

Demons & Christians

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Integration Question: *What can demons do to believers today? What can/should we do to protect ourselves?*

Theological Statement

There is a spiritual war at hand in this world. Currently, everyone who does not claim faith and allegiance in Jesus is subject to Satan, the prince of the world. Jesus recognized this during His ministry, ensuring His followers that the ruler of this world, Satan and his demoniac, will one day be cast out (John 12:31). Paul writes that everyone is dead in their trespasses and sins in the way of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, which is currently working in the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:2). Thankfully, there is hope for Christians. Jesus' death has rendered Satan powerless over all who believe in Jesus by freeing them from the subject of spiritual slavery (Heb. 2:14-15). Paul, in his letter to the churches in Rome, exclaimed, "Thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17-18). The theological significance is that Satan and his army of demons do not have authority over followers of Jesus. But because earth is a warzone and the enemy is constantly on the move, followers of Jesus can submit their authority they have (in Christ) to the demonic realm. Ultimately, because of the victory offered through Jesus, Christians can reclaim their authority over Satan when they abide in the truth of what Christ has done for them. This is exactly what Paul urges Timothy, a pastor of the churches in Ephesus, to instruct his members, teaching that through believing in the "knowledge of truth", which is Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, people can "escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will" (2 Tim. 2:26).

Satan and his demon's interaction and possession of followers of Jesus is three-fold.

First, we can be confident that Satan and his demons can never *own* a Christian. All who believe in the atoning work of Jesus on the cross are rescued from Satan's dominion of darkness and live under the ownership of Jesus. (Col. 1:13; 1 Cor. 6:20). While this is true, followers of Jesus will experience *temptations* and be acceptable to the *influence* of the demonic realm. Jesus' life bears witness to this as He was tempted by Satan in the desert (Matt. 4:1-11). The early church also saw avenues of influence from Satan. Paul warns the newly formed churches in Corinth that just "as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, [their] minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ" if they do not continue their faith and perseverance in Jesus (2 Cor. 11:3). Giving way to demonic influence and temptations can lead a Christian to be *dominated*, seen through *manifestations* of Satan and his demons. Jeremah 32:30-35 and 2 Kings 23:4-20 are narratives of God's holy place, the temple, being entered and defiled by evil and demoniacs while His presence was abounding. Similarly, Christians, God's New Covenant temple, can give way to domination from Satan, but just as the Old Testament temple was cleansed, so too, Christians can be freed from any Spiritual manifestation through the blood of Jesus because the demoniacs ultimately have no ownership (only what authority we give them) of what Jesus has bought.

Ministry Application

Two practical applications of this theological concept are understanding common ways Satan has tried influenced God's children, and learning what tactics and practices we can utilize to counter the enemies temptations. First and foremost, I believe Satan's number one lie to Christians is in regard to our identity. On the very first pages of the Bible, we learn that God made humans in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27). A page later, Satan shows up on the

scene and tempts Adam and Eve. He tells them that if they want to be like God, they need to eat of a certain, forbidden fruit (Gen 3:1-5). Satan's temptation was rooted in influencing God's children that they needed to do something to be like God, when God just previously stated that He had already created them in His likeness. Similarly, Jesus was tempted in the same way. Immediately after He was baptized and heard God proclaim Jesus was His Son (identity statement), Jesus was led into the wilderness where Satan tempted Him three times. Satan's way of tempting Jesus was for Him to prove that He really was the son of God (Matt 4:3,6,9). How significant it was that just prior to this, God claimed Jesus' identity as His Son, and now, Satan was tempting His exact identity as God's Son. Just like Adam, Eve, and Jesus, Christians around the world are tempted in the way of our identity. Christians must always be on guard against the temptation of Satan to influence us away from our identity as redeemed, purified, holy image bearers, ambassadors, priests, and children of the Most High. This means that when it seems tempting to act out in anger at our spouse, lead our family selfishly, or be prideful at work, we must realize that our identity is one of someone who has been given a new heart and the old person who lived via the ways of this world has died. We are now someone who has been born again in the newness of Jesus' indwelling life. Living in our new identity means we can choose and live in the Way of Jesus as the people of Jesus.

The tactics and practices to fight off the attacks of the enemy and its manifestation is best demonstrated in Jesus' very own temptation account. Jesus uses Scripture (properly exegeted) to counter Satan's temptations (Matt. 4:4,7,10). A Christian must also claim the truths of Scripture over the enemy. While each demonic influence may be different for each person, the truth of Scripture is that God created humanity to live in an unmarred relationship with Him, and despite the evil ones best efforts to thwart that, Jesus reunited mankind to God's presence and has

ultimate victory over the evil one. Reading Scripture, reciting Scripture, memorizing Scripture, singing Scripture, praying Scripture, and living out Scripture are all ways to combat the lies and influence of the enemy. Jesus also spoke authoritatively over the enemy. The Creator bows to no one. He exercises His authority over the evil one in order to bring His Kingdom here to earth. This is the same authority that Jesus has bestowed upon His followers (Matt. 28:18; Luke 10:1-12). When a Christian is experiencing the influence or manifestation of the demoniacs, they must attack with the authority of Jesus and His victory. After the ceasing of temptation or removal of Satan's domination, the Christian must ensure they are continuing to be filled with His truth, through an abiding life of spending time alone with Jesus and surrounding themselves with community, so they do not leave any room for the enemy.