

Spiritual Warfare: Overcoming Demonization

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[Introduction](#)

[Reality and Reasons of Demonization of Christians](#)

[The Real Victory Won by Christ for Christians](#)

[The Real Victory of Christians Over Demonization](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[End Notes](#)

[Bibliography](#)

[Appendix 1 – A Prayer of Renunciation & Affirmation](#)

Introduction

Christian leaders may not be in total agreement on the how's and why's of demonization of Christians, yet they all recognize the fact that Christians could be demonized. Therefore overcoming demonization is an essential aspect of Christians' warfare against sin, self, Satan (& evil spirits). The controversial debate on the possibility¹ and extensiveness² of demonization of Christians is beyond the scope of the present simple study which is just an attempt to provide brief instructions for Christians on overcoming demonization.

The Reality and Reasons of Demonization of Christians

Testimonies of suffering Christians and reports of pastors/counselors all point to the fact that *Christians could* and are being demonized. In the Philippine context, Christians can be demonized for the following reasons:

1. Spiritism, superstition and animism

Most Filipinos, including many Christians, are believers and practitioners of spiritism, superstition and animism. They believe that there is a "diwata," or "anito" or "patron" for every place, phenomenon of nature, and profession. They wear amulets on their bodies, place crucifix or charms in their vehicles, keep shrines (e.g. "sto nino") at home, visit astrologist, patronize palm-readers or fortune-tellers, resort to *espiritista* for healing, etc. They observe superstitious taboo and practice. People may use different names such as "folk Christianity," or "split-level Christianity," etc. to label this syncretistic characteristic of the Filipino culture. The sad fact is that Filipino Christians are readily susceptible and vulnerable to demonization.

2. Popular Christian superstition and possible personal involvement

Non-Christians may be superstitious out of fear of the unknown, unseen and invisible entity or reality. Christian superstition is mostly due to theological ignorance, spiritual

immaturity and doctrinal inconsistency. For example, Filipino Christians often think that God may be punishing them for missing morning devotions or a prayer meeting when tragedy occurs to them. For many have a ritualistic view of Christian duty.

Other Filipino Christians may have an idolatrous attitude towards the printed Bible and find it easier to fall into sleep by placing it on their chest when frightened by the evil-spirits. Yet others when facing a crisis may cry out "susmariosep" or "in Jesus' name" as a sacred formula, or an incantation to ward off evil spirits.

The more Christians are afraid of Satan and his companion evil spirits, the easier and more likely they could be demonized.

Christians who repeatedly quench the Holy Spirit, persist in sin, or willfully rebel against God, could leave room/ground/hold for evil spirits to inhabit/squatter in their life.

3. Past influence

Just like many physiological diseases that can be passed down from one generation to another, so also can demonic influence (Ex 20:3-5). Demonization of Christians may be caused by pre-conversion connection with evil spirits, e.g. ancestral transference, parental consecration (or spiritist healing during childhood), or personal involvement in occultic practices (e.g. moving glasses, fortune-telling, séance, etc.).

The Real Victory Won by Christ for Christians

Overcoming demonization is not the monopoly of a few specialists or exorcists. All Christians could and should be victorious. They should be reminded of the following truth:

1. The position of Christians in Christ

Christians can win the spiritual warfare against the principalities and power of evil. The basis of Christian salvation, sanctification and spiritual victory is Christ's atoning death and his abolishing the power of the enemies: sin, sickness, Satan and evil spirits, self and death. Salvation is for the total person (body, soul &/or spirit) and is complete (past, present and future).

2. The provision for Christians in Christ

Christians should know the provision in Christ and should be reminded of the victory over the spirits are won by the power of prayer (Mk 9:29), the Word of God (Eph 6:17, 18), the blood of Christ (Rev 12:11), and the power of Jesus' name (Mk 9:39; Lk 9:49).

3. The promise for Christians' victory

Not only Jesus' disciples were given the authority to cast out demons (Mt 10:1; Mk 6:7,12; etc.), Christians are also promised spiritual victory over demons and evil-spirits (Mk 16:15-18; 1 Jn 4:4; Jam 4:9, etc.).

The Real Victory of Christians Over Demonization

The position of Christians in Christ, the promise and the provision for Christians are the basis of Christians' overcoming demonization. Yet these promises and provisions for victory are to be appropriated and realized by Christians now and here.

1. Preparing for Christian victory

Christians are to fight the spiritual battle with spiritual preparation by being born of God (1 Jn 5:1-5, 18), abiding in Christ (Jn 15); walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16ff); confessing of sin (1 Jn 1:9), etc.

2. Personal victory of Christians

Since there are many possible reasons for demonization, Christians are to carefully examine and explore the many aspects of their lives, i.e. past and present, ancestral ties or personal involvement, etc. Spiritual victory can only come when one is sincere in his desire to be freed, confident in the total salvation and liberation in Christ, honest in his confession, earnest in his prayer for deliverance. The following is a sample prayer (not a sacred formula but a systematic coverage) of confession, renunciation and affirmation:

“As a child of God who has been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, I cancel out all demonic working that has been passed on to me from my ancestors...As one who has been crucified and raised with Christ and now sits with Him in heavenly places, I renounce any and every way in which Satan may claim ownership of me. I declare myself to be eternally and completely signed over and committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. All this I do in the Name and Authority of Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior, Amen.”
(Gal 3:13, Eph 1:7,20; Rom 6:4, etc.)

Christians after being delivered from demonic bondage should get rid of sinful practices and demonic items, e.g. adultery and idolatry, "anting-anting," amulet and charms, etc. which were the immediate causes of trouble and defeat before their deliverance. They should henceforth walk closely with God, grow spiritually and be ministered to by the Body of Christ.

3. Participatory victory with fellow Christians

The Body of Christ has been given the authority (Mt 18:18-20), endowed with spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:9-10), for mutual edification and defense in the spiritual warfare. Gifted and strong Christians should help the suffering and demonized ones to experience victory together in the various stages of deliverance: preparing, proceeding, and post-deliverance follow-up. Here is a sample prayer of deliverance:

“In the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the power of His precious blood, I bind every spirit of (name of people or place) and command you to leave ...and go to the place prepared for you, harming nobody, now and never return. In Jesus' Name and for His glory, Amen.”³

Conclusion

Overcoming demonization is promised and provided by Christ for Christians and the Church. Christians have a choice of either becoming victorious or victimized in the spiritual warfare against demons. We are to regularly prepare for victory, readily proceed to victory with positive attitude of being calm (1 Cor 15:33), confident (1 Jn 4:4) and cautious (Eph 6:10ff, 1 Pet 5:8-9). Of course, the best way is being preventive by the leaders' modeling, teaching, and discipling and by the followers' watching carefully against the enemies, and walking daily in the Spirit.

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[Top of page](#)

End Notes

1. Most authors agree that Christians can be oppressed and obsessed but they differ in terms of the possibility and extensiveness of inhabitation and possession.
2. In passing, it should be noted that theologian Merrill Unger who denied the possibility of Christians being demonized (i.e. inhabited and/or possessed) in 1952 had reversed his position in later publications (1971:116ff; 1977:46, 128, 136).
3. For further theological discussion, biblical study and practical guideline, please consult the books listed below and the forthcoming publication by the present writer entitled *Deliverance Ministry Manual*.

[Top of page](#)

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[Top of page](#)

Appendix 1 – A Prayer of Renunciation & Affirmation

As a child of God purchased by the blood of the lord Jesus Christ, I here and now renounce and repudiate all the sins of my ancestors. As one who has been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, I cancel out all demonic working that has been passed on to me by my ancestors. As one who has been crucified with Jesus Christ and raised to walk in newness of life, I cancel every curse that may have been put upon me. I announce to Satan and all his forces that Christ became a curse for me when he hung upon the cross. As one who has been crucified and raised with Christ and now sits with him in Heavenly places, I renounce any and every way in which Satan may claim ownership of me. I declare myself to be eternally and completely signed over and committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. All this I do in the Name and authority of the Lord Jess Christ (Gal. 3:13, 2:20; Eph. 1:7, 20; 2:5-6; Rom. 6:4)

Signed _____

(Full Name)

Address _____

Phone No. _____

(None of us knows what works of Satan may have been passed on to the counselee from ancestry. Therefore, it is well for every child of God to make the above "Renunciation & Affirmation". It is advisable to speak it aloud with the witness of other Christians.)

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