

Spiritual Warfare: Understanding Demonization

Enoch Wan

Professor, Western Seminary

Published in Global Missiology, Spiritual Dynamics, Oct. 2003, www.globalmissiology.net

Introduction

The Puzzling Question: Can a Christian be demonized?

Figure 1. Possible Stages and Intensity of the Activities of the Enemy

The Personal Question: Can I be one of the Christians being demonized?

The Practical Question: Can I be free from demonization?

Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

The life-goal of each Christian is to glorify God. The objectives of the Christian Life and ministry are to lead a godly life daily, to love and serve God and others diligently. The enemies of Christians are sin, self (the “flesh” or the fallen nature), and Satan and his cohorts – evil spirits. Unfortunately, many Christians are blinded to the fact of spiritual warfare and are deceived by Satan’s strategy of slighting the reality of his presence and power (or evil spirits).

Though there are several dimensions in spiritual warfare, in this two-part series the scope of discussion will be on demonization: *a basic understanding of demonization* (part 1) and *a brief instruction on overcoming demonization* (part 2). The question and answer format is employed to make the presentation simple.

THE PUZZLING QUESTION: CAN A CHRISTIAN BE DEMONIZED?

Yes, a Christian can be demonized if we understand “demonization” to be “the process and state of being influenced, controlled, and eventually being inhabited/possessed by an evil spirit and demonic force.”

Demonization of a Christian may vary in degree and duration. Even Jesus was influenced by the devil and his followers (evil spirits and demonized persons included) in his temptation, persecution and crucifixion.

There are different types and stages of demonization as shown in the following table:

Figure 1. Possible Stages And Intensity Of The Activities Of The Enemy

Oppression	Obsession	Inhabitation	Possession
In Christians or non-Christians			In non-Christians
External		Internal	

Oppression is the state/process of being tempted spiritually with a sense of being weighed down physically and psychologically,” as in the case of a Christian being disturbed or harassed by the devil. Possible symptoms are: heaviness or obstruction in body and/or mind; depression; discouragement; dullness; etc.

Obsession is “a persistent disturbing preoccupation with an often unreasonable and unnatural idea or feeling,” as a result of the devil’s (or evil spirits’) intrusion into the life of a Christian, impelling him to (or preoccupying him with) certain ideas, emotions or actions from without. After his repeated oppression by an evil spirit, King Saul was obsessed by the thought of killing David because he was filled with jealousy and consumed by his hatred of David; though he had previously been anointed by the Spirit and prophesied (1 Sam. 10:1, 9-13).

Inhabitation is the process of being temporarily occupied, leading to being inhabited or indwelt by the devil or evil spirits (Luke 13:11-16; 1 Cor. 5:5).

Possession is “the act or state of being dominated or possessed by an extra-ordinary force (e.g. passion, impulse, idea) or extraneous personality (the devil or evil spirits).” Demonic possession by evil spirits occurs among non-Christians who have not been born again and are subject to the complete control of Satan in the kingdom of darkness.

Demonic inhabitation of a Christian is like the illegal occupation of new settlers in urban centers. Satan has no rightful occupation in the heart of a Christian whose life belongs to God after regeneration. However, a Christian's willful disobedience against God and personal persistent sins in his life can give ground for the devil or evil spirits to act as "squatters" in his life for a period of time.

For example, Judas who repeatedly stole money (John 12:6) had first allowed Satan to enter his heart. This eventually led to his betrayal of Jesus and suicide (John 13:2, 27). Another example is found in Acts 5:2 of Ananias and Sapphira. Similar cases were seen recently in ministers and evangelists who, being first obsessed with sexual immorality and sinful practices for a long period, were later driven to moral corruption and spiritual defeat.

THE PERSONAL QUESTION: CAN I BE ONE OF THE CHRISTIANS BEING DEMONIZED?

Since man is a holistic unity with three-dimensional functionality (i.e. one person with a composite personality of physio-psycho-spiritual aspects), the following list of possible symptoms (inductively derived from biblical cases of demonization and personal experience in deliverance ministry) are of three inter-related categories:

1. Physical Changes

a. Negative changes:

Physiological disorder or physical infirmities. e.g. paralysis and crippling.
Blindness, dumbness, convulsions, foaming at the mouth, falling or fainting,
altered voice and personality, etc.

b. Positive changes:
Superhuman strength and power

2. Psychological changes

a. Negative changes:

Fear, restlessness, depression and defiance, rebellion and volitional weakness, anti-social and destructive (even suicidal) thinking and attitudes, etc.

b. Positive changes:

Mediumistic abilities or extraordinary power and knowledge, e.g. moving objects, fortune telling, psychic healing, etc.

3. Spiritual changes

a. Personal:

Blasphemous thoughts, inability to concentrate on Bible reading or Christian exercise, transference, hatred, and fear of Christ, resistant to spiritual things, unusual reaction to Christ or His name, ineptness for true knowledge of sin, religious doubt, lack of peace or joy that is persistent, loss of faith, lack of spiritual growth or exhibit spiritual decline, inability to pray, spiritually impotent, etc.

b. Collective changes:

Cause division among Christians, disrupting of worship services, causing church splits, etc.

THE PRACTICAL QUESTION: CAN I BE FREE FROM DEMONIZATION?

Yes. Christians can be freed from three types of demonization, i.e. obsession, inhabitation and possession.

No. Christians can never be free from oppression as long as we live in this world.

The *how* of being freed from demonization will be discussed in the next issue: Part II – Overcoming Demonization.

CONCLUSION

In the spiritual warfare against sin, Satan and self, no Christian is exempt from the constant and persistent assault of his enemies and none can drop his guard at any time.

Christians, beware, be warned, and be watchful!

At the time of writing, Dr. Enoch Wan was Visiting Professor at Alliance Biblical Seminary, Quezon City, Philippines, and on sabbatical leave from Canadian Theological Seminary,

Regina, Sask., Canada. First published in Alliance Family, 1988 Summer: 6-18, Manila, Philippines: CAMACOP.

Send comments to: ewan@westernseminary.edu