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Bondage and Deliverance (Part 1)



Spiritual Warfare - Steve Gregg

In this discourse, Steve Gregg discusses demonic possession and deliverance based on his experiences with missionary work in Manila and encounters with possessed individuals. He asserts that Christians are not exempt from possession and that it is important to understand the realm of demonology in order to effectively address it. Gregg notes that while the Bible does not explicitly address demon possession among Christians, it is important to consult scriptural passages concerning encounters with demons by Jesus and his disciples. He cautions against basing doctrine solely on personal experiences and asserts that demonization is a measure of control or influence by a demonic spirit, rather than complete possession.

Transcript

I wish I had more details on the story I'm going to tell you about. I've heard it, I've read it, but I forget some of the details. The story, I think, occurred in the, I think it was in the early 1950s in the Philippines.

And there was a, it was a dramatic story that actually got into Time, or not Time, but Life Magazine, I believe, wrote a story on it back when it occurred. A young girl in Manila was seen to have attacks and seizures and just unexplainable torments in her life, where she was actually attacked by an unseen being that would actually sexually molest her, physically scratch her, and bite her, and she'd have these terrible bouts. The Manila police, as I recall, had actually put her in protective custody in jail just for her, to try to keep her safe from all attackers.

But these attacks continued even in jail. Whatever was attacking her was not able to be kept out by the VARs. And she became very noteworthy, and the news actually recorded it, or reported it on the news, and there was a missionary in Manila at that time named Lester Sumrall, who heard the report on the radio of this girl.

And he knew instantly, of course, that she was demon-possessed, and he felt the Lord told him that he should go and minister to her. So he went and asked permission to see the girl, and he ministered to her, and she was actually delivered of demons. And it was

so dramatic, it made international news.

As I say, I think Life magazine recorded it, because her case was so dramatic. Before she was delivered, apparently, she would have, in the mornings after she'd have these attacks, there'd be bite marks, like tooth bite marks, on the back of her neck, where she could never have bitten herself, and yet she'd been locked up in a cell all night. She'd have fists full of black hair, not human hair, they say it was like that of a wild boar or something like that, you know, some kind of strange experiences she had.

And these, I think all Christians will have to agree, were clearly of a demonic sort, although surprisingly so, because demons are spirit beings, not physical. It may come as a surprise to hear of demons that would actually leave physical marks, or even leave hair behind after a woman's had a bout with them. I'm sure that a skeptic would be inclined to suggest there'd been some trickery, or some kind of sleight of hand, or something going on, but there are enough cases of this type that come from the mission field, and from other sources, to cause the Christian to believe that this kind of thing, though rather extraordinary, is a real spiritual thing.

It is an actual encounter with real spirit beings, called demons. We do not know as much as we would like to know about demons, of course. Unfortunately, Christians, because of their curiosity, have often filled in many gaps by imagination alone, as to what demons are, and where they're from, and what their background is, and all that.

Of course, we have the traditional notion, which may be true, that the demons are fallen angels. There are other possible explanations, but that's the most prevalent among Christians. But there's a tremendous amount of demonology, as it is called, doctrine concerning the demonic realm, the satanic realm, that is really guesswork on the part of those who teach on it.

And I want to do my best to avoid resorting to guesswork when we talk about the phenomenon of demon possession. Unfortunately, we do not have a systematic teaching on the subject, given to us in Scripture. In fact, for the most part, our knowledge of the subject from Scripture is from anecdotal information, just cases where Jesus or the apostles encountered people who were demon-possessed and dealt with them.

From these cases, we can see some patterns developing, both of what kinds of symptoms may indicate that a person is demon-possessed. Also, there are some patterns that develop from these cases of what can be done to relieve them. But not every question is answered.

For example, the Bible does not speak directly to the subject of how a person comes to be possessed by demons. There's not a direct statement in Scripture about this. The Bible does not actually give a total catalog of unmistakable symptoms that a person is demon-possessed.

There are actually some demon-possessed people in the Bible who had symptoms that a person might have those symptoms and not be demon-possessed. In other words, there are some behaviors and certain symptoms which a person, if they have them, might be demon-possessed or might not be. It's impossible, as far as I know, to find a comprehensive list, certainly not in the Scripture, of those symptoms which can be undeniably attributed to demon possession, so that you might know beyond a shadow of a doubt that someone has demons.

The Bible does not really catalog or give methods of deliverance from demons. Certainly, the phenomenon of deliverance is promised and is seen occurring in the stories of the Scriptures, but there is not a place in the Scripture that teaches us about how to affect the deliverance of the demon-possessed. The Scripture does not tell us the exact nature of demon possession in the sense of the question, is the demon at some point outside and another point inside of a person? For example, one could get the impression from Scripture, a possibility a is that a demon resides in a person continuously and occasionally manifests itself, or b possibility is that a demon-possessed person has visits from demons that come and there are bouts and fits and so forth that that person has, but then the demon goes away for a while.

Actually, both possibilities could be supported from Scripture and maybe both are true. Maybe some cases are this way and some are that way. What we don't have is the answer to many of the practical questions that we would like to have.

Furthermore, the Bible doesn't even specifically say what many Christians want to believe. The Bible doesn't specifically say that Christians are exempt from demon possession. Now, in spite of the fact that the Bible does not speak specifically on all these points or give direct teaching on all these points, I believe the Bible does give us principles from which we can arrive at partial answers to some of these questions.

I think there are the kinds of questions that a Christian wants to know, not just out of morbid curiosity, although I think some people have little more than that to motivate them to search this out. Some are just curious. I don't think that's a very good motivation.

To be too curious about evil things seems to be actually forbidden in Scripture. Moses told the Jews in Deuteronomy that when they go into the land they should not go into inquiries, detailed inquiries, about how the pagans serve their gods. Idolatry is the worship of demons.

And to have too much curiosity about evil is not a healthy thing if it's just curiosity for curiosity's sake. But on the other hand, if it is a matter of wanting to know enough to be effective in doing the same kind of ministry Jesus did toward the demon possessed, or the same kind that the apostles did, or even what Jesus promised that those who believe shall cast out demons in his name, this is a prediction that Jesus made. And we can hope

that we might somehow be useful in this way, but it's not likely that we'll be able to be as effective if we don't understand at all the realm that we're talking about.

I told you in our last session that I'd read recently, and I'd read years ago also, this book which came into my hands by a strange providence when I lived in Bandon. I say by a strange providence because I don't know who sent it to me. It came in the mail.

It has a rubber stamp thing, just like a rubber stamp address in it, of some place in Los Angeles where I suppose it's distributed out of, although the publisher is in New York, and I don't know who sent it to me. It came to me anonymously, and I'd never heard of the man about whom it is. The man's name is Johann Christoph Blumhardt, and he was a German pastor.

And the events recorded in this book occurred to him, happened in his life in the 1840s, so almost 150 years ago. He was an interesting guy as it turned out. Not real interesting before these events happened, but the events recorded in this book are the first of three very important things that happened in his life.

He referred later to this conflict with the demon as the battle. In fact, the book is called Blumhardt's Battle, A Conflict with Satan. It's translated from German by someone named Frank S. Boshold, who looks like he may be a missionary himself in Columbia or somewhere like that.

The translator actually makes some occasional notes in the back, trying to correct Blumhardt's theology about these things, but I'm not sure Blumhardt needed to be corrected. I think he's probably had more experience with the demonic than most of us will ever have. But the book I'm holding is only about 60 pages long, and it was written by Blumhardt himself as a report to, well, here's what it says.

This account is translated from an official church document, Pastor Blumhardt's carefully detailed report of his battle prepared for the synod to which he was responsible. In other words, he spent 18 months dealing, a lot of his time was devoted to dealing with this demon-possessed girl. And he had to give an account to it, of it, as a Lutheran pastor, he had to give some kind of account for the use of his time and his activities, and it had become rather well-known and so forth.

So he detailed very cautiously, very responsibly, using as little sensationalism as the events could allow. He documented in detail dates, times, who was witnesses, who were there, who he took with him, and so forth, on what occasions, and what occurred over a period of 18 months. What happened is this man was a pastor in an extremely small German town.

I think it's called Möttlingen is the name of the town. But he was, the town had only about 500 people, it was a tiny little German burg, or village, and he was the parish

Lutheran pastor there. Kind of a sleepy job to have in a little town like that, a Lutheran church, not much exciting going on in the denomination there in the middle 1800s.

And it came to his attention that one of the girls, one of the ladies, actually she was in her 30s, in his church was having strange demonic attacks. And when I say strange, I want to tell you, I have read many occurrences of demon possession. I have a book at home written by 30 different missionaries, giving 30 different occasions in different lands of missionaries dealing with demon-possessed people.

In fact, I've got quite a library from which I've read a great variety of cases of demon possession, and I've encountered a few myself. I don't claim any expertise on this, and I haven't had very many experiences with it, but from my research, I would have to say that what Blumhardt experienced was very, very unusual. And I even wonder why it happened in that little village that way.

But when I talk about unusual, this woman had thousands of demons that came out of her. They spoke in other voices, they threw her into convulsions, and they did weird physical things to her. She was sexually abused by them, but she was also beat up, bruised, bloodied, and she vomited whole buckets of water initially, which the doctor who always attended Pastor Blumhardt, he always took a medical doctor and the mayor of the town with him when he went to visit, so he'd have credible witnesses.

And sometimes the whole town was there at the window watching. But I mean, supernatural things happened. This woman would, sometimes live bats and frogs would come out of her mouth in great numbers.

Sometimes there'd begin to be a protrusion out of her skin, and then the skin would begin to divide, and out would come a metal point, and the pastor and the doctor would pull on it for a very long time, and out would come a full-size knitting needle. In fact, over a short period of time, over 30-something knitting needles came out of this woman's body. Sometimes sewing needles came out.

Sometimes clusters of them came out through the skin, and when they came out, there was no marks left on the skin. I mean, these are very bizarre situations. The woman would sometimes bleed from her ears, eyes, nose, and mouth, and the town would come and they'd find her sitting in the middle of a room, the whole floor covered with blood, and blood just streaming out of her body in such quantities as a human body doesn't even contain.

I mean, you only have about eight pints of blood in your body, and there'd be gallons of blood all over coming out of her. This is very peculiar. I mean, and if not for the total sobriety of the man and the number of witnesses that he had and the details he gave him, dates and times and places and naming who was there and who saw these things, and the fact that it became known all over the region so that tourists began to come

there to see these weird things happening to this woman.

It's just an incredible story. I was amazed when I read it, but I had never heard of Pastor Blumhardt before this. After this event, and by the way, he didn't know anything about demon possession before this happened.

He kind of had to learn as he went along, but he was a faithful, godly, conservative, evangelical. He resorted entirely to prayer and to use of scripture, and he didn't resort to any hocus-pocus. He tried to have real restraint in conversing with the demons, or a lot of demons spoke out of her in different voices, even different languages, quite a few different languages.

In fact, some of them, when they spoke out of her, they spoke German, which was of course her and his native tongue, but they spoke it like a foreigner who doesn't know German very well. He said it was almost humorous the way that some of them spoke in various languages he didn't recognize, and some of them even spoke in a German that was obviously not the first language of the speaker. The woman would see apparitions.

In particular, this all began with her seeing a woman holding a baby in a house that she'd just moved into. She'd just moved into this house that was apparently haunted by this spirit, and it turned out that the woman holding the baby that she saw on a regular basis was a woman who had killed two of her babies and had since died two years earlier and had lived apparently in that house. They found all kinds of things under the floor that were evidence of witchcraft having been practiced there, bones and ashes and paper with incantations written on them and so forth.

Real, real strange stuff, and I thought I'd heard it all. I mean, I've made it a matter of interest to study not only the biblical cases of demon possession, but whatever sober, well-documented historical and modern cases that I can find, and this is the most extreme case I've ever heard of. Well, interestingly, when I was in Honduras two years ago, I found a book about, not this Blumhart, by his son, or about his son.

Apparently, this pastor Blumhart, and by the way, I found something else in another book about him too after this. After this victory that he got over these many demons, and very humbly, I mean, he didn't take any credit for it, he just felt very inadequate for it, but the Lord just was faithful and gave him the victory. Finally, the woman was fully delivered.

He writes a postscript here six years afterwards, and he says, a full six years, or as of six full years have passed since the above report was written, the reader will be anxious to hear how Gottlieb, and that's the girl's name, is now. I simply state that she moved into my house for good four years ago. He was a married man and with children, and she became a maid in his home, and she is the most faithful and most understanding help to my wife in the housekeeping and child education.

My wife can entrust her by all means with everything in the housekeeping department, etc., etc. So, I mean, her deliverance, he reports, six years later was complete and permanent. But there was more.

I learned from other books later that this man began to have a tremendous ministry in healing. That was legendary throughout Europe. People came from all over Europe.

Karl Barth, a famous German theologian, came to this man's meetings because they were so remarkable. People came and were healed of all kinds of diseases. Eventually, he retired from the pastorate and started a Christian community retreat in Germany where people with all kinds of sicknesses would come and get healed.

His son took over that ministry after Christoph Blumhardt died, and it's a very interesting story. I was so surprised never to have heard of him before, but he became a very famous, in the 1800s, very famous healing minister, much to his surprise. I mean, it was like a sovereign thing.

God brought this situation to him. He dealt with the demon. There were actually three things in his ministry.

In that little biographical sketch, it says here, it says, here he had, in this little town of 500 and something souls where this event, it says, here he had three great experiences of his life which have become of special importance not only to his entire life's work, which was to follow, but also as he was convinced for the kingdom of God. The first he called the battle, which was this. The second experience was a movement of repentance and awakening in his church, and the third connected with the first, who was a continual miracle of answered prayer and healing for the sick.

For him, this was nothing else than the experience of the real presence of the Lord Jesus. Thus, miracles became natural to him, and so forth. Here's an ordinary Lutheran pastor who didn't have any knowledge of the supernatural or of the miraculous, and God just kind of changed his whole life.

But I'll tell you something, reading the story is a sobering thing. It'll just wake you up to the spiritual realm, because it is, it's not some wild Pentecostal from which we might expect all kinds of strange stories, undocumentable. It is a sober guy who never had any interest in sensational things and just got stuck in this situation which he found very uncomfortable, but, and with many witnesses, was able to document these wild, wild things that happened to this woman, none of which could have been faked.

It was truly a case of demon possession of an extreme sort, and reading about this, I realized there must be other cases. You know, I mean, I know there's demon-possessed people. I haven't had doubts about that for the last 27 years.

I've encountered some of them, but I've never experienced anything like this. I thought

there must, there must be cases like this somewhere in the world now. Whenever you read missionary biographies, especially from charismatic missionaries, there's almost always some record of direct dealing with really bizarre demonic cases.

Now, when I read that kind of thing, I think, God, you know, how come the devil is allowed to do this kind of harm to people? This girl was a Christian. Now, I realize that there are some people who say Christians can't have demons, and in that case, they're going to have to say she wasn't a Christian, because no one can deny she had demons. Problem is, she had every evidence of being a Christian.

She had been a Christian from childhood, raised in a Christian home. She was regular and faithful in the church, had a Christian testimony, called out on the Lord on a regular basis. I mean, if she wasn't a Christian, I'm not sure how we could know who is.

And yet, she was tormented. But see, she knew nothing about spiritual warfare, and her pastor knew nothing about it, at least very little about it, until this event, and he learned a great deal about it. But the dealing directly with demon-possessed people is the extraordinary part of spiritual warfare.

What we've talked about up to this point seemed rather tame compared to this kind of thing. I mean, just fighting off temptation or avoiding getting deceived or whatever. Actually, what we've talked about so far is perhaps the most important part of demon possession, because it is so regular, so constant.

Temptation, deception, the devil's attacks against us are daily and regular and universal. Demon possession is not universal. Not everybody is demon-possessed.

Not every sinner is demon-possessed, and not every Christian encounters demon-possessed people. Some don't ever encounter them, or at least not so as they'd recognize them, and even the ones who do don't encounter them every day, generally speaking. On the other hand, we read in Scripture that Jesus encountered demon possession on a fairly regular basis.

There are many places in the Gospels that just summarize the activities of Jesus in certain places where he went, and Matthew chapter 4, for example, speaks of an itinerary Jesus made throughout all of Galilee. In Matthew 4, verses 23 and 24, it says, and Jesus went about in Galilee teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then his fame went throughout all Syria, and they brought to him the sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics and paralytics, and he healed them all.

Now, Jesus, wherever he went, people brought him sick people, epileptics, demon-possessed. Apparently there was no shortage of demon-possessed people. In fact, one

gets the impression from reading the Gospels that everywhere Jesus went, there were no shortage of sick people and demon-possessed people that Jesus dealt with.

That doesn't mean that you'd run into one every day, but apparently they were common enough to need deliverance in many of the places Jesus went to. And I've been curious about this, because in the Old Testament we find very little about demons. Suddenly when Jesus is here, there's just this outburst of demonic activity, and Jesus runs into it everywhere, and so do the disciples.

But we don't seem to run into it everywhere. If you go to the stories of missionaries in India or in Africa or in Latin America or even China, in some places like that, you will find that demon activity is not very uncommon. A man named Niveus, I think his name was John Niveus, if I'm not mistaken, was one of the early missionaries to China, and he encountered demon possession there, and it was a new phenomenon to him in China.

This was, I think, in the 1800s also that he lived, and he wrote a book called Demon Possession, which was based on his sending out a questionnaire to all the missionaries he knew in China, and asked them specific questions about whether they had encountered this kind of thing, and what they'd done about it, and what the features were, and so forth. And he was one of the earliest guys to actually kind of catalog some of the things about demon possession that are not actually cataloged in Scripture, but which were fairly commonly encountered by missionaries. Now, I have a lot of things I want to talk to you about on the subject of demon possession, but I've already said that the Bible doesn't address all the answers, doesn't give all the answers to everything we're curious about.

Now, we need to guard on one hand against being too curious about things God has told us nothing about, and on the other, we need to make sure we're not too uncurious. We don't want to avoid knowledge that is useful and important for us in ministry to people, and in carrying out the purposes of God in the earth. And some of the things we might learn about demons might be unpleasant.

Some people just do not think about it. Some people would even criticize us for talking about demons. Some people say we're not supposed to be thinking about the demons, we're just supposed to be thinking about Jesus.

Well, we are, of course, supposed to be setting our sights on Jesus, looking under Jesus, but we're also told to be vigilant because the devil is out there as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. This vigilance supposes that we're on the watch out for him. We do look at Jesus, but we also look at the enemy.

No person can conduct a battle only looking at the flag of their own side. You've got to look at where the enemy is, too, and what they're doing. And so I make no apologies for the fact that I feel there is a legitimacy in talking about demonism and demons at times,

so long as it doesn't become an obsessive thing or morbidly speculative or whatever.

There is another thing I need to address though at the beginning, and that is that when I began in the Christian life, or in the Christian ministry in my teenage years, I sat on a very powerful teaching from the Word of God, which, of course, acknowledged the existence of demon possession and took for granted the existence of demons. However, the teaching I sat under very strongly suggested that Christians can never have demons, and it was often said that those who teach that Christians can have demons base it entirely on experience. Now, the teaching I sat under went something like this.

We cannot use experience as an arbiter of doctrine. We can only trust the Word of God. And if the Bible doesn't teach something, then it cannot become part of our belief system.

Now, frankly, I still am very sympathetic with that suggestion to a large degree. However, I would suggest that some of the things that we would recognize as biblical material are simply the record of people's experiences. The Gospels record the experiences of Jesus and the disciples.

The book of Acts records the experiences of the disciples. These experiences are told as if they are useful for us to know of them, as if there's something to be learned from them, if there's some example or pattern to be derived from them. And I am not of the opinion that God stopped acting through his people when the book of Acts was completed.

I believe that much of what we have in Scripture about demons comes from nothing else but the experiences of people who encountered them. And if we continue to consult the experiences of people, Christians who've encountered them, after the close of the book of Acts and up into modern history, I don't really see how we can call that invalid data. If we're trying to derive an understanding of the nature of this particular conflict, I don't see why it is safer just to consult those few cases in the Scripture where Jesus or the disciples encountered demons and to eliminate what may be learned by Christians having encountered them in many other places ever since.

Now I will say this, that we cannot allow a doctrine or a practice to become normative or to even be followed at all by the Christian if it is anti-scriptural. If the Scripture says that a thing cannot be so, then no matter what contrary experiences may be alluded to, we can't accept the experience as valid. Spiritualism and Mormonism and a lot of cults validate their beliefs based on experience alone.

A burning in their bosom or an experience at a seance or whatever for these people validates their beliefs even if it's unscriptural. We cannot allow personal experience to override Scripture in determining spiritual truth. The Scripture is wholly true.

Our experiences are sometimes misinterpreted. Our experiences are not a totally reliable source of information about spiritual reality, but it is not a totally unreliable source either. And I'm going to suggest to you that those who say we cannot talk about things, we cannot derive any information, we cannot consult the testimony of Christian experience in order to understand this better because that's going beyond the Bible.

I think that such talk is going to limit us unnecessarily. We all know the value and many things we've learned about the spiritual realm from spiritual biography. Who hasn't read and learned a great deal spiritually from reading the biography of Reese Howells or George Mueller or Hudson Taylor? And yet these men practiced many things that you can't find exact Scripture in verse form.

Where in the Bible does it say that you should never tell anybody what your needs are? It's nowhere in the Bible. That that was what George Mueller did, can we say what he did was invalid, a bad practice? No, most of us would agree that God showed that that was a good choice for him to make and that God honored that and that we learn things from that. We can see an example in that, but we don't see that particular practice necessarily commanded in Scripture.

The biography of Christians throughout history if they're faithful and godly and evangelical Christians who live by the Bible often show us by example many things about spiritual life that are not specifically enumerated in the Bible. The problem is of course when we begin to follow something in the experience of another person or our own experience that is unscriptural, that is that the Scripture would tell us is wrong. We must allow the Scripture to be above experience in determining things, but that doesn't mean that it's invalid for us to consult the experience of godly people who've had experience in these areas to get some information and to help form some understanding of it.

After all, those who say that we can only believe such things about demons as the Bible says do not practice that themselves. Most of them say that demons are fallen angels. The Bible doesn't say that.

Most of them say that a third of the angels fell and became demons. The Bible doesn't say that. That is tradition and I don't see any reason why tradition should dictate doctrine to us any more than experience.

As a matter of fact, experience might be more reliable than tradition so long as it's not anti-scriptural. So having said that right at the beginning, what I'm trying to say is that I think we would limit our effectiveness and our usefulness unnecessarily if we'll say we will not accept or will not credit any information about this realm that comes only from the experience of godly people and missionaries just because the Bible doesn't specifically mention it. For example, we don't read in the Bible anywhere of a demon possessed person having blood streaming out of their eyes, ears, and nose.

Yet I have no reason to doubt that Pastor Blumhardt's experience, which was witnessed, was caused by demon possession. Therefore, if I said, you know, one of the symptoms of demon possession on rare occasions might be blood streaming out of their eyes, ears, and nose, I would be saying a statement that isn't found in Scripture, and I would be basing it on somebody's experience. But it is a well-attested and documented experience, and it's not unscriptural.

The Bible nowhere says that such things can't happen. So I'd like to put in perspective, because as soon as you begin to talk about demonism, you're either going to have to say very little on the subject, or you're going to have to say some things that are not specifically stated in Scripture. Now, I don't prefer to fill in the gaps in my knowledge with imagination.

I don't try to say, well, let's see, there's a big gap here between what the Scripture says on this point and this point, and there's got to be something there. I think I'll imagine something. I'll fantasize something.

I'll come up with something that sounds like a good argument. I'm not into that. But I am into saying that what experiences God gives certain Christians that are very much like the experiences of the Apostles, or the experience of Jesus, but have different features, I'm willing to consult them.

And I'm just going to say that at the beginning. There may be some who are here, or who would hear this tape, would say, well, some of the things, Steve, that you've said, the Bible doesn't say that exact thing, but you're just basing that on experience. Fair enough.

That's true. Some things I do based on experience. So far, or so long, I should say, as the experience is not contradicted in Scripture.

And on this point, I need to consider the issue of whether Christians can experience demon possession. I'm going to talk about some very practical, down-to-earth things about demon possession. I want to talk about how people get demon possessed, how they can be recognized to be possessed, how they can be delivered, how they can stay safe, how come sometimes people aren't delivered when it seems like they should have been, and so forth.

I want to talk about these things. I'm going to use Scripture, although I can't use direct scriptural statements that tell us the answer to those questions. I'm going to try to apply biblical principle as much as I can.

And I may have to resort to, on some of these points, the experiences of people who were successful. But on the matter of whether Christians can have demons or not, this is a very controversial point. Mostly, the people who believe one way or the other, the two

possible answers are yes and no.

To the question, can a Christian have a demon, there's two possible answers. One possible answer is yes. The other possible answer is no.

Now, those who hold the yes answer hold it with great passion. Those who hold the no answer often hold it with great passion. In other words, it's a volatile question.

It's not one that's kind of a, who cares kind of a question. Christians want to know. And I would say that, I don't know which side has the most votes, although I don't base the truth on votes.

It appears to me that probably there are more evangelical Christians who would say a Christian cannot have a demon, than there are Christians who would say a Christian can. I've encountered both. But let me give you a little bit of information about my own spiritual journey in this matter.

My earliest training, the only training I had early on in my ministry, was very strongly, adamantly convinced that Christians could not have demons. That demon possession was in fact a reality, but not among Christians. And there were certain scriptures, which I'd like to point out to you, that were used to prove this point.

And so, there was no problem, I had no problem being convinced of it. I knew I was not demon possessed. I had never known a Christian was demon possessed, and my pastor told me that the scripture teaches that Christians can't be demon possessed.

So that was easy enough for me to accept. When I was, so I think about 19, I made my first international trip preaching to Germany, actually. But I first traveled across the country and spoke in some churches and stuff on the way there.

And I, in New Jersey, I stayed in the home of some Christian people, who didn't have anywhere near the Bible training or Bible knowledge I did, but they, they were just talking to me at one time. We talked about many things, I stayed in their home for several days. But one of the things they talked about was some meetings they'd been to, where some people had been, had demons cast out of them.

These were deliverance meetings. And they, they spoke about a particular friend of theirs, who had been delivered at one of these meetings, whom they said was a Christian. Well, as soon as they told me that this person whom they said was a Christian had been, had demons cast out, I dutifully responded, as I thought orthodoxy would require, that I did not believe that a Christian, a genuine Christian, could genuinely have a demon, because I'd been taught this, and I felt this was scriptural.

Well, these people were not really very biblically well, well read, and they didn't know, they didn't try to argue with me. They didn't, they didn't feel defensive. They just, they

were surprised that I thought that, and I was surprised they thought what they thought.

And it was, it was a pretty cool discussion. I didn't jump all over them, and they didn't jump all over me, but they said, well, it certainly seems like this woman's a Christian. And, you know, they described the experience, and it sounded like a case of a demon being cast out.

And so I realized, well, there are two possibilities. One was that this woman only appeared to be a Christian, wasn't really. And in fact, she did have a demon, and it was cast out, but she wasn't a Christian.

The other was that she really was a Christian, and the experience she had was something else other than deliverance from demons, since Christians can't have demons. I was convinced that a Christian could not have demons, and in any case where it seemed like a Christian had demons cast out of them, I figured there's one of two possibilities. Either it wasn't really a case of demon possession, or the person wasn't really a Christian.

As time went on, I began to hear from place to place other stories of this kind, and I made it very clear, well, these are just experiences people are having. I can't base any doctrine on experience alone if it's unscriptural. And my conviction was that the Scripture teaches that Christians cannot have demons.

But the more stories of this kind I heard, the more I began to wonder, and not so much whether the Scripture is true, but whether I was interpreting the Scripture correctly. You see, the Scripture cannot be overruled by experience, but a wrong interpretation of Scripture can sometimes be shown to be wrong by experience. Truth works.

Truth is not only truth theoretically, but truth is reality. And therefore, if experience after experience after experience seem to point a certain direction about reality, then the truth must conform with that reality. Now, if the Bible is true, and if it teaches that Christians cannot have demons, then all these cases that appear to be Christians who have demons that I began to hear about, and almost got a log of cases that I began to accumulate, then those must be false somehow.

Those experiences must be a deception. Those experiences must be wrongly construing things. On the other hand, if the Scripture, if I was only interpreting the Scripture, perhaps wrongly, to teach that Christians could not have demons, in other words, if it was not plainly taught in Scripture, but it was only my interpretation of certain verses that Christians cannot have demons, then possibly this abundance of experiences that seemed contrary to that teaching might mean that my interpretation of Scripture is wrong.

I began to at least entertain that notion. I never began to think that experience could

override Scripture, but I did begin to think that experience could make me question my interpretation of Scripture. Because if experience is real, and if Scripture is real, then these things shouldn't be in conflict.

So I went back and I looked at the verses, and I had actually a long list of verses that had been given to me by people like my pastor and certain cult busters and stuff that were on the radio and others who said Christians cannot have demons. I had Scriptures that were used to prove this point. I began to go back and look at them again, saying, am I understanding these correctly? And I want to acquaint you with at least some of these Scriptures, but essentially what I found was that all the Scriptures, and I thought there were quite a lot of them, but all the Scriptures that I thought that Christians couldn't have demons, when I looked at them in their context, none of them were even in passages that were about demons.

None of the Scriptures that I used to prove the point really were in passages that were even talking about demon possession. It was just cases where a Scripture would make a certain point, and by extrapolation it was assumed by me, and by those who taught me, it was assumed that this point could be extrapolated to include the thought of demon possession. But it was not at all clear, and in many cases the Scriptures, when looked at more carefully, even the thought, if extrapolated, wouldn't prove that point.

Now let me tell you the Scriptural case for Christians being exempt from demon possession, if I could. First of all, the first point of the case that teaches that Christians cannot be demon possessed is all the Scriptures available, of which there are many, that tell us that we have resources stronger than the devil's resources. These would include Scriptures like Jesus' statement to the disciples in Luke 10, 19, where he said, Behold, I give you authority to trample upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Or 1 John 4, 4, Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. Or James 4, 7, Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. These verses are samples of the kinds of verses that the Bible has that prove that we have resources superior to those of Satan.

In fact, I've used all those verses earlier in these lectures to point this very point out. Christians are at an advantage over the devil. Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

I remember one of my pastors who tried to make this point, used that Scripture and said, It does not say, Greater is he that is in you than he that is also in you. In other words, this is supposed to be a proof that the Bible doesn't allow Christians to have demons, because it doesn't say, Greater is he that is in you than he who is also in you. But it says, Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

The devil's in the world, he's not in you. You can't have a demon, in other words. But, as

I considered these texts, I realized that they do not directly address the issue of demon possession.

There may be something in them that can be extrapolated to that subject, but that's not what they're talking about. They're talking about the general Christian's warfare and struggle wrestling against Satan and his influence in their lives. That if you resist him, he'll flee from you.

Jesus in you is more powerful than Satan who is in the world. Jesus has given us authority over them. I affirm these things strongly and adamantly even today.

I believe those things. That's one reason I'm not afraid of demons, because I don't think that they have resources greater than I do. At the same time, I am aware that Christians do not always walk in all of the privileges and advantages that are said to be theirs in the Christian life.

For example, the Bible says, sin shall not have dominion over you, and yet some Christian sin does have dominion over them, apparently. There are things that Christians experience that are sub-normal. The Bible tells us what the normal Christian life can and should be like, but in reality, Christians sometimes do not experience all of that because of one reason or another.

They don't mix the promises with faith, or they're don't conduct warfare, whatever it is. Whatever the explanation, we know that there are many sub-normal circumstances in the lives of some Christians, maybe most Christians even. Therefore, to tell us that Christians, if they would, could exercise authority over all the power of the enemy, and that if they would resist the devil, he would flee from them, these are true statements.

But the question is, what if they don't? What if they're deficient? What if they're negligent in this? I mean, Paul said, we wrestle, but what if we don't wrestle very well? Or don't wrestle diligently? What if we decide to stop wrestling for a while? What happens then? Why does Peter say, be vigilant, be sober, your adversary the devil like a roaring lion is walking about seeking whom he may devour. Why should I watch out for him if he can't devour me? It will indicate in the very next verse says, whom resist, this is 1st Peter 5, 8 and 9, whom resist, it will indicate in the very next verse says, whom resist, this is 1st Peter 5, 8 and 9, whom resist, steadfast in the faith. In other words, the devil is roaming around wanting to devour people, including Christians.

It's Christians who are told to watch out for him. And he says, you should resist him, steadfast in the faith. Well, fair enough.

Resist the devil, and he'll flee from you. But what if you don't resist him steadfast in the faith? What if you're weak? What if you're negligent? What if you lapse a little bit in your faith? What can happen then? Well, these verses that tell us of our tremendous

advantages over the devil and over his forces, do not answer the question, what happens if you neglect your privileges? What happens if your faith, if you don't continue in the faith as strong as you should, what happens if you don't wrestle? What happens if you do get lazy? These questions don't answer, but some of them are implied. Peter's statement implies that the devil will devour people if they don't resist him.

Christians, but what does it mean to be devoured? Maybe that means they backslide. Maybe that means they fall into sin. Maybe it means they get demonized.

We don't know. It doesn't specifically say. But one thing is clear.

It is not sufficient simply to quote a lot of verses that tell us all the advantages available to the Christian over the devil. And from that extrapolate, therefore, no Christian under any circumstances could ever succumb to demonic control and possession. It just does not follow.

What does follow is that a Christian who walks in faith, who walks in the spirit, who does what Christians are told to do, who lives what we could call the normal Christian life, that person has nothing to fear from the devil or from demons. But do all Christians do that? I think the answer is self-evident. And since not all Christians do that, these scriptures do not tell us what may or may not happen in terms of their losses and their defeats in spiritual battle.

Can they be possessed? These scriptures don't answer that question. What other scriptures are there? One of the principle arguments that people like to give to prove that Christians can't have demons is based one way or another on the fact that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Christians bring this up quite a bit as proof that you can't have a demon because after all, the Holy Spirit's in there.

He wouldn't allow a demon in there with him. I heard one well-known broadcaster and author trying to make this point. He says, what do you think? The devil lives on the ground floor and Jesus lives on the top floor? He was trying to make it sound as ridiculous as possible to prove his point.

I actually argued with him on the radio once about this. A very well-known guy, no longer living now, but wrote many books and was a daily radio broadcaster. But anyway, this argument is that since we know the Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, it cannot also be inhabited by something as contrary to the Holy Spirit as a demon.

One of the verses I once thought was the most potent in making this point is 2 Corinthians chapter 6. In 2 Corinthians chapter 6, I once thought this verse settles the matter all by itself. This proves Christians can't have demons. Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, near the end of that chapter, around verse 14, do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? What

communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with belial? Or what part has the believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? Or, you know, idols are demonic.

What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God, as God has said. Now, at one time in my life, when I was considerably more naive about the meaning of scriptural statements, a person could convince me that a Christian cannot have a demon by simply saying this. What fellowship has light with darkness? What communion and agreement has the temple of God with idols? I say, oh yeah, sure, obviously.

I mean, in my body is the temple of God. Demonic idols, they have no place in there, so obviously a Christian can't be demon-possessed. But as I began to reconsider this, and I may not ever have reconsidered it if I had not been confronted with so many people's testimonies and experiences that made me have to wonder, am I understanding scripture correctly? One thing that became obvious when I read it is that Paul, first of all, is not discussing demon possession here.

What is he discussing in the context? He's discussing the question of being unequally yoked together with unbelievers, right? Now, when he makes a strong argument against being unequally yoked together with unbelievers, he is not discussing the issue of the devil or demons or demon possession at all. The question is whether what he says here can be extrapolated to that subject or not. He's actually talking about something entirely different.

It has to do with people and people, unbelievers and Christians being yoked together. Now, the next question is, is his argument calculated to say that this cannot happen? Is he saying it is somehow impossible for a Christian to be unequally yoked with unbelievers? How could this be? We know of it happening all the time. In fact, Paul must have assumed it was possible because he forbade it.

You don't have to go around forbidding things that can't happen, that people can't do. It's obvious that for a Christian to be yoked with an unbeliever is a possibility. Therefore, when Paul says what fellowship has light with darkness, what agreement has the temple of God with idols, he's not saying that it's an impossibility.

He's saying it's an incongruity. It's something that is way unnatural. It is something that is way disagreeable.

The temple of God with idols? Now, let me ask you something. Is it physically impossible? When the Jewish temple was saying, was it physically impossible for an idol to be brought in there? No, it happened, didn't it? We know that Antiochus Bithynes brought an idol and an altar to Zeus and a pig into the temple. This happened.

It was not impossible. Was it appropriate? Not at all. It was an abomination.

But the fact that it was an abomination and that there was no agreement between the temple of God and idols, that lack of agreement didn't prevent it from being possible to happen. Many things happen that are disagreeable. To say that light and darkness do not have kinship or fellowship, that the temple of God and idols do not have an agreement, is not the same thing as saying that they cannot exist in the same place.

They just can't coexist in a friendly way with each other. Certainly, they can coexist. Certainly, an idol can come into a temple, even if it doesn't belong there.

In fact, if we were going to use this scripture to answer the question, can a Christian be demon-possessed, and since Paul says your body is the temple and he mentions idols in connection, if that refers to demons, then we'd have to answer, yes, it is possible for the temple to have idols in it. It should never happen. It's never right, but it's happened in the past, and therefore, it must be possible.

If bringing an idol into the temple of Jerusalem, for example, is an analogy of what can happen to the Christian body and demons, then we'd have to argue that a Christian could have demons from this argument, but I'm not saying that Paul is trying to make that argument or any other. He's talking about something different than demons. He's not talking about demons.

But he is certainly not arguing about the impossibility of light and darkness being in the same place, only the impossibility of them having communion with each other. Now, when someone says, well, I don't think that God would tolerate a demon inside his temple, I'm sure that God doesn't. I'm sure that God is not very pleased at all to have demons or idols in his temple at all.

But not everything that happens pleases God. You know what? God's not very pleased when Christians sin either, but it happens. It's a matter of fact, we're told in Galatians 5, 17, that there is a very contrary force, contrary to the spirit of God dwelling inside that temple.

You recall what that force is? Paul calls it the flesh. Where is the flesh? The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these two are contrary to one another, so that you do not do what you want. Now, I'm not saying that's a statement about demonism, but it is, it tells us something.

The flesh is contrary to the spirit of God. The flesh is abhorrent to the spirit of God. The flesh is not in agreement with the spirit of God, but the flesh coexists in the same body with the spirit of God.

And all I'm saying about that is, so what if we know that demons and the spirit of God are definitely not in communion with each other? They are not friendly toward each

other. They don't get along. Neither does the flesh get along with the Holy Spirit, but they both exist in the same person.

We cannot argue that the Holy Spirit is jealous over his temple, and we are his temple, and that there's no agreement between him and idols. That doesn't prove that no idols ever get in. There was no agreement between Israel and idols either, because they were God's people, but the idolatry got in.

Paul is not describing impossibilities here. He is describing inappropriateness, things that are not congruous with each other, things that don't belong together. Now, I personally think that there is nothing in the Bible that specifically says that a Christian cannot have demons.

There are other scriptures like this one that talk about the body being the temple of the Holy Spirit, and that's a very commonly used argument to prove that Christians can't have demons, but to my mind, those scriptures don't make that point. They don't even attempt to make it. They don't even address that point, and what they do say does not in any way extend in such a way as to indicate that a Christian couldn't have a demon just because his body is the temple.

In 1 John 5, this verse is sometimes quoted to show that a Christian cannot have a demon. 1 John 5, 18, John says, We know that whoever is born of God does not sin, but he who has been born of God keeps himself. Some translations say, He that is begotten of God keeps him.

That is, Jesus keeps the believer, and the wicked one does not touch him. If the wicked one doesn't touch the believer, then how could the believer ever be demon-possessed? It seems obvious to some, and to me at one time, that this scripture is making it impossible for a Christian to have a demon, because the wicked one can't touch the believer. But what is meant by this? Now, as I put out before, there is a textual variant here.

It either says that Jesus keeps the believer, or that the believer keeps himself. Either one can be true. Either one has verbal parallels elsewhere in scripture, so we don't know which one is the original.

If by any chance, the King James and the New King James are correct in rendering it, He that is born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one touches him not, it would be suggesting that insofar as the believer keeps himself from Satan, the devil doesn't touch him. But it does not speculate as to what happens if he doesn't keep himself. Now, let us not worry about that particular textual variant.

Let's just say, let's go ahead and say the devil can't touch the believer, without reference to the believer keeping himself, or whatever. Let's just say that this is teaching the devil

can't touch the believer. In what sense can't the devil touch the believer? What part of the believer can't he touch? Can the devil touch a believer's body? Do we have any biblical information about that? Well, it seems like we do.

Paul said that there was a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him. It was a thorn in his flesh. That's his body.

It was a physical thing. It sounds like the devil touched Paul, his body. I personally think that John would not deny that the devil could touch a believer's body.

He would have to be at odds with Paul in saying that. What about a believer's mind, or what we might call the soul, the sphere of thought and emotions and the devil touch that in a believer? Well, Peter was a believer, and the devil spoke right through him. Obviously, he was informing, controlling Peter's thoughts, speaking through Peter's mouth.

Now, was Peter demon possessed? I don't think so. No, I certainly don't think so. But did the devil touch him? Did the devil have any influence or control over Peter's thinking at that moment? Apparently, he did.

Was Peter a believer? Yes. Well, then what is it that the evil one can't touch? Well, John doesn't specify. But I personally believe that he is suggesting that the believer, because he is seated in Christ in heavenly places, this is a spiritual position, cannot be laid hold on in any sense of ripping him away from God in the sense of, I mean, I'm interpreting.

You don't have to follow my interpretation, but we have to interpret it within light of what other things the Bible says. I think that your spirit is safe in God. Your life is hid with Christ in God.

There is a part of you that is inviolate as long as you keep yourself in the love of God. As long as you maintain faith, I believe there's a part of you that is kept by the power of God that the devil can never get out of. God cannot.

Jesus said in the Gospel of John, no one can snatch them from my Father's hand. But what part of us can't be snatched from the Father's hand? Can our thoughts defect? Can we experience deception? Can we be killed physically? Of course we can. Then what cannot be snatched from us is our salvation.

Now that doesn't even answer the question as to whether we can forfeit our salvation by our own choices, but the devil is not capable of destroying the soul of the believer, of capturing him from God and taking him for himself. And it is in that sense, I suppose, that the devil cannot touch the believer, because I know from biblical evidence that the devil can have tremendous impact on the believer's body and mind. If the believer is negligent, especially in terms of the mind, the devil can have control on a believer's body even if the believer is not negligent.

Paul was not negligent when he had a thorn in the flesh. He even prayed about it and God wanted it to stay there. It can be the will of God for the devil to afflict the body, but what about the mind? I don't think God wants us to allow the devil any room in the mind.

However, it happens. It can happen that the devil can obtain a place in our mind. We know that is possible because Paul says to the Christians in Ephesus, or in the book of Ephesians, in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 26 and 27, Paul says, Be angry, but do not sin, and do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.

If you let the sun go down on your wrath, apparently you are giving place to the devil. Where? In your emotions? In your thoughts? In your mind? I don't know. But it apparently is possible for the believer, in some way or another, to give place to the devil.

Now, he that is born of God keeps himself so that the devil doesn't touch him, but what if the believer doesn't keep himself? What if the believer gives place to the devil? This is apparently a possibility. What then? Well, I'm not answering the question. I'm only asking it.

I'm not saying that if a believer doesn't keep himself, that if a believer doesn't wrestle, that if a believer does give place to the devil, I'm not saying that that believer will become demon possessed, but I'm not sure that we can say with biblical authority that he can't. I'm just saying, I don't know. The Bible is not clear.

The Bible does not specify that demon possession is a particular work of the devil that only unbelievers can be afflicted by. We know that the devil does afflict Christians. We know that the demons attack Christians.

The Bible nowhere tells us where the line is drawn. The demons can go this far and no further, except of course they cannot pluck us out of the Father's hand. That much we can be sure of.

Everything else, for all we know from scriptural testimony, may be open to them, as open as we leave it. They can take as much place as we give them. Now, I'm trying to avoid guesswork.

I'm trying to avoid speculation. I'm trying to just not read more into the scripture than is there. What I'm saying is that the verses that I used to use to prove a Christian cannot be demon possessed, once I looked at them again, first of all, none of them are even found in scriptural discussions of the subject of demon possession.

Secondly, most of them don't say about whatever it is they're talking about. They don't say that there is an impossibility here. And the bottom line is the Bible, none of these scriptures, and by the way, if there were better ones, I'm sure they would have been dug up.

Good Bible teachers have come up with this list. But I've read to the bottom many times and I haven't found anything more than what I used to know. It's all there.

These scriptures do not make the point. Now, you might still be able to believe that Christians are free from demon possession and you'd be entitled to believe that. I could not prove scripturally that demons can possess Christians.

But all I'm saying is that it cannot be proven scripturally that they cannot. But what can be proven is that a Christian can be free. I'm not a great fan, necessarily, of Jack Hayford.

What I mean is I haven't followed his ministry that closely, I haven't heard many of his tapes, I don't listen to the radio much, so I can't say much about his mystery in general. But I remember years ago when there was a big conflict in the charismatic movement about whether Christians could have demons or not. And whole denominations were putting out position statements, like the Assemblies of God came out saying, no, they cannot have, a Christian can't be demon possessed.

And Calvary Chapel always said such things. And there were other groups coming out that way. Jack Hayford, who was in the Forest Square denomination, came out with a tape.

And the title of the tape was a question, and it was, can a Christian have a freedom? The question was not, can a Christian have a demon? The question is, can a Christian have freedom from a demon? The answer to that is a very clear and resounding yes. We can say with certainty on the basis of Scripture that a Christian need not ever fear being demon possessed. But that doesn't mean that Christians will always do all that is available to them, and use all the resources available to them, and walk in all of the faith that they should walk in, and therefore will always be free from demons.

There are many things from which we can be free, including sins in our lives, from which we will not be free if we do not live as the Scriptures instruct us to live. Whether demon possession is in this category or not, we can only guess. We don't know.

Now, if there are an abundance of experiences that people have had, or persons who are convincingly Christians, also convincingly seem to be delivered of demon possession, then that might tip the scales in the absence of Scriptural statements to the contrary, that might tip the scales in favor of the belief that Christians in some circumstances may in fact be demon possessed. But, that wouldn't necessarily settle it. Persons could still say, well, that's just experience, we don't have Scripture on it.

And that's true. We don't have specific Scripture on it. Although there are some places in Scripture that may indicate that Christians can have demons.

I will say this. Let me show you a few things. This may be relevant to the subject.

I will have to say that a person could question, in these cases also, whether demon possession and Christians are what's in view in each of these cases. But look at 2 Corinthians chapter 11. 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 3 and 4, Paul says, But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds, that is, Christians' minds, may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

For if he who comes preaches another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if, notice this, if you receive a different spirit, which you have not received, or a different gospel, which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it. Paul is concerned about the Christians in Corinth. Some of them might receive another gospel, another Jesus.

They might even receive another spirit. What is meant by that? Well, I'm not so sure I could say. Does it seem possible that it might even refer to demonic spirits? I don't know that we could rule that out.

I don't know that the best exegesis of the passage would suggest that Paul is specifically expressing concern about demonic possession of the believers. But he does say he's concerned that they might well receive another spirit. This word receive is the same verb that's found in the passages that talk about receiving the Holy Spirit.

And to receive another spirit, in the same sense that we've received the Holy Spirit, might well result in what the Bible calls demon possession. I have not even yet defined for you demon possession. We will get around to that eventually here.

And that will be subsequent to what we're talking about right now, as far as our examination of the general topic and all its aspects. In Acts 19, there's an interesting story that may have bearing on this, or may not. Once again, I don't claim that these prove the point.

I've already said the scripture does not plainly say whether Christians can or cannot have demons. But what I'm saying is there is at least as much data in scripture that may point in the one direction as in the other. In Acts 19, Paul was in Ephesus and he was opposed by the Jews there and stood up the Gentiles against him and so forth.

And so while he had been preaching in the synagogue, he withdrew from there and began to conduct his meetings elsewhere in the school of Tyrannus. He actually separated the Christians from the rest of the people. It says in verse 9, when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the way, this is Acts 19.

Before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Gentiles. God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and evil spirits went out of them.

Now, here we read of certain people who have evil spirits going out of them, presumably they were possessed. This happens when they receive pieces of cloth that had come from Paul. Now, we are not told whether these people who were healed in this way or were delivered in this way were Christians or not.

They may not have been. But Luke is very negligent in giving us clarity on this, if it is the case that they were not Christians, because he states that Paul had already separated the Christians and himself from everybody else. He'd gone off to have, for two years, separate meetings with the Christians.

And during this time, miracles were done of healing and exorcism. Now, were these exorcisms and healing taking place outside the circle of Christians? Maybe, but we don't know. All that we know is that Luke is told that Paul had concentrated his ministry among the Christians.

And during the time of that ministry, there were many healings and exorcisms. Now, I will not say that this teaches that the Christians were experiencing healings and exorcisms, but it does not specify whether they did or not. There's a very interesting passage, and someone showed me this years ago, and I must say it was one that really had an effect on shaking me from my assurance that a Christian could not have a demon.

And that is found in Matthew 18. In Matthew 18, we have a lengthy parable. Jesus tells this parable about forgiveness.

A king had a servant who owed him billions of dollars. The servant couldn't pay, and the king forgave him. This servant went out and found a fellow servant who owed him a very small amount.

And the servant begged for forgiveness and patience, but this forgiven servant wouldn't forgive his fellow servant. And here's how the story winds up near the end of Matthew 18. It says in verse 32, Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.

Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you? And his master was angry and delivered him to the torturers, until he should pay all that was due to him. Then Jesus says this, So my heavenly Father also will do to you, he's talking to his disciples, if each of you from his heart does not forgive his brother his trespasses. Now the reason this shook me when someone first showed me this in this connection was because it's hard to know who these torturers are if they're not demons.

There may be some other explanation. Many commentators I looked up said that this refers to them being sent to hell. But I don't think so.

Maybe, but I don't necessarily think so. The Bible does not describe hell as a place where

there are torturers. It does speak of torment, but it doesn't mention torturers.

Dante's Inferno or Milton's works or some of these that have given us the traditional imagery of the demons poking people with pitchforks and stuff down in hell. The Bible nowhere says that there's torturers in hell going around torturing people there. But we do read many times in scripture of people being tortured by the devil and tortured by demons and so forth in what is usually called demon possession, which is also referred to being tormented by demons.

And of all the possible interpretations that I could think of, it seemed to me that the torturers in this parable seem to correspond most clearly with demons than with any other options I could think of. Now, you don't have to follow me in this. I'm just telling you how this affected me and my thoughts on it.

Now, one thought I had was, well, parables, you know, sometimes they have a lot of points in the story that don't really correspond to the specific thing Jesus is teaching. Jesus teaches parables and sometimes a lengthy parable will have only one point it's making about spiritual reality and all the others are just stage props, you know, irrelevancies that don't have any correspondence. Like the parable of the unjust judge and the widow who begged him and so forth, well, that's certainly, although that's a parable about persistence in prayer, it is not to be suggested that everything about that parable applies.

I mean, God is not an unjust judge. Likewise, the story of the unjust steward. He is commended for his shrewdness and Christians are told that they should also look out for the future, even as he did.

But there are many things about him that do not correspond to what Jesus would exhort Christians to be. It's clear that some parables have one point they're making, but they have a long story to make the point. A lot of the stuff in the story doesn't correspond with the lesson.

So it occurred to me, well, maybe this parable is like that. It's a long parable. The main lesson is forgive people.

You were forgiven of much as a Christian, therefore you should forgive other people because what they've done to you is nowhere near as much as what you've done to God. And if God forgave you a great debt, you should forgive everybody else their debts to you. And maybe that's it.

And the other stuff is just stage dressing. It doesn't really mean anything. The problem with it is that Jesus himself made the application of the parable.

And he made it clear that this parable is making a point more specific than just that we ought to forgive people. In verse 35, Jesus said, so my Heavenly Father also will do to

you. If each of you from his heart does not forgive his brother his trespasses.

I mean, Jesus tells the parable and the only application he makes is that my Father will do to you what that king did to this guy. Well, what was that? He gave him over to torturers. It's as if that's the one thing in the parable that does correspond to the point Jesus is making.

It's not as if the giving over of this servant to torturers by the king is an incidental that just brought the story to a conclusion in an interesting way. It's that that was the very point of telling it. That just as this king gave the unforgiving but forgiven servant over to torturers, that's what God will do to you, disciples, if you don't forgive everyone.

In other words, Jesus was saying that God will give you over to torturers. Now, what in the world kind of view of God does that give us? Apparently the view Jesus wants us to have. You know, it's interesting when you read about demonism in the Old Testament, like I said, there's hardly anything there, only a few cases.

But in all the cases that really talk about people being distressed or possessed or whatever actually the term possession isn't used in the Old Testament, but certainly people are said to be tormented by evil spirits sometimes. But the Bible always talks about God sending the evil spirit. In the Old Testament, let me give you the sum total of times where probably the phenomenon of demonization is in view.

We're going to talk more about what demonization is. But in Judges chapter 9 verse 23, this is a story about Gideon's son who rose up in revolt and tried to become king of Israel by illegitimate means after Gideon had died. But in Judges 9 and verse 23 it says God sent a spirit of ill will.

Actually in the Hebrew it says an evil spirit. It's a literal writing. God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem.

So these men who had been his friends began to be unfriendly toward him. For no rational reason, it's just that an evil spirit caused it. A wedge in the relationship.

There are many times when relationships between friends seem to, in a very bizarre way, begin to dissolve and corrode. And no one can explain why. But I think many times it's because there's an evil spirit there.

But what's interesting here is it says God sent this evil spirit. And it resulted in a judgment upon Abimelech, a very wicked man. In 1 Samuel, which you're probably reading currently, we read in chapter 18 and verse 10 that an evil spirit from the Lord came upon Saul.

Now the New King James is a distressing spirit, but again in the Hebrew the word is evil. The same word that's used when it talks about evil men. The same Hebrew adjective is

there.

You can find it used of evil men or any evil things. Evil spirits too. But in 1 Samuel 18, 10 it says now a certain I'm looking at 2 Samuel, but it's in 1 Samuel.

Let me find it here. It says, and it happened on the next day that an evil spirit from God came upon Saul. Likewise in 1 Kings 22 when Ahab was ripe for judgment, God said to a group of spirits around his throne, who will go and persuade Ahab to follow Amos Gilead? And a spirit came forward and said, I will persuade him.

God said, how? He said, I'll be a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets. And God said, go and do that. That's in 1 Kings 22 verses 21 and 22.

There is little said about demons in the Old Testament. What's interesting is that in the Old Testament they are never associated with Satan. Although in the New Testament it's clear that they are part of Satan's ranks.

But on the few occasions they're mentioned, they are seen as being dispatched by God upon persons worthy of judgment from God. That God uses the demonic powers. Now we are not to understand that the demonic powers love God and willingly serve Him and love to be His servants and so forth.

It's just they've got no choice. He's sovereign and they're not. They can't do any harm, even though they want to, except what He allows.

And so on the few occasions we see them doing harm, and where it's mentioned in the Old Testament it's on occasions where God decided He would allow it in this case. This man deserves to be judged. The judgment is possession.

There is actual strong reason to assume that demon possession is associated with idolatry. I'll talk about that a little more in another lecture. Not this one.

I don't have time right now. But it is a judgment in the Old Testament when demons come against someone and afflict them it is a judgment from God upon them. Now does this mean the demons are not in league with the devil? No, it means that the demons may have their own motivations, the demons may have their own hostility and desire to hurt, but they can't, unless God allows it.

But when God wants to, He does allow it. He does pull the hedge away. He does allow the demons to get through and afflict somebody if there is no good reason for Him to protect them from it.

Now God protects Christians from such generally, but He says if you do not forgive your brothers, then God will turn you over to torturers, just like the king did in the parable. That is Jesus' statement. It is a literal rendering of what He said.

And He is talking to Christians. He is talking to people who have been forgiven already and need to therefore forgive others. But if they don't, they can expect to be turned over.

Now, there is far more that we will talk about on this matter, but what occurs to me is there are very strong indicators, hints at least in the Bible, that may be under certain circumstances, very unideal certainly, that Christians might indeed find themselves suffering from demon possession. But here we need to define our terms. And we only have a few minutes to do it, but I want to define the terms because there is a lot of people who, they acknowledge, yeah, demons can do a lot of harm to a Christian, but they can't possess them.

And one of the most common sayings among Christians of this sort is that a Christian can be demon oppressed, but they cannot be demon possessed. This sounds so true that many Christians repeat it as if it is in the Scriptures itself. First of all, with reference to the statement, Christians can be oppressed by demons but not possessed by demons, there are two things I have to say, and one is that both statements are wrong.

At least both statements are without Scriptural basis, let's put it that way. The Bible nowhere uses the term oppressed by demons. No one has ever described the Bible as being oppressed by demons.

The expression is not found. Therefore, if we are going to say Christians can be demon oppressed, we are already resorting to non-biblical language from the same people who say we can't derive our doctrines from experience, we have to derive them by Scripture, yet they are resorting to an expression that isn't even in the Scripture. Oppressed by demons? No one in the Bible has ever said to be oppressed by demons.

It's true that Peter said in the household of Cornelius, when he was preaching, he said, Jesus went about doing good and healing all those who were oppressed by the devil. But it's not clear what he meant. He either meant that those who were oppressed by the devil were the sick people Jesus healed, or he might have been referring to the demon possessed that Jesus delivered.

But Peter does not establish a third category of people who are demon oppressed, but not demon possessed. If those who are oppressed by the devil are the sick, then we're not talking about what most people are talking about, demon oppression anyway. And if they are the demon possessed that Jesus healed, then there's no distinction between oppressed by the devil and possessed by a demon.

In other words, we cannot on biblical authority argue that there is a thing called demon oppression that is somehow distinguished from demon possession. Now the other point I want to make by way of definition is that the word demon possessed is a very poor choice of words. You'll find me using it because I grew up using it and because the Bible

uses it in the English translations, but the Greek words don't really readily translate that way.

Or word, I should say. There's a single word in the Greek that is uniformly used in the Greek New Testament when you find the phenomenon of demon possession. That word is daimonizomai.

Its root word is the word demon in the Greek. D-A-I-M-O-N daimon is demon in the Greek. And you add to that the letters I-Z-O-M-A-I daimonizomai daimonizomai really.

And you have something that if you would kind of anglicize it or transliterate it into English characters or thoughts, most people would just anglicize daimonizomai as demonized. Idzomai, really the last part of that, is comparable to our English suffix eyes, I-Z-E like to standardize or something like that. Eyes is a suffix on some of our words.

What does it mean to demonize? Well that's a very good question. The word doesn't convey any specific information content by itself. It suggests at least that someone is somehow affected somehow influenced probably by demons maybe some measure of control is implied by the word but the expression possessed is not a very good translation of it because possession is a word that means to own something.

If you possess something you own it. And I don't know if the devil really owns people. If he does he certainly doesn't own Christians and therefore if demon possession means the demon owns someone then we could certainly say that no Christian could be demon possessed in that sense because only God owns the Christian.

Unfortunately though for those making the argument the word demon possessed isn't even a thought that's found in that word. Demonized is the word that is used throughout scripture in the New Testament for this phenomenon and that does not convey obvious information content of a sort that would prove that Christians can't be demonized. In other words if it really meant owned by a demon we know Christians can't be owned by a demon.

Christians are owned by God but it doesn't mean that. What does it mean? Influenced? Controlled? What? What does demonized mean? The only way to know the answer to that is to look at the cases where it's used because it's not a word that has a clear meaning easily translated. And what you will find if you'll do what I did several years ago and look through all the cases in the scripture of people who are demonized you'll find that there are degrees.

Some people apparently are mildly demonized. I use the term mildly the Bible doesn't. Others seem severely demonized.

And by that I mean you'll find people whose whole life and behavior is radically impaired by the fact that they are possessed by demons. They can't even live among human

beings. They're violent.

They break chains. They live in tombs. They're naked.

They don't know it. They're crazy. That is a case we read of in scripture which is a case of very severe demonization.

But there are other cases where people are fairly normal. They function in society. They go to synagogue.

They sit and listen and participate in the synagogue. Then at a certain point they kind of get erratic and jump up and start screaming. That's a different degree it would appear of being affected or controlled by a demon.

You even find cases in the scripture where a person is demonized and there's nothing about their behavior mentioned that's out of the ordinary. They're just bent over and they can't stand upright. Or they are blind or dumb or deaf.

And yet when the demons cast out these physical conditions cease. But nothing at all is said about their behavior. One gets the impression the only effect the demons had on them was this physical.

And yet they are said to be demonized and demons are cast out of them. Now what I'm saying is that demonized apparently is a word that has a range of meanings varying in degree. I'm going to assume from the biblical data that demonized means something like coming under some measure of control or influence of a demonic spirit.

Can Christians come under some measure of control or influence of a demonic spirit? Well, I don't know of anything that says they can't. I would say this, that the measure of control that a person comes under has a lot to do with what they allow. How much place they give to the devil.

I don't think a Christian who's really a Christian could ever be as completely controlled by demons as a non-Christian could be. Because a Christian by definition is at least partially submitted to God, but there are areas of a Christian's life that may actually fall under the control of another influence, whether flesh or demon or whatever. And to say that the demon cannot control those areas that are available in a Christian's life to be controlled by other than God is to say more than the Bible does.

Therefore, I will say this, I don't know for sure if a Christian can have a demon. But since the Bible teaches that some people do have demons and does not specify that Christians cannot, then the burden of proof rests the most heavily on those who want to prove that Christians are an exempt class and that this phenomenon cannot happen in any measure to people who are believers. The Bible does not say so, and the Bible speaks about it as if it were a general phenomenon and does not exempt Christians.

So I will not assume that Christians cannot have demons. Perhaps they can, perhaps they cannot. We'll resume this subject of demon possession and get more practical next time.

We have to stop at this point and we'll pick it up again after a break.