

Demon Possession

By Rev. Jason L. Kortering

The subject of demon possession is super-charged with both controversy and emotion. It can easily get out of hand. Our purpose is to write soberly and carefully so that we can reflect upon this aspect of missions as well.

Prior to coming to Singapore, I pretty much accepted the idea that demon possession was part of the phenomena which marked the apostolic age. I felt very comfortable placing it in the same category as miracles, speaking in tongues, and such like. My understanding was that during this particular age the Lord Jesus and His disciples (apostles) demonstrated the Lordship of the Lord Jesus over all things natural and spiritual. The Lord Jesus was confronted by people who were demon possessed, and He showed His majestic power by casting them out. Upon the Lord Jesus' resurrection and ascension into heaven, the early Christian church needed the same outward sign to establish the power of the living Lord as He dwelled with His church by His Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus worked a mighty work through His apostles, and this included such signs and wonders. By doing this, the Lord Jesus made very clear who His apostles were. He gave them such signs and wonders to distinguish them from impostors. Upon the writing of the Holy Bible, the need for such external signs and wonders ceased, as explained to the Christians in Corinth. The idea of demons actually taking possession of human beings ended along with the other signs and wonders. The devil was defeated by the Lord Jesus Christ. His head was crushed at the cross, and he now is made subject to Christ and is denied such power.

Though there is much truth stated above, there is more to be said about demon possession. My concept of what demon possession is all about has greatly expanded through working here in Singapore. I would be the first to admit that living in a western culture, which tends to discredit such things anyway, and not having contact with heathen culture, where demon possession takes on an entirely different perspective, I was a bit naive in this regards. I do remember reading of the escapades of the Volta Evangelistic

Association brothers who would go into the back country of Ghana, Africa and recount for us in the Foreign Mission Committee their battles with demons. Also, I was most intrigued with missionary accounts of personal struggles with demons, and I wondered how that all could take place.

Living in Singapore for about five years does not make me an expert on demonology by any means. In fact, I hesitate writing on demon possession for the very reason that I would like to study much more on this subject; but then again I suppose a person could put off writing on almost any topic because of this feeling of inadequacy.

In addition to this, there is something reprehensible about this subject. Fact is, the more I learn about it the more I tremble at the horror of it. We must not approach this subject with such curiosity that we are willing to place ourselves in spiritual danger. Demons are real and they have great power. They hate God and hate God's people and always work havoc in the lives of those who yield themselves to their power and control. Any account of demon-possession carries with it nothing but horror. Instinctively, as Christians, we ought to run as far from this sort of thing as we can. The purpose of writing on this subject is to alert all of us to the reality of demons, and to try to bring us to some understanding of how we are to deal with it both in heathen and nominally Christian cultures.

Our approach must be that of the Holy Bible. We are warned that in the latter days "some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (I Timothy 4:1-2). The devil is so subtle that we are told in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

We can be sure that Satan, as the chief of all demons, would like nothing better than that we imagine that he has little power. Such a response would allow him to do his wicked work unopposed and he could strike as he would.

The Holy Spirit makes perfectly clear to us that our real enemy in the spiritual battle of faith is none other than demons. "Put on the whole armour of God...for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:11-12). Here Paul refers to ranks of demons which are under the direction of Satan, their chief. The picture which the Holy Spirit conveys to us here is that the air is literally filled with demons, who are well organized and marshalled for battle against the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world.

Our Reformed forefathers understood this well when they wrote the Form for the Lord's Supper and included mention of tampering with demons as reason for one not to partake of the Lord's Supper. "Such as all idolaters, all those who invoke deceased saints, angels, or other creatures, all those who worship images, all enchanters, diviners, charmers, and those who confide in such enchantments" - all these are admonished to abstain from the meat and drink of the Lord's Supper.

Beginning with this article, I would like to set forth six principles which I trust will help put into perspective the Holy Bible's teaching about demons. (1) All non-Christians are under the dominion of the devil. (2) The Lord Jesus stripped Satan completely of any control or authority over His people, the church. (3) Christians can never be demon possessed, though they can be harassed by demons. (4) If God is pleased to deliver a non-Christian from demon possession, He does it not through exorcism, but through the ministry of the gospel and prayer. (5) The Christian's security against the assaults of Satan is to live the holy life. (6) The Lord Jesus Christ is Lord also over the devil; that is our great comfort as Christians.

All non-Christians are under the dominion of the devil

The Holy Bible uses this language. In three passages, John 12:30; 14:30; and 16:11, the Lord Jesus calls Satan the prince of this world. In John 8:44, the Lord Jesus is disputing with the Pharisees subsequent to His exposing

their hypocrisy when they brought the woman taken in adultery to the Lord Jesus, and He says to them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." When the Lord Jesus presented to His disciples the only two possible alternatives, God or mammon, He said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). Mammon is the material world under the direction of Satan. It is either Christ or Satan as master.

Having said this in no way contradicts the biblical truth of God's sovereignty in the Lord Jesus Christ. We must add that God is always sovereign over Satan. The point is that until the Lord Jesus finished His work of redemption, Satan had the right to exercise His lordship over the entire earth. The very first promise given by God to Adam and Eve by way of Satan was that Satan would have his head crushed by the Seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus Christ. The history of Job not only teaches us that Satan had to receive permission from God to touch Job, but it also teaches us concerning the exalted position Satan had among the "sons of God which presented themselves before the Lord," as Satan was among them (Job 2:1ff.).

This helps us understand the temptations of the Lord Jesus as well. Satan offered to the Lord Jesus the nations of the world without having to go to the cross (Matthew 4:8). Satan is prince of this world because of God's curse and judgment upon the world. When the Lord Jesus finished His redemptive work on the cross, He settled it once for all that Satan as prince of this world is greatly limited. Satan was cast out of heaven and given the earth as his domain (Revelation 12:9ff.). Hence the cry of the angels went to the earth, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having a great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Revelation 12:12).

When we say that Satan has control of this world under the rule of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must understand that this control is exercised in varying degrees. Satan exercises his control over the whole world and from his point of view marshals his forces in spiritual battle. From a general point of view we can say that all the wicked are soldiers in the army of Satan. He has his own strategy for battle. He has his own ranking of spirits as described in Ephesians 6. Some devils are like generals, others like captains, sergeants, or infantrymen. He has his choice men in high places in the nations, schools, and churches, wherever they can exert their greatest influence. He has a purpose for the drunk that wobbles in the alleys of our broken cities. Everything outside of the Lord Jesus Christ is part of Satan's own massive offensive against Christ's church.

The worst form of Satan's control comes in the form of demon possession. It is called "worst" not because of the amount of influence such a person has, but in the sense of the horrible expression of what Satan is all about and what horrible power he possesses. What we see in a demon possessed person is an outward and tangible display of what is true in the lives of all those who are non-Christian. Satan still rages as a horrible lion, or dragon, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8 and Revelation 12:17).

This takes place where fallen men invite him into their lives and openly desire to have the power that Satan gives to them. Demon possession takes place in an environment where he exercises his rule in horrible wickedness.

A couple of examples may help.

You can see demon possession in the heathen temples where the worshippers literally give themselves over to be willful servants of the devil. The worst form of this is the temple medium. Heathen people are very superstitious. They are basically afraid of their deities. They imagine that their temple gods and even their ancestors control their lives. Unless they appease them with sacrifices and prayers, the gods will do them harm.

In such a setting, the temple medium plays an important role. He is the one who is literally under the control of Satan. He acts as the intermediary between the living and the dead. When the worshippers want to know their future or want to communicate with their dead relatives, he knows how to place himself in a trance and function as a direct agent of Satan. It is striking that the families of such mediums are usually affected as well. In many instances their wives and children get involved in this.

Sometimes their demon possession is more controlled. The medium may take on a terrible appearance of death, and tremble, and his voice will sound exactly like that of the dead person when he was yet alive.

We should understand that mediums are not able to awaken the dead, nor to communicate with the dead, but the devils have such power that they are able to mimic it. We know of a Christian who attended such a visit to a medium when her mother wanted to make a financial decision but wanted to consult her dead husband before finalizing it. When the medium was in the trance he spoke with a voice just like her father's. This is the terrible deception.

At other times the demons take possession of a person, usually in connection with temple worship, and control him in a violent way, very similar to what is described in the Holy Bible. Such a person can know full well that a demon is within him and that the demon is using him.

We know of a person here in Singapore who was born and raised in such a medium family and was also at one time himself demon possessed. He tells how he experienced this. The devil would speak through him, and he had no control over what he was saying. He saw how his brother, while in a trance, had the end of his tongue cut off by a medium with no blood shed, and later how the medium placed the piece back on the tongue with no sign of it ever having been cut off. The Hindu practice of fire-walking is not only a display of mind over body, but also a religious festival in honour to their gods. This is a festival which is actually demon controlled.

We had an interesting conversation with a young man on his way to serve as missionary in India. He was born in a Christian family, but he went

through a period of spiritual backsliding. During this time he took up New Age meditation. While he was doing this, a devil moved in and took possession of his mind. For over a year, he told me, he lived in literal hellish torment, for this devil taunted him and challenged him that he was not a Christian. He could hardly sleep at night, and always the inner voice of the devil inside of him harassed him. He thanks God for his deliverance, for he sees the demon possession as an attempt of a devil to take control of him; but he had had enough spiritual strength given him by God that he could still resist, though it involved a year-long internal fight.

The Hindus and Buddhists do the same with their meditation to achieve karma. This is a realm in which Satan holds sway.

Devils are real, and the spiritual battle is intensifying as we enter the final moments of history, during which Satan will put forth his last effort to deceive the very elect of God. There is however much comfort for us as Christians. We will examine that in our next article, the Lord willing.

Demon Possession (2)

By Jason L Kortering

Subsequent to writing our first article on this subject, I read an interesting reference to demon possession in the book, *Practical Theology and the Ministry of the Church*, published in 1990. Dr. Roger Greenway has a chapter entitled, "Evangelism." In preparation for writing this chapter he sent questions to twenty-five leaders in evangelism within the Reformed and Presbyterian community. One of the questions was, How would you compare your thinking today about evangelism with your thinking on the subject thirty or so years ago? From his summary of these answers I quote one paragraph, entitled "The Missionary Spirit and Demonic Oppression."

Related to this, there is surfacing a clearer recognition of the demonic in the lives of individuals and of society. The biblical teaching about Satan and demons is receiving fresh attention. Satan is seen to be very real. He is no longer regarded as belonging largely to some far-off orbit, but

his presence and influence are recognized in the world's affairs and in opposition to divine truth and righteousness. In short, there is a fresh emphasis on the immediacy of God and the Holy Spirit and of Satan and his cohorts. The one brings comfort and strength to God's servants, and the other is the archenemy of evangelism.

No longer is this subject of concern only in relation to heathen cultures. The infiltration of the New Age Movement forces Westerners to come to terms with their own understanding of demons. This movement has its roots in pagan religions and with it all the trappings of demons and spirits. All of us do well to have a clear biblical perspective in order that we can properly warn our covenant youth against any experimentation. We do not play with demons.

The second point we want to make in connection with our subject of demon possession is that Christ has completely stripped Satan of any control or authority over the people of God and His church. In Jesus Christ there is deliverance from the fear of evil spirits and even the horror of demon possession because Jesus is Lord.

The thrill of the Christian gospel is exactly this message.

I wish I could convey to you something of, the horror, the fear, and superstition that is associated with heathendom and their being under the control of the devil. Why do eastern religions emphasize so much meditation, clearing of the mind, chanting mantras, focusing on karma, and such like? It is because this is their answer to the dread which surrounds the people. The influence: of Taoistic Animism (the presence of the spirits of the dead) and evil spirits keeps the people in the grip of fear. They are afraid of the spirits of the dead reporting to the god of hell that they are not living properly, and of such a god taking vengeance on them. How will he do this? By sending evil spirits into their lives and haunting them, threatening them, even destroying them.

It seems the more "civilized" the heathen becomes, the more he tries to deny such influence and put it behind him. Fact is that his past haunts him no matter how modernized he may become. He will continue to think in terms of appeasing the gods and the spirits. For this reason you see modern women with attaché cases in hand stopping off at the Chinese temple on the way to work. Among the most educated, the Necromancer does a booming business to soothe the superstition of his clients. The more blatant expressions of fear in connection with evil spirits are in the back hills of the undeveloped world. It is their mind-set, for they see evil spirits taking control of much of their life, and they deal with the mediums to try to discover how to gain their favour or appease their wrath. Van Rheenen, in his book, *Communicating Christ in an Animistic Culture*, quotes James Frazer in this manner:

They dog his footsteps, dazzle his senses, enter into him, harass and deceive and torment him in a thousand freakish and mischievous ways. The mishaps that befall him, the losses he sustains, the pains he has to endure he commonly sets down, if not to the magic of his enemies to the spite or anger or caprice of the spirits. Their constant presence wearies him, their sleepless malignity exasperates him; he longs with an unspeakable longing to be rid of them altogether, and from time to time, driven to bay, his patience utterly exhausted, he turns fiercely on his persecutors and makes a desperate effort to chase the whole pack of them from the land, to clear the air of their swarming multitudes, that he may breathe more freely and go on his way unmolested at least for a time.

How shallow, how horribly man-centered are the attempts of eastern religion to deliver such people from their fears. It is into this setting that God in His wisdom brings the gospel. The Holy Bible speaks to this kind of fear. There is story after story and message after message that tell us that God has given to us His Son who has conquered Satan and all his hosts. The gospel narratives of the Lord Jesus' casting out evil spirits speak directly to

them. Yes, they are around us all the time. Yes, there are people possessed of devils. The Lord Jesus did not destroy the devil and put away all his spirits, but, thanks be to God, there is deliverance and victory over them.

The Lord Jesus assured His disciples that such would be the case. We see this in Luke 10:18, "I saw Satan as lightning-fall from heaven." This was the Lord Jesus' response to the seventy disciples who returned to Him to report on their ministry. They had said to the Lord Jesus, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." The Lord Jesus' answer to them was to point them to Satan's defeat portrayed as lightning falling from heaven. This is subsequently described for us in Revelation 12:9, "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

The place from which he was cast is heaven. During the Old Testament times Satan had access to heaven, as we learn from the book of Job. Being cast to the earth symbolizes his ultimate defeat. This is learned from the chorus which the angels sang upon this occasion (w. 10-12). The theme was that salvation is come to heaven, for the accuser of the brethren is cast down, the inhabitants in heaven are exhorted to rejoice, and the inhabitants of the earth are warned.

Even though the battle is not finished, Satan is defeated. Proof of this can be seen in the reason for the victory of the saints over Satan. It is through the "blood of the Lamb," the "word of their testimony," and their "love for Him, even unto death." Victory over Satan is in the wonderful work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through His blood of atonement, the devil is silenced. He can no more accuse the brethren.

There is a legal and judicial basis for our being received by God, namely, the blood of the Lord Jesus on the cross as the payment for sin. For this reason He has power to overcome the devil. This the Lord Jesus demonstrated while He was on earth. He personally resisted the, temptations of the devil and exercised power to cast out demons. Now in His exaltation, the Lord Jesus has given to us the testimony of His Word, the Holy Bible.

Through the wonderful work of the graces of the Holy Spirit we are caused to see that God is no more angry with us, for we are reconciled to Him by the death of His own Son. Now are we the sons of God, we are His family. There is a beautiful bond of friendship between God and us.

The main point is this, the fear of evil spirits is taken away because God is for us. The beautiful doctrine of the covenant is such good news to fearful, superstitious pagans. The angels sang of this on the occasion of the ascension of Christ into heaven. We do well to declare it to the nations.

We must emphasize now, in the third place, that it follows from this that Christ Himself is LORD over Satan and his evil spirits. This may sound a bit repetitious, but the point that we want to make here is this. The Lord Jesus defeated the devil and is more powerful than he is, that is true. But we must add to this, that even the devils and spirits are now subject to the Lord Jesus Christ. The real burden of heathendom and its superstition is this: who is in control of the spirits? Are they roaming about on their own? Do they strike at will without any reason? The heathen do not have the answer for this.

Most heathen cultures have some fables and myths about how the gods came into being and how a certain hierarchy exists among them. This includes their dealing with anger and avenging themselves on people who do not do as they say. These gods have their evil spirits roaming the world to execute their demands. One thing becomes very apparent, these poor people do not know why or how these spirits may come. Whenever something goes wrong in their life, they take to guessing what they have done wrong to bring such hardship and difficulty. For this reason they are so vulnerable to the temple mediums. The mediums can do or say almost anything and some of these people will listen and blindly follow them. One such medium instructed a woman, who came to him out of concern for her unfaithful husband, that she had to have sexual intercourse with him if she would appease the evil spirit in her husband. She consented to this, only to learn later that his only interest was his own lust. In the extreme, it even involves the killing of children to appease the spirits.

What a gospel it is to tell such people that there are not two forces in this world which are fighting to gain control. It is not the force of good versus evil. It is not some gods fighting to gain control over spirits. The gospel is not simply to say that the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit are stronger than evil spirits. No, there is only One who is in control, and that is the great Creator God. He is even in control of evil spirits because of the work which the Lord Jesus Christ His Son did while He was on earth.

This is demonstrated to us in the Holy Bible as well. In the Old Testament we are reminded that Satan could not even touch Job with any form of trial without first obtaining the consent of God. We can turn to Mark 5 and read of the account of the Lord Jesus as He cast the demons out of him who was named Legion. The Lord Jesus had complete control over those demons, to the point that He could either cast them into the deep (out of the country, v. 10), or, as He did, into the swine. Repeatedly (see the parallel account of this event in Matthew 8:1, when the Lord Jesus came face to face with such demons, they feared Him greatly and taunted, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Even the "thorn in the flesh" of Paul was a "messenger of Satan to buffet him" (see II Cor. 12:7). That thorn was ultimately from God, for when Paul sought Him to take it away from him, God's answer was, "My grace is sufficient." That thorn from God was used by Satan as a means to tempt Paul, but in that he failed, for God is Lord over Satan.

This has tremendous implications for the gospel as it is brought to those who are gripped in the fear of demons. As they tremble in the presence of demonic power, which is real, they see it about them and have experienced dreadful consequences, the good news of the gospel to them is, fear not! There is a way for deliverance. There is not only a God who is more powerful than demons, but there is a God who even controls the actions of demons and turns them all for good. God's way of deliverance is to enable us to "resist the devil and he will flee from thee, draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to thee" (James 4:7-8).

The gospel presents demons as very real and powerful, but there is victory over them. The victory comes in the way of putting on the Christian armour mentioned in Ephesians 6, which enables us to prevail in our spiritual warfare. He continues to send his fiery darts, but we are protected and are able to drive him away from us through the use of the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

In this manner we can exalt the great doxology of the inspired Paul when he brought the powerful eighth chapter of Romans to a close, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" No, in all these things we are more than conquerors. "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come...shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39). Angels are set against demons as contrasting forces in our 'lives. Not even demons can separate us from the God we love in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This brings us to the fourth point of consideration. I can only introduce it in this article and we will have to go into it a bit more in our concluding article. This has to do with demon possession and how one is delivered from it.

We want to say a few things about two aspects of this subject. We should say a few things about the character of demon possession, that is, what marks a person who is possessed and how do we know he is possessed? The second is, what must we as Christians or as a Christian church do if it pleases God to use us to deliver such a one from possession?

Books have been written on these questions, but we should at least address them briefly in our next article so that we can also exult in the Name of our Lord Jesus, who not only delivered people from demons in His day, but continues to do so in our day.

Then we have to say a few words about, the, remaining two propositions, that is, that the Christian can never; become demon possessed, and that the

best way to become secure against the wiles of Satan's assaults is to live a holy life with God.

Demon Possession (3)

By Jason L Kortering

We should consider in a little more detail how we know if a person is actually demon possessed? This is necessary to consider in connection with the method of deliverance.

There are so many far-out and wild-eyed books about demon possession and deliverance that I can understand why a Reformed man would simply throw up his hands and deny its existence. That is an easy way out of the mess. The Charismatic and Pentecostal movement has not helped in this regard either. We all know how they go about seeing demons in every disease and attributing character faults to demon possession. I personally have had to minister to a man who had been worked-over for five days as attempts were made to deliver him from the demon of self-seeking. The poor fellow was a physical and mental wreck. Interestingly, all during those five days his would-be healers never once opened their Bibles to read what God has to say. For that matter, neither has the Roman Catholic glamorization of exorcism helped one bit. Abuse spreads even further. I suppose you have read of the episode in California where a Korean woman was killed by her own husband in the process of exorcism. He was joined by a Presbyterian deacon in their local church who also participated in her death. In their exorcism ceremony they literally stomped the woman to death in an attempt to force out the demon. This went on for some five hours. One is inclined to use such incidences to declare belief in the presence of demon possession to be illegitimate and wrong.

Yet, we cannot do this. A far more sober approach is suggested to us in the book by Merrill Unger entitled, *Demons in the World Today*. If you are interested in this subject, you do well to read it. His description of demon possession is as follows:

Demon possession is a condition in which one or more evil spirits or demons inhabit the body of a human being and can take complete control of their victim at will. By temporarily blotting out his consciousness, they can speak and act through him as their complete slave and tool. The inhabiting demon or demons comes and goes much like the proprietor of a house who may or may not be "at home". When the demon is "at home", he may precipitate an attack. In these attacks the victim passes from his normal state, in which he acts like other people, to the abnormal state of possession.

When this takes place, Unger suggests, we can look for definite distinguishing marks. These are collated from the scriptural accounts of demon possession, and they are in turn confirmed by reports of many missionaries and others who have had to deal with this. He suggests that the chief characteristic is the automatic projection of a new personality in the victim. During the attack, the victim's personality is completely obliterated, and the inhabiting demon's personality takes over completely — so completely that the demon refers to the "possessed" in the third person, an element which Unger observes to be entirely lacking in cases of insanity. Such persons imagine themselves to be the Lord Jesus Christ or other characters.

In various degrees, three more things take place. First, the demon possessed has supernatural knowledge and intellectual power. Unger gives examples from both the Holy Bible and mission history. Second, supernatural physical strength is evident in the possessed. Third, there are evidences of moral depravity. The demon causes the possessed to speak in a vile manner or even to delight in violence or in sexual excesses. From a different point of view, they frequently rave at any spiritual activity such as Bible reading and prayer. This was evident when the demons expressed their rage against the presence of the Lord Jesus.

Because the Lord Jesus Christ defeated the devil and all his hosts through His death and resurrection, He is also the One who is able to defeat him in

the arena of battle. This is important for us to remember. No human being can deliver another human being from the throes of the devil. This is the work of our Sovereign Lord alone.

We must also remember that Satan never is allowed to take possession of the Christian. He is able to influence and tempt the Christian, but not take possession as we described it above. This observation is deduced from the teaching of Scripture which speaks of the work of salvation in the child of God. 2 Corinthians 5:17 calls one who is saved a "new creation." In Ephesians 1:13 we read that we are "saved with the Holy Spirit of promise." The words of Colossians 1:12-13 form such a promise: "Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Because of this change, our response to Christ is not fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father (Romans 8:15).

From a little different point of view, we look at Matthew 12:24-32, where the Lord Jesus was accused of casting out demons by Beelzebub, a demon. The Lord Jesus calls this "blasphemy," for that constitutes a divided house. How much more that would be true if the Lord Jesus would allow a demon to be enthroned in the heart of one of His dear children where He reigns. It is impossible to conceive of this. This must in no way detract from the clear teaching of the Holy Bible that we Christians "wrestle against demons" (Ephesians 6:12). Satan goes about as a "roaring lion" whose attack is focused upon Christians (1 Peter 5:8). He even buffets us through our "thorns in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

Since non-Christians are the ones who are possessed, it fits the purpose of God to deliver such from demon possession for the sake of the gospel. Such deliverance is the prelude to salvation. This was evident in the biblical accounts and also witnessed by many missionaries bringing the gospel to the lost. Such deliverance is not only for the sake of the individual (which in itself must be unfathomable relief), but even more so is for the furtherance of the gospel. Such a display of power has a moving effect upon those who receive

Christian missionaries into their midst. The same is true in a culture such as America, where there is a transition from secularism and scientism to spiritism and mysticism.

How must such casting out of demons be done?

The first thing we ought to emphasize is that the concept and practice of exorcism is fraught with dangers. Even the heathen go through magic rites to cast out evil spirits. Most of the time this is accompanied with inflicting pain on the possessed. We must have none of the chanting and magical blood which marks the abuse of this activity by many Charismatics. As in most of their "worship," they grieve the Holy Spirit. It is better that we not use the term exorcism, because of the abuse that is associated with that practice.

The place of casting out demons in the New Testament, as recorded in the New Testament itself, must caution us so as not to elevate it to some place of distinction and power. It can be demonstrated that the casting out of demons was almost completely limited to the Lord Jesus and His disciples (see Luke 10:19-20). Also, we must observe that in the great commission as expounded both in Acts and in the epistles of Paul, Peter, and John, there is no explicit instruction to cast out demons, nor is there mention of such activity in the early church. From this point of view, the casting out of demons was part of the special phenomenon such as miracles, speaking in tongues, etc. which were done away with when the Holy Spirit gave the church the completed revelation of God in written form, the Holy Bible. What does this tell us? It seems to me we learn this, that there was no special "gift" given to some person to cast out demons. Rather, the deliverance from demon possession is connected with the preaching of the gospel. The word of the gospel and the power of prayer is that which God uses to deliver from demons. The ministry of the Word is that which delivers one from demons (Colossians 1:13). The power of the Word preached is that of continual prayer, even as the Lord Jesus told His disciples that certain demons can be cast out only with much prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:21). The prayerful

preaching of the Word of God is the vehicle for the deliverance from demon possession.

This is important for mission work. The preaching of the gospel includes the authority of Christ to cast out demons in the name of the living Lord. That preaching is the word of the exalted One, who has defeated Satan, who also, in the bringing of the gospel to the heathen, demonstrates His great power over all evil forces by delivering captives of Satan through the word and prayer of the missionaries. When missionaries stand in the presence of one who is possessed, they must bring the good news of the gospel to him or her, declaring that in Christ there is deliverance. They must call such a one to repentance of sin and to fall before the cross of the Lord Jesus in whom alone is life everlasting. Such a one must be called to embrace Christ and forsake all evil. He must turn to God in humble confession of sin and seek deliverance.

This brings up yet another interesting side question. In bringing the gospel to such a possessed person and in praying for him/her, should the demon(s) be personally addressed? Should the missionary or pastor speak directly to the demon and command him to come out in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ?

In my search for an answer to this question, I find that Christians have divided views. In Singapore there has been quite a controversy in local churches over this issue. The point at issue is this, is it giving too much credibility to the demon and too much power to the pastor if he sets forth such a direct confrontation? It is argued that the Lord Jesus had the authority to do this, and He knew His own intention, so that when the Lord Jesus made such a command it was effectual and always delivered the possessed from the demon. It seems that the disciples had this power as well, as they reported to the Lord Jesus upon their return (Luke 10:17). Morrison, in his book *The Serpent and the Cross*, suggests that even the Lord Jesus did not just command them to "come out," but ordered them into the abyss, making an exception at the time when the demons begged to enter pigs instead. Over against this point of view, there are many instances cited in mission

accounts where demons left the possessed just because they were commanded to do so in the name of the Lord Jesus.

I frankly have to admit that I have not come to a conclusion on this issue. It seems to me the issue is this: May the missionary/pastor say, as part of the gospel message to the demon possessed, "In the name of the Lord Jesus, come out!" He does have the authority to speak in the name of the Lord Jesus. That is what makes the preaching of the gospel distinctive. It is also true that he has the authority to command men everywhere to repent and believe, that is, to issue the command to more people than it may please the Lord Jesus to save. Would that also be true if the missionary/pastor addresses a command to a demon to come out as part of the gospel to the demon possessed? There is a difference, obviously. If it does not please Christ to use it for deliverance, the effect is the same as all gospel preaching, a double effect. At least we can do more reflecting upon this issue.

Finally, we must remind ourselves that, even though Christians cannot be "possessed" by demons, the spiritual warfare is sharp and decisive. How can we best equip ourselves in this spiritual battle?

We do not have to go around marking off territory and people with holy water, claiming that they are thereby protected by the blood of the Lord Jesus. Such foolishness smacks of the darkness of heathendom, caught in the web of superstition.

The best safeguard against the wiles of the devil is to stop playing with him. Years ago, when I was a student at Calvin Seminary, I made a chapel speech entitled, "The devil on the leash." The point of that speech was that, though we never want to give complete control to Satan because we know his wiles, we do like to have him for our "pet," like a dog on a leash. We imagine that he is then under our control. We allow him just so much influence in our lives as we please. We do this when we mess around in his territory. Today's movies that deal with the extra-sensory and extra-terrestrial just play into the devil's hands. Anything that has to do with fortune telling, the occult, and games which involve using the power of the mind to do wonders (and there are so many of these that entertain today)

put the devil on the leash. We Christians must know that the horror of Satan's deception, as seen in those "possessed," must teach us that we are to be in dead earnest when we deal with him.

More positively, and it is good to leave on a positive note, the best guard against any temptation and allure of the devil is to walk close to God. Holiness is exemplified by wearing the protective armor (Ephesians 6), and using the offensive weapon of the Word of God to speak to ourselves and to others as to how we are to live in this world to the glory of God.

"Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 2:16 and Leviticus 11:44). There is no more effective safeguard against the wiles of the devil.

Thanks be to God for such deliverance and salvation in our Lord Jesus.