

Hard Questions About Theology

Part 4: Is It the Devil or Just Me?

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For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Eph. 6:12

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Gal. 2:20

Q: *Can a Christian be demon possessed? Or have demonic activity in his/her life? Or do the work of the devil? Why do I entertain evil thoughts in my heart? Am I crazy or possessed? Why is this happening to me? Am I evil and a sinner or evil and possessed?*

Common Misconceptions

Demons are Hollywood fairytales with pointy horns and a pitchfork.

Demons were active when Christ was on earth, but their activity has subsided today.

What the early church called demonic activity we now understand to be psychological or mental illness.

All problems in a person's life are due to their continual "lack of surrender".

All inherited characteristics and personality quirks are unchangeable.

Christians are not subject to demon activity.

Demonic influence is only evident in extreme or violent behaviour and/or gross sin.

Freedom from spiritual bondage is the result of a power encounter with the demonic.

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases... Luke 9:1

What's the difference between the authority to rule and the ability to rule?

When I realize that I have both the power and authority, then I am able to deal with the enemy, with: belief; humility; boldness; dependence.

Understanding the Enemy

We live in a world that is under the authority of Satan. *John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 1 John 5:19*

For the believer Satan is no longer our ruler – Christ is our ruler. *Eph. 1:19-23; Phil. 3:20; Col. 1:13*

Satan keeps trying to rule our lives by deceiving us into believing we still belong to him. *1 Peter 5:8*

Our identity in Christ is eternally secure, but we can be controlled by Satan if we remain under his influence long enough. *Gal. 5:1; 2 Tim. 2:25-26*

Satan does his evil work through a hierarchy of spiritual forces – evil spirits, fallen angels, etc. *Eph.6:12; Rom. 8:38-39; Col. 1:6*



Ways that the Enemy Attacks the Believer

Temptation – resulting in sin and shame

Accusation – resulting in lack of identity and fear

Deception – resulting in pride and arrogance and defiance

The Result:

Influenced (probable) – *1 Peter 5:8*

Controlled (possible) – *Acts 5:3*

Owned (never) – *1 Peter 1:18-19*

My Steps to Freedom

Counterfeit vs. Authentic

But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 2 Cor. 11:3-4

Deception vs. Truth

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 1 John 1:7; Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. Ps. 32:2

Bitterness vs. Forgiveness

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Eph. 4:31-32

Rebellion vs. Submission

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. Rom. 13:1-2; Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. Heb.13:17

Pride vs. Humility

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. Prov. 3:5-7

Bondage vs. Freedom

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16

Agreement vs. Renunciation

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand {generations} of those who love me and keep my commandments." Exodus 20:4-5