

# Sound Doctrine

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship ... (Acts 2:42)

## Can A Christian Be Demon-Possessed?

In the 25 years since comedian Flip Wilson first gave us the guilt-absolving line, “**the devil made me do it**,” there has been a growing tendency among many theologians to believe exactly that. In an attempt to justify the increasingly defeated, debauched and dysfunctional lifestyles of many modern Christians, they attribute to the devil more power than the Bible would ever allocate, award him more territory than Christ's blood would ever allow, and assign him more influence than the Holy Ghost would ever acquiesce. Their faulty reasoning and flawed rationale has given rise to a false doctrine that purportedly permits a believer to be “Holy Ghost possessed” and “demon possessed” – at the same time!

Even theological heavyweights like Merrill F. Unger (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, *Unger's Bible Handbook*) have jumped on the bandwagon, teaching that “demon control is not unknown among believers ...”<sup>1</sup> But Unger's erroneous understanding derives much of its validation from the doctrine of **Unconditional Eternal Security**, which is a crucial cornerstone for the doctrine of “Christian demon possession.” Since Unger believes that no saint could ever forfeit their salvation by entertaining sin,<sup>2</sup> it is just a small leap in logic for him to believe that a Christian could maintain salvation even while hosting demonic spirits.

Unfortunately, many nominal Christians find Unger's premise entirely logical, simply because they have never experienced the fullness of Biblical salvation with its life-changing, habit-breaking, sin-subduing power. Since it is water baptism in Jesus' name that puts “**YOU IN CHRIST**”<sup>3</sup> and the baptism of the Holy Ghost that puts “**CHRIST IN YOU**,”<sup>4</sup> one could reasonably expect a shortage of spiritual power in the lives of those who have been content with a new **BELIEF** but have not continued on to a new **BIRTH**.<sup>5</sup> However, the same troubling trend has been observed among Apostolic people, who in increasing numbers are embracing the utterly false notion that the devil can invade a Spirit-filled believer at will and wreak havoc in their life.

There is no doubt that Satan and his demons attack Christians. In fact, they are special targets of the enemies of God simply because they are His children. The Bible makes it clear that, upon entering our relationship with Christ, we also enter a “battle royal” with the forces of darkness.<sup>6</sup> It would be spiritual suicide to assume that Satan has some kind of “hands-off policy” when it comes to believers, for the devil will eagerly seize any territory he is given. That is why the Apostle Paul instructs us in Ephesians 4:27 not to “give **PLACE** (a foothold, a chance, an opportunity<sup>7</sup>) to the devil.” But take note of what Paul is saying – **the devil cannot GAIN a spiritual foothold in a believer's life unless they GIVE it to him!** Although Satan and his demons may “tempt” and “entice,” the Bible teaches that it is still a person's “own lust” that “brings forth sin” in his life.<sup>8</sup>

Satan basically has free rein to work WITHIN the “children of disobedience,”<sup>9</sup> but he is limited to working on the OUTSIDE where the Spirit-filled child of God is concerned. That is why the Bible contains numerous examples of the demonization and subsequent deliverance of unbelievers, but **NOT ONE CASE**

involving a Christian. Is this not an odd oversight on the part of the Author of Scripture, if the demonization of Christians is really the danger many declare it to be?



Raymond Woodward  
www.RaymondWoodward.com

Having said this, it must still be realized that demonic forces can produce pain, problems and perplexities **FROM THE OUTSIDE**. This means that a lukewarm Christian is especially in peril! There are several stages through which a spiritually cold person must pass on the road from temptation to possession, but it is often shocking how quickly the process of backsliding can occur and how drastic the consequences can be along the way:

- **TEMPTATION**. This is the devil's initial appeal to our sinful desires. Temptation can be rejected quite easily at first.
- **INFLUENCE**. At this stage, sin has developed a foothold in our life. To say “no” requires a determined act of our will.
- **OPPRESSION**. Satan now has some degree of domination over us, and we can't seem to break free. We find ourselves often acting compulsively, even against our better judgment.
- **OBSESSION**. At this stage, our sinful habits are so clearly established that we find it hard to discern them as wrong. Satan now has a great deal of domination over us, but it is still being achieved through outside manipulation.
- **POSSESSION**. By the time we arrive at this last stage, we are little more than puppets under Satan's control, with little or no desire left to resist. No one can get to this stage without simultaneously forfeiting their salvation, for God's Spirit will not dwell in a vessel that is inhabited by Satan.<sup>10</sup>

In the event that we do encounter a demon-possessed person who desires deliverance, the only Biblical course of action is to simply cast the demons out in Jesus' name. It is certainly not Scriptural to hold conversations with evil spirits, for that allows the possessed person to become a mouthpiece for demons, in direct violation of God's Word.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, such spirits never tell the truth anyway!<sup>12</sup> The devil loves to take credit for more power than he possesses, and delights in becoming the focus of our attention through bizarre manifestations. That he likes it is enough reason for mature Christians to deny him the pleasure!

<sup>1</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *What Demons Can Do To Saints*, p. 91

<sup>2</sup> Unger states, “Departure from the faith does not necessarily mean defection from Christ ...” – *ibid.*, p. 91

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 3:27, Colossians 2:12, Romans 6:4

<sup>4</sup> Colossians 1:27, Romans 8:9, Romans 8:15

<sup>5</sup> John 3:5, Acts 2:38

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 6:10-12

<sup>7</sup> Greek word *topos* (# 5117), *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*, Logos Research Systems, Inc., see also NLT and CEV translations

<sup>8</sup> James 1:14-15

<sup>9</sup> Ephesians 2:2

<sup>10</sup> 1 Samuel 16:14, Colossians 1:13, 2 Corinthians 6:14-16

<sup>11</sup> Deuteronomy 18:10-12, 1 Chronicles 10:13

<sup>12</sup> John 8:44