of 6,000. Or Jesus may have simply asked to reveal to the man himself how serious his condition was.

After asking the demon for a name, Jesus binds the spirit, which is to say, he prohibits it from some activity and thus curbs or breaks its power (see also Matthew 12:29). Then, he rebukes the spirit. Another way of saying this is that he censures or warns or denounces the demon. We see this explicitly again in Mark 1:25: "But Jesus rebuked him [the demon], saying, 'Be silent and come

out of him!'" We also observe this approach in Matthew 17:18; Mark 9:25; and Luke 9:42. This sort of *rebuke* is not just a verbal reproof but also a technical term for subjugation of the evil power.

After binding and rebuking the demon, he silences it. In Mark 1:34 we read that "he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And *he would not permit the demons to speak*, because they knew him" (emphasis mine). We don't know with certainty why he refused to let them speak, but Peter Davids cites three possible reasons.⁵

First, "the teachers of the law" associated him with Beelzebub, "the prince of demons" (3:22). Any tendency to show that he accepted the demonic would have given extra evidence to these opponents.

Second, to accept the testimony of demons about himself would give a precedent to his followers to accept (or even seek) testimony of demons about other things. This would threaten to make Jesus' movement an occult movement.

Third, and most important, Jesus' whole mission was a call to faith based on evidence, not on authoritative testimony. . . . Therefore the demons were short-circuiting Jesus' whole methodology. His command to them was a sharp "Shut up!" His invitation to the crowd at their expulsion was, "See and believe that the Kingdom of God has come."

After silencing the demonic spirits, Jesus would typically cast them out (see Matthew 8:16; Mark 1:25; 7:29), and after casting them out, he would refuse to let the spirit return. We read this in Mark 9:25—"And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, 'You mute

⁵ Peter H. Davids, *More Hard Sayings of the New Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 27.

and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and *never enter him again*” (emphasis mine). There are even some occasions in Scripture when Jesus would directly send a demon into the abyss. We read in Luke 8:31 that the demonic spirits themselves “begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss.” Why do the demons fear the abyss? Perhaps it is a place of imprisonment where they would be temporarily consigned, awaiting the final judgment. Or it may refer to the place of final punishment. We can’t be certain. Aside from its appearance here and in Romans 10:7, the word *abyssos* is found only in Revelation 9:1–2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3.

Regardless of the exact meaning of the word, we should note that Jesus did not always consign exorcised demons to the abyss or in some place of permanent detention. As seen above in the account of the demonized young boy in Mark 9, Jesus simply said, “I command you, come out of him and *never enter him again*” (v. 25, emphasis mine). This implies that the recurrence of demonization after deliverance was a possibility, and steps had to be taken to prevent such from happening. Evidently, often after being cast out from a person, a demon was free to return to the person or to enter someone else.

Notice in Mark 9 that Jesus criticizes the disciples for their lack of faith in dealing with this demonized boy (vv. 19, 28–29). Evidently, due to their previous success in deliverance ministry, they had come to believe that divine power was at their disposal to use as they saw fit, apart from constant reliance on God. But this kind of demon, says Jesus, can come out only by prayer (v. 29). This is intriguing, insofar as *there is not a single instance of deliverance by prayer in the New Testament*. Deliverance elsewhere always occurs by the word of *command*. It is also interesting to note that deliverance from an indwelling spirit is never granted in response to the faith of the one who is demonized, although it is sometimes related to the faith of others. One can only conclude that in particular cases where an especially powerful demon is involved, prayer may be needed.

Sydney Page notes that “Mark focuses on the need for prayer

because it clearly demonstrates that divine power is not under human control; it must always be asked for. Manifestations of the power of God, such as are needed when dealing with the forces of evil, come only in response to the attitude of trust and reliance upon God that is expressed in humble prayer.”⁶ Jesus doesn’t specify precisely what should be asked for in prayer, but we can assume that it is for the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to enable us to do what we in our own power could never accomplish (see Luke 11:13).

It surprises many to discover that even for Jesus, deliverance was not always instantaneous or without considerable resistance (see Mark 1:26; 5:8 [Lk. 8:29]; 9:26). If this is difficult to grasp, consider the analogy of a parent and his/her child. When my daughters were young and still in the home, and I would exercise parental authority and tell them to do something, or to cease from some activity; it was not unusual for them to delay their obedience. They would resist complying with my command, using any number of tactics. Soon, though, they began to obey, but then hesitate. They stalled, made excuses, and insisted on arguing about whether or not it was right or necessary for them to obey me. They might try to distract me from the issue at hand by diverting my attention to something of equal or greater urgency. They moved slowly, hoping I’d forget. They might even play me off against their mother, telling me that she had given her approval. If I persisted in the exercise of my authority as their parent, they would eventually do as I said or suffer the consequences!

I think something similar may be at work in the exercise of spiritual authority. Our approach should not be, “Speak the word of command in Jesus’ name, *and it is done*,” which usually leads to frustration and disillusionment. Our approach should be, “Speak the word of command in Jesus’ name *UNTIL it is done*.”

We should also remember that Jesus’ approach was never ritualistic or mechanical or magical. He employed no elaborate religious

6 Page, *Powers of Evil*, 164.

formula. No incantations. No candles. No mood music playing in the background. No charms. No religious formulas. No chanting. No dancing. No cutting off of a chicken's head. He didn't have to shout or jump up and down. He didn't physically restrain the demonized man or press a cross against his forehead. He didn't use "holy" water or incense. He simply said: "Shut up! Get out!"

It is little wonder, then, that the people of his day were amazed by how Jesus dealt with deliverance (see Mark 1:27; Matthew 9:32–33). According to Matthew 8:16, Jesus "cast out the spirits *with a word*" (emphasis mine). Jesus never appealed to a higher authority when expelling demons, unlike Paul, for example, who cast out a demon from the slave girl in Acts 16 by appealing to "the name of Jesus Christ" (v. 18).

Encounters with the Demonic and Deliverance in the Book of Acts

In addition to the encounters of Jesus in the gospels, there are several examples of demonic deliverance in the Book of Acts (see Acts 5:16; 8:5–8; 13:6–12; 16:16–18; 19:12). The story in Acts 19:13–17 is worthy of special attention:

Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.

Acts 19:13 contains the earliest known occurrence in Greek literature of the word "exorcist" (*exorkistes*) and the only occurrence of it in the New Testament. Whereas here it is used of the Jewish "exorcists," it is never used to refer to Christians engaged in deliverance ministry (perhaps because of its magical connotations).

Acts 19:12 tells us that Paul was engaged in a successful deliverance ministry in Ephesus. Although the connection is not explicit, Luke appears to link the presence of disease with that of demons as well as the healing from disease with the expulsion of demons. He also mentions that there were some itinerant exorcists present in the vicinity of Ephesus, but these were not Jewish Christians, otherwise they would have simply appealed to the name of Jesus as the one whom *they* preached. Any reference to Paul would have been unnecessary (v. 13). Also, we can see from the way the demon speaks of them that they were not true believers.

The demon that is referenced in this passage is portrayed as an intelligent being who is able to converse openly and clearly with humans. The demon is able to distinguish between Christian and non-Christian, between true faith and false profession. Strangely, this demon also appears to have something of a sense of humor. Note the sarcasm in his reply: "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, *but who [the heck] are you?*" (v. 15, emphasis mine). The question the demon asks is not for the purpose of learning their identity (names) or obtaining personal information about them. He is challenging their right to use the name of Jesus: "I know Jesus. I must bow to his authority and obey. And I know Paul acts in Jesus' name. But who are you that I should obey what you say or pay any attention to your demands?" As John Stott points out, "To be sure, there is power—saving and healing power—in the name of Jesus, as Luke has been at pains to illustrate (e.g., [Acts] 3:6, 16; 4:10–12). But its efficacy is not mechanical, nor can people use it second-hand."⁷

⁷ John Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World: The Message of Acts*

Christians, such as Paul, most certainly do have a right to the name of Jesus, and demons must obey.

This narrative demonstrates that demons are by nature violent and can infuse their victims with superhuman strength (v. 16). Although this does not mean we should never make physical contact with the demonized (Jesus certainly did; see Luke 4:40–41), it is certainly a cautionary note that we should never act presumptuously or carelessly when dealing with the supernatural power of the enemy.

Neil Anderson's Approach to Deliverance

Among the many approaches to deliverance ministry, I have found much that is helpful in the approach proposed by author Neil Anderson.⁸ Anderson advocates what he calls the *truth encounter* method of deliverance as opposed to the *power encounter*. A truth encounter requires that the demonized or oppressed individual personally renounce the enemy, repent of all known sin, affirm the truth, and submit to the Lordship of Jesus. No one else need be engaged in the process. It is a form of self-deliverance.

A truth encounter can be contrasted with a power encounter, which is when you confront the demon directly and verbally command that it identify itself (name, function, point of entry, etc. [although this is not essential to the power encounter]) and cast it out (to the abyss, or to wherever Jesus sends it). Jesus often employed the power encounter approach, as did Paul in Acts 16. To engage in a power encounter you would typically follow this approach: (1) *Expose* (discern and document that demonic activity is present), then (2) *engage* (identify, name, function, point or ground of entry), and then (3) *expel* (in the name and authority of Jesus).

(Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 307.

⁸ See especially, *The Bondage Breaker* (Eugene: Harvest House, 2000); *Victory over the Darkness: Realizing the Power of Your Identity in Christ* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1990); and *Ministering the Steps to Freedom in Christ* (Ventura: Gospel Light, 1998).

Anderson advises against power encounters in deliverance for two primary reasons. First, he argues that conversing with demons is never advisable because demons are liars (John 8:44). While I agree that demons will certainly try to lie, I believe they can be compelled to speak the truth when subjected to the authority of Christ. For an example of this, see Mark 1:24 where demons spoke the truth.

Anderson also argues that the epistles are our guide to deliverance, not the gospels or Acts. The epistles stress what we do for ourselves, not what others do for us. Anderson insists that he has not attempted to “cast out” a demon in years, instead helping people find freedom in Christ by enabling them to resolve their personal and spiritual conflicts. He believes that success in attaining freedom is dependent on the cooperation of the person who is oppressed. Anderson gives no textual or biblical arguments for rejecting the gospels and Acts as a pattern for deliverance. His position is probably the fruit of his dispensational approach to biblical interpretation, but I’m not convinced that we should limit deliverance ministry in this way.

While it is obviously ideal for an individual to participate in deliverance, what should we do for a younger child or someone who can’t perceive the truth sufficiently to work through Anderson’s “Steps to Freedom”? What if the bondage is so intense as to have crippled the person’s ability and strength to work through the steps, or if a person is so thoroughly deceived that he/she doesn’t believe the truth or effectiveness of the steps? What if the person has been blinded by the enemy (2 Corinthians 4:4)? Anderson’s truth encounter is certainly good and helpful and ought to be employed whenever possible. But in cases of severe demonic stronghold or intractable resistance, a direct power encounter may also be required.

Anderson asks the question, “If you expel or cast out a demon from someone, what is to prevent the demon from returning?” In other words, he says that without the involvement of the person, without the responsible activity and mental participation of the victim, the problem may disappear for a while only later to re-emerge.

My response is that what prevents a demon from coming back is the same authority and power by which it was compelled to leave in the first place. In Mark 9 Jesus commanded the spirit saying, "never return." So, too, should we. Of course, a person can always willingly re-open that door, but that possibility should not prevent us from helping them get free.

A final caution with Anderson's approach is that it is cognitive, a form of self-deliverance. *We are not exorcists, says Anderson, but facilitators:*

In a truth encounter, I deal only with the person, and I do not bypass the person's mind. In that way people are free to make their own choices. There is never a loss of control as I facilitate the process of helping them assume their own responsibility before God. After all, it isn't what I say, do or believe that sets people free—it's what they renounce, confess, forsake, whom they forgive and the truth they affirm that sets them free. This "truth procedure" requires me to work with the whole person, dealing with body, soul and spirit.⁹

But of course, in the final analysis, it isn't what "I" say, do, or renounce even in the power encounter, but what "I, in the name and authority of Jesus," say and do that brings deliverance. We need to remember that there is no power inherent in truth. All power is in God, and it is the God of truth who has power to set the captives free.

A Practical Model for Deliverance

Now that you've gained some familiarity with biblical examples of deliverance and we've looked at one of the most popular models for

⁹ Neil Anderson, *Released from Bondage* (San Bernardino: Here's Life Publishers, 1991), 17.

deliverance, we are ready to articulate the model for deliverance ministry employed at Bridgeway. I acknowledge that this certainly isn't the only way to approach those who are severely oppressed, but it's the approach that I've found most helpful.

Pray for Discernment

As you are getting started in the ministry of deliverance, I highly recommend the value of having someone skilled in deliverance and gifted in discernment present with you. It's one thing to read about this in a book or even in the Bible, it's another thing to practice it. Those who are new in deliverance ministry often presumptuously and incorrectly connect demonic spirits with certain emotional and/or psychological symptoms and bizarre behaviors. Experience is helpful. Whereas we don't want to ignore demons if they are present, even greater damage can be done by assuming that they are the cause of a problem when they aren't.

I mentioned having someone with the gift of spiritual discernment, so let me take a moment and briefly explain the spiritual gift of discerning of spirits. Unfortunately, nowhere in the New Testament is this gift defined, and the only place it is even mentioned is in 1 Corinthians 12:10. Because we know so little about this gift, we should avoid dogmatism in our efforts to identify and account for how it should operate in our lives. That being said, I suggest that this charisma is most likely the Spirit-empowered ability to distinguish between what the Holy Spirit does, on the one hand, and the works of another spirit (demonic) or perhaps even the human spirit, on the other. We must come to grips with the fact that not every supernatural display of power is produced by the Holy Spirit. My sense is that this is the type of discernment that the gift of discerning of spirits is designed to accomplish: to provide us with insight into the ultimate origin or cause of any particular spiritual phenomenon.

There is a sense in which all Christians are responsible to "test the spirits to see whether they be of God" (1 John 4:1), and the

ability to draw these conclusions does not require a special gift. We need only ascertain whether or not a person “confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh” (1 John 4:2). Those who do not, says John, are “not from God” but are operating in the “spirit of the antichrist” (1 John 4:3). The apostle Paul, on the other hand, has in mind a unique ability that is fundamentally intuitive or subjective in nature, a Spirit-energized ability that is only given to some in the body of Christ, not all. The spiritual gift of distinguishing of spirits is probably a supernaturally enabled sense or feeling concerning the nature and source of any particular spirit under consideration.

Again, we can’t be certain about this, but it is likely that we see examples of this gift in operation in the following texts. In Acts 16:16–18 Paul was able to discern that the power of a young slave girl was not divine but derived from a demonic presence. We also read in Acts 13:8–11 where Paul through the Holy Spirit saw that Elymas the magician was demonically empowered in his efforts to oppose the presentation of the gospel. In Acts 14:8–10 Paul “saw” (discerned?) that a man had faith to be healed. And in Acts 8:23 Peter is portrayed as in some sense “seeing” that Simon Magus was “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” How did he come by this knowledge? Perhaps it was through his exercise of the gift of discerning of spirits. Then there is Jesus himself. In John 1:47 he looked at Nathanael and described him as a man “in whom is no deceit.” Again in John 2:25 it is said that Jesus “knew what was in man.”

Here are some important steps we should take in the process of discernment:

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to open your spiritual eyes and speak to you regarding the individual. He may be pleased to reveal to you the cause of the oppression or what sins(s) might have occurred that gave the devil an “opportunity”

or “foothold” (NIV; literally, a “place”) in this person’s life (Ephesians 4:27).

- Pray with your eyes *open*. The presence of a demonic spirit will often lead to physical, visible manifestations. If it does, don’t react in disgust or surprise. Satan would love nothing more than to intimidate you into thinking that you are incompetent for the task of securing freedom for this individual. Don’t ever conclude that any case of demonic oppression or demonization is above your spiritual pay grade! Simply take authority over the spirit(s) in Jesus’ name. You may recall from the story in Mark 9 that when a father brought his demonized boy to Jesus for deliverance, the demon suddenly “convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth” (Mark 9:20). Even after Jesus commanded the demon to “come out of him and never enter him again” (9:25b), the physical manifestations didn’t immediately cease: “And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out” (9:26a).
- Learn (by experience) the signs and symptoms of oppression and demonization. This will only come with time, as no two cases are always precisely the same. I can say, however, that in most instances of serious demonization, I’ve discovered that the enemy will do everything possible to resist the truth of the gospel. As noted below, under point (3), when asked to read aloud of how “all rule and authority and power and dominion” have been “put under” the feet of the risen and exalted Christ (Ephesians 1:21–22), the afflicted person will often stutter, stumble, get distracted, complain of dizziness, or angrily refuse.

Instruct the Person

After you have prayed for discernment, take time to explain to the individual what you are doing and why. This will help alleviate their

fears and any anxiety they might be feeling. Explain to them that if they have a demon, this does not mean they are dirty, more sinful than other Christians, subspiritual, or unloved of God. Instruct the person to cooperate with what is happening by constantly giving you feedback: what they are feeling, thinking, physical sensations, intrusive thoughts, violent or sinful impulses, etc.

Articulate Your Authority in Christ

Begin by verbally declaring the authority of Christ and his supremacy over all demonic spirits. I encourage either you or the person who is suffering to read aloud Luke 10:17–20, Ephesians 1:15–23 (esp. v. 21), and Colossians 2:9–15. Direct, authoritative prayer and Bible-reading should stir and agitate demonic spirits if they are present. Ask the person if they are hearing or feeling anything unusual when you read the Bible or speak of Jesus and his blood.

Explore Other Possible Causes

Don't immediately assume that the problem is demonically caused. Conduct an interview of sufficient depth that you explore the possibility of other potential sources for the problem such as: physiological (have they had a physical examination recently?), prescription medication (are they on any?), other organic causes, stress, fatigue, circumstantial issues, relational dynamics, etc. Be aware of the fact that even if the presenting problem is caused by something other than a demonic spirit, the enemy can still aggravate, intensify, and exploit such factors.

Ask the Right Questions

Ask the person to give you a personal testimony of faith in Christ. Do they struggle in doing so? Are they able to affirm without agitation or hesitation their submission to the lordship of Jesus? Ask the person if they experience any special hindrances when they engage in spiritual activities such as praying, reading the Bible,

worship, etc. Ask them if at any time he/she is feeling anger or hate toward you. Do they feel prompted to assault you either verbally or physically?

Determine as best you can if any behavior or beliefs of the person may have opened the door to demonic activity. Focus particularly on *family history* (any involvement of ancestors in the occult or unbiblical practices) and *personal sins* (idolatry, witchcraft, unforgiveness, sexual immorality, etc.). If something in particular is discovered, lead the person in a prayer of confession, repentance, and repudiation of whatever it is that may have led to demonic intrusion. In short, lead them in a prayer by which *they* close any doors that may have been opened.

Confront the Enemy

I have found the most effective strategy is to engage the person in eye-to-eye contact. Explain to them that whereas you will be looking *at* them, you will not be speaking *to* them. You will be addressing any demonic spirit that might be present. (This is what Paul did in Acts 16:18.)

Look directly into their eyes and say: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and through the power of his shed blood and resurrection life, I take authority over any demonic spirit either present in or around _____ (name of person). In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command any and every demonic spirit to leave _____ (name of person) and never return."

You may find it necessary to repeat this prayer of command more than once. Demons are quite good at misdirection and will try to deceive you into thinking they have left when they are actually still present.

These commands and prayers for deliverance may take any number of forms. You may want to be specific in naming any sins that may have led to the problem. You may want to pray for the Holy Spirit to shine the light of revelation and truth into the person's

heart and mind, dispelling all darkness and confusion, etc. You may wish to pray prayers of protection over the person. Remember: the key is not in particular words or formulas but in the simple, irresistible authority of the risen Christ in whose name you act.

If there is a demon present, you can usually expect some form of resistance or physical manifestation. Encourage the person to report to you any impressions, thoughts, emotional impulses, physical sensations, voices, etc., that occur in the course of your prayer.

Assessment

One of three things is true. It may be that the demon(s) really did leave. Its departure may be loud, violent, and visible, or silent, simple, and unseen. Don't be too quick to draw conclusions about whether it left based on how the person felt or reacted. If you suspect it might still be present, repeat the above procedures.

There is also the possibility that the demon(s) is still there. If it is still present, there are at least three possible reasons: (1) the person doesn't want it to go; (2) the demon(s) has moral grounds for staying; or (3) this is an especially powerful demon that requires more prayer, faith, fasting, and concentrated effort on the part of all involved (see Mark 9:28–29).

Finally, you may have to reckon with the fact that the demon(s) was never there in the first place and that the nature and cause of the affliction (whether it be emotional or physical) is of a different order, calling for a different approach.

Concluding Prayer

It might be helpful to close with a prayer such as this:

Father, I thank you that _____ (name of person) is your child, redeemed by the blood of Christ Jesus, forgiven and justified by faith in his name, and indwelt by the precious and powerful Holy Spirit. Guard him/her. Protect

him/her. Surround your child with your angelic hosts. Fill him/her with a renewed sense of your love and the peace that surpasses all understanding.

Conclusion

We should passionately cherish and regularly give thanks for every promise spoken to us in Scripture. In view of Satan's determination to "devour" us (1 Peter 5:8), there is perhaps one promise that we should especially lay hold of and praise God for its fulfillment. Learning how to obey the command to "resist the devil" (James 4:7a) was the principal aim of this chapter. But the promise that follows the exhortation should be precious to every child of God: "and he will flee from you" (4:8b). I've tried to make it clear in this chapter that "the devil," or Satan, is a very real, very cunning, and very powerful enemy. But he is no match for the Christian who stands firmly in the authority of Christ and resists him. That's not arrogance or spiritual bravado. It's simply a matter of believing and acting on the promise of God: "he *will* flee from you." Whatever power Satan may have, ours in Christ is greater.

James does not suggest that Satan *might* flee from us if we resist him. He does not *hope* that such will be the case. He does not say that *perhaps* we will be successful in our opposition to his nefarious plans. He declares without hesitation or doubt that if we resist our enemy he *will* flee from us. If little else of practical benefit comes to you who read this chapter, I pray that you will move forward in your Christian life and in whatever ministry God has given you with a newly found and biblically grounded confidence in the authority and power given to every believer in the name of Jesus. Don't live in fear of the devil and his minions. Stand firm. Resist them. Rejoice and be glad in the exercise of the authority given to you in Christ, but even more so in the incomparable truth "that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).