

Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare 2

Dr. David Powlison

Introduction:

Do we get our view of spiritual warfare from the Devil or from the Scriptures themselves?

There is a contrast between Peretti's fantasy and that of Tolkien/Lewis.

Review of 3 Key Questions:

1. How does the holy Creator and Sustainer of the universe relate to evil creatures?
2. How does the Redeemer deliver wicked people?
3. What does spiritual warfare look like?

The World, the Flesh and the Devil

- Some believe that there are world problems, flesh problems, and demon/spiritual problems.
 - A spiritual problem is a "spirit problems"
 - There aren't three types of problems. There is one problem and the three work together like a braid.
 - The three are not teased apart – they work together and there is mystery to how this works.

Wars with Spirits vs. Spiritual Warfare

- **What is it?**
 - Spiritual warfare is about the question of what rules your heart. Who is your lord?
 - "Spirit wars" is operating on a different paradigm. Deliverance ministries, demon deliverance, etc.
 - The common theme is a moral demonization. The work of the demonic is an alien intelligence and will which is able to infiltrate your personality and take over control. It is like a virus on the hard disk of your soul that is able to execute commands.
 - Neil Anderson uses the metaphor of bats in the cave. The cure is that the bats have to be eliminated – the virus needs to be scrubbed.
- **What are the causes?**
 - A background in the occult or animism
 - Bizarre behaviors – schizophrenia, multiple personality disorders
 - Being severely sinned against – childhood rape
 - Sinning too often
 - Tantrums or bouts of anger/rage
 - Acquired from ancestors – intergenerational sins or demonic attachments

- **What are the solutions?**
 - Cast it out – do what Jesus and the Apostles did
- **What is the bottom line?**
 - It is basically an occult theology coming in Christian guise
 - It is animism being read into the Bible
 - They fail the categorical questions from part 1, and they fail the exegetical test in each of their distinctive teachings
 - None of the texts cited actually support their assertions

But What Abouts?

- **But what about third world cultures?**
 - There is an appeal to let experience lead rather than Scripture
 - Story of a missionary friend
 - Pragmatic disillusionment
 - Theological disillusionment
 - A shift to basic counseling revealed normal sins behind the veneer of weirdness
 - Adultery, bitterness, corruption, going back into the occult for solutions
 - Confession of sin reduced the occurrence of the “weird” things
 - In an animistic culture the bizarre will be sin’s idiom
 - In our psychologized culture sin’s idiom is DSM-IV symptoms
- **But what about the fact that Jesus and the Apostles did deliverance ministry?**
 - Jesus and the apostles did deliver people who had a demon or were demonized.
 - Don’t import the occult worldview into these stories.
 - What was going on in the deliverances?
 - The Bible uses the word evil with a double sense.
 - Sin
 - Suffering
 - Ecc 9:3
 - In the biblical deliverance examples, it is never evil in the sinful sense. It is relief from suffering/misery/torment.
 - The Gerasene Demoniac (Luke 8:26-33)
 - There is nothing in it about a moral cause to the problem
 - Everything in the story is indicating a person who is the closest to hell. He is a damned man.
 - The demons are tormentors (mental anguish)
 - He lives in the tombs – the place of death/curse
 - There are pigs there – he is in Gentile territory – curse

- Jesus, in his mercy ministry to sufferers, goes right to the pit of hell and does good to a person who is under the curse.
 - He is the extreme case of a sufferer living in a cursed world.
 - The other cases are put in exact analogy to sickness
 - Convulsions, blind, lame
 - The language of “healing” is what is used of deliverance – the same as healing the sick
 - There are 2 causes of medical difficulties. Some are naturalistic and some are spirit caused. Jesus does good to both during his earthly ministry.
 - Deliverance ministry is part of Jesus’ mercy ministry.
 - Deliverance is analogous to healing the sick
 - Deliverance is analogous to stilling storms
 - Compare Mark 1:25-27 and Mark 4:39-41
 - Jesus’ rebuke (demon/wind & sea)
 - Be quiet/still
 - Immediate response
 - Reaction – amazement/fear
 - Talking to one another in wonder
 - Reference to obedience
 - Both situations are an effect of the curse and Jesus removes destruction
 - Where is spiritual warfare in Jesus’ life?
 - In the desert
 - In the Garden of Gethsemane
 - When he ministers the word and talks to people
 - The Gospel of Luke is an oscillation between action and word
 - Actions: still storms, feeding hungry, etc.
 - His teaching never tells us to go do deliverance ministry
 - The Bible never tells us how to do this
- **What about trans-generational sins?**
 - The only proof text cited is Ex 20:5
 - It is from the 10 commandments
 - The passage is about the fact that God brings judgment upon sinners
 - There is nothing about an occult past or a demon that needs to be exorcised
 - Fred Dickason “Demon Possession and the Christian”
 - He had to cast demons out of 400 Christians
 - 380 of them came from intergenerational sin
 - There are lots of ways our ancestors affect us

- Being with angry people or foolish people, etc.
 - These are the “discipleship contexts” in which we live.
 - The Bible says, “Your anger, pride and folly are yours and you can repent.” This is a message of hope.

- **What about the names of demons?**
 - In deliverance ministries, finding out the name is a method of diagnoses.
 - Proof text: Mark 5:9
 - Jesus did ask the name of the demons
 - He did not get an answer that was a name – he got a number
 - He was not interested in the name per se, nor establishing some sort of hierarchy
 - There are many ways in which deliverance methodologies seek to find the names of the demons.
 - Some seek to get in touch through a word of knowledge, others use free association.
 - Practically, if you have any sense of people, you can hang around someone and get an idea of their besetting sins. If you free associate for 10 minutes, all of your besetting sins will be on the table.
 - The methodology doesn’t prove anything and the passage does not support this.

- **What about progressive demonization?** (audio cuts out a little)
 - Some claim that there is a progression of demonization: oppression, foothold, stronghold, and demonization.
 - This is taking concepts from four different places and pulling them out of context to support a pre-supposed theory.
 - There is an analogy to the truth that there is a progression of sin, but those scriptures are not teaching a progression of demonization.
 - **Oppression**
 - Acts 10:37-38 ... you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were **oppressed by the devil**, for God was with him.
 - The deliverance ministries are really talking about temptation, but call it oppression and root the cause in the demonic
 - This is people suffering under the lord of darkness in the fallen world.
 - **Footholds** (Eph 4:27)
 - It is often viewed as a military foothold – your soul is an island and the demons get the foothold for their invasion.
 - The context of Eph 4 is a sociological category, not a psychological category.

- When people live in sin, the body of Christ is harmed – the devil is getting a foothold in the body.
 - **Strongholds** (2 Cor 10:4)
 - It has nothing to do with progressive demonization – it is about false teachings.
 - Paul opposes false teachings and goes after them.
 - **Demonization**
 - This is found in the Gospels
 - It is not tied to the moral element; it is tied to the suffering element.
- **What about the binding and losing and warfare prayers?**
 - Matt 12:29
 - It is a picture of the work of Christ that has already been accomplished. Jesus on the cross has destroyed the work of the devil and he is plundering the nations.
 - Matt 16:19, Matt 18:18
 - The things bound and loosed are not demons or spirits: they are people. It is about people being inside or outside of the kingdom of God.
 - Warfare prayers
 - None of those statements have the ring of the Bible.
 - The Bible is not filled with “I” authority language.
 - It is the mode of weakness seeking strength.
- **What about self-counseling?**
 - Matt 12:43ff
 - This gets turned into a whole practical theology of how to maintain your deliverance.
 - The worldview is false. The passage is not about one demon bringing in seven so we must keep them out. It is a story about Israel. Jesus has come into the midst of Israel bringing in the kingdom of God. If this generation does not believe, their end will be seven times worse – hell.
- **Pastorally, peoples’ lives are really harmed by this teaching**
 - Example of an angry woman – bubbles passing through
 - These “bubbles” can be dealt with
 - This was a scheme that prevented the lady from knowing herself
 - Self-knowledge and the knowledge of God are correlative – the more you know God, the more you know yourself.

- **What about “it works”?**
 - Everything works.
 - Get some purpose in your life – try something, and it will be better than nothing.
 - A friend of his was delivered from drugs by a guru.
 - From a biblical point of view, we want to look at the foundation out of which this relief is found.
 - There are times when deliverance ministries are used by God for good.
 - It is not a testimony to the crookedness of the stick that the Lord can draw a straight line with it.
 - This does not mean that we should promote something that is false.
 - A friend of his was brought to Christ through the Jehovah’s Witnesses.
 - People can sometimes get a biblical message through an unbiblical vessel.
 - This teaching ultimately teaches people to live in a haunted universe.
 - There is a great spectrum of deliverance ministries
 - Thankfully God uses us with our various defects, so also he can use the good in some methodologies despite their wrong foundation.

Conclusion

- The foothold the devil wants is to create division and destruction in the body of Christ.
- Our call is to live Ephesians 4 lives so we are fighting real spiritual warfare – with humility and gentleness, speaking the truth in love.
- We want to lovingly help our brothers and sisters deal properly with this falsehood.