

# Spiritual Bondage & Spiritual Freedom: “Am I Believing a Lie?”

## Some Over-Arching Principles Regarding Spiritual Conflict

- It is the very nature of powers of darkness to lie and deceive.
- Committed believers should expect attack and opposition by the enemy.
- Though defeated by the cross, powers of darkness are presently allowed to carry out their deceptive activity in the lives of believers and non-believers alike.
- God’s Word instructs believers, “Do not be deceived,” implying that we are both vulnerable to deception, yet empowered to recognize and resist the enemy’s efforts to deceive us.
- Prayer and Scripture are the offensive weapons we are to use as we engage in spiritual conflict or warfare.
- The “One-Another” expectations of Scripture lead us to believe that called believers can and should be equipped to help one another experience victory in this area.

## Biblical Overview of Satan

### Satan’s Nature

*Genesis 3:1-19; John 8:44 & 10:10; Acts 16:18; 2 Corinthians 11:14*

- Deceptive.
- He can present himself as being an angel from God.
- His method/strategy/agenda is to steal, kill and destroy.

### The Back-Story on the Devil and Demons

*Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 24:12-19; Revelation 12:3*

- Lucifer was a beautiful angelic being, once obedient to God.
- He aspired to equal or surpass God.
- God cast him from heaven.
- What we now know as demons were 1/3 of the angelic population cast down with Lucifer.

### Their Activity and Ability

*Genesis 3:1-19; Job; John 8:44; Acts 16; Colossians 2:8; 1 Peter 5:8*

- They will use both subtle and overt deception to gain influence and control of people.
- Their power is determined and/or limited by God.
- To the extent God allows, Satan has power to control elements of nature and to inflict illness.

### Defeat and Destiny

*Ezekiel 28:19; Colossians 2:15; Revelation 20:10*

- Powers of darkness were defeated and disarmed by the cross.
- Destiny: eternal punishment.

## Examples of Human Interaction with Demonic Manifestations

### Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1-19)

- Given the uniqueness of the Garden of Eden experience, Eve's conversation with the serpent should not be considered normal for believers.

### Paul orders a demon to leave a girl in Philippi (Acts 16:18)

- While not an example of what we typically call a "demonic manifestation," Paul seems to observe demonic control and commands it to leave the girl with no additional interaction.

### The Sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13-16)

- I believe this is the only biblical example of human interaction with a demonic manifestation beyond a command to depart, except for Eve in the Garden of Eden.

### Spiritual Warfare (Ephesians 6:10-13)

- Spiritual opposition or attack from powers of darkness is normal for believers who are committed to Christ and growing in their faith.
- The believer should be constantly appropriating strength from God (in Ephesians 6:10, "be strong" is a passive verb) for the spiritual battle with an *expectation* of opposition from the enemy.

## Examples of Jesus' Interaction with Demonic Manifestations

### Temptation of Jesus in the desert (Matthew 4:3-8)

- Given that the devil sought even to deceive Jesus, believers should be wary of believing they can extract dependable information from demonic manifestations in people.

### Jesus casts demons out of people who are "possessed," being victimized or controlled by demonic powers against their will.

- As described in Matthew and Mark, it occurs only prior to the cross. (Matthew 4:24; 8:16; 8:28-33; 10:8; 12:22-28; 15:22; 17:14-18; Mark 1:32-39)
- Based upon Colossians 1:13-14 and 1 John 4:1-6, believers can be assured that, not only have powers of darkness been defeated and disarmed (Colossians 2:15), but that the presence of God's Holy Spirit within them as well as their identity "in Christ," prevents them from being "possessed" or controlled against their will by powers of darkness.

### Jesus asks for the name of the demon(s) possessing a man (Mark 5:8-9; Luke 8:27-31)

- It is unclear why Jesus asked this demon for its name, something He did not normally do.

## Regarding Generational Transference of Demonic Oppression

- The Bible describes how the sins of one generation could be experienced by subsequent generations, specifically when God withdrew His protection and provision due to Israel's rebellion. Until subsequent generations turned back to God, they suffered under the consequences of the sins of their ancestors (Numbers 14:18 Cf. Exodus 34:6-7; Deuteronomy 5:9-10; 1 Kings 21:29; Ezekiel 20:5; Jeremiah 32:18).
- Ezekiel 18:14 & 20 indicates that God does not hold one generation morally responsible for the sins of their ancestors. Further, that children should not follow the sinful examples of parents.

- The sinful activity of parents affects their children, especially when psychological, emotional, spiritual, physical or sexual abuse has occurred. The enemy will exploit these vulnerabilities to embed deception that is perceived as “truth.” I do not know of a biblical example supporting the idea that, if an individual experiencing demonic oppression (or possession) dies, that demon will, by assignment, transfer its oppression to direct or indirect subsequent generations.

### **The Weapons of Spiritual Conflict are God’s Word and Prayer (Ephesians 6:17-18)**

- God’s word is the authoritative source for beliefs and methods (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God’s Word provides the necessary instruction, examples and guiding principles for one’s own engagement with powers of darkness, as well as for helping others (Ephesians 6:17).
- Prayer on the part of the person being served as well as by the leader lays the foundation for a habit of depending directly upon God when experiencing spiritual conflict rather than another person praying on their behalf (Ephesians 6:18).

### **An example of using Scripture to stand against powers of darkness:**

*I stand against the powers of darkness (Ephesians 6:10-13) and I resist Satan (1 Peter 5:8). The enemy comes to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10), yet he has already been defeated and disarmed by the cross (Colossians 2:15). Satan is a liar and there is no truth in him (John 8:44). By the Lord’s strength (Ephesians 6:10), I refuse to be deceived (Colossians 2:8).*

### **Examples of prayer as an “offensive weapon”:**

*Thank you that you are the One True God, Creator of heaven and earth (Genesis 1; John 1:1-3).*

*Thank you for taking human form in Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:5-8), in whom the fullness of deity lives (Colossians 2:9) and who died for my sin, was buried and rose again according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4), ascended into heaven and will visibly return again (Acts 1:11).*

*Thank you that you for loving the world and for sending Jesus into the world to save sinful people so that none would perish (John 3:16; 1 Timothy 1:15).*

*Thank you for demonstrating your love for us in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).*

*Thank you that your forgiveness is more than enough to cleanse me from every sin I have ever committed, no matter how bad or how many times (1 John 1:9).*

*Thank you, God, that I have received Jesus Christ and that you have given me the right to become a child of God, born not of any human effort or bloodline, but only of God (John 1:1-13).*

*Thank you that Christ has overcome the world and as one born of God, I have overcome in Him (1 John 5:4-5).*

*Thank you that I have the Son and so I have eternal life (1 John 5:11-13); my name will never be erased from the Book of Life (Revelation 3:5).*

*Thank you that I have been freed from my sin (Romans 6:17-18) and that I am blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3).*

*Thank you that I am saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9) and that you created me to walk in good works which you have already prepared (Ephesians 2:10).*

*I offer myself to you as a living sacrifice, no longer to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of my mind (Romans 12:1-2).*

### **Examples of Signs and Symptoms of Spiritual Conflict\***

*\*While these are some of the signs that often indicate the presence of spiritual conflict, oppression or attack, they are often also symptomatic of unrelated and/or common accompanying emotional, psychological or physical conditions, disorders or illnesses.*

- Persistent (often unexplainable) feelings of being spiritually stuck, stagnant or apathetic.
- Feeling controlled or “in bondage” to compulsive habits, destructive behaviors or habitual sin. (People experiencing these things are encouraged to begin participating in a biblical recovery program.)
- Uncontrollable anger, violence, sexual urges, etc. that seem to “take over” or make one feel helpless to their control.
- Chronic character and behaviors that contradict the fruit of the Spirit such as excessive judgmental attitudes, paranoia, narcissism, being overly self-impressed, fearful, spiritually legalistic, performance-driven, pre-occupied with non-essential and peripheral scriptural issues, etc.
- Chronic (and unexplained or undiagnosed) headaches, back-aches (or other pain), overt fatigue, especially when working specifically to overcome spiritual challenges.
- Behaviors or beliefs that find their root in traumatic experiences such as (but not limited to) physical, verbal or sexual abuse.
- Past involvement in cult-like religious groups, occult groups, New-Age or mysticism, etc.
- Inaudible “voices” that oppose, contradict or mock one’s relationship God or efforts to grow spiritually, including random thoughts or mental images that are highly offensive in nature.
- Inability to read Scripture or books about scriptural principles, to listen to sermons or to pray due to mental “noise,” vision going dark, feeling faint, cold sweats, uncontrolled shaking.
- A compelling need to run or escape during worship services, sermons, Bible studies, etc.
- A feeling of being physically restrained, held down or assaulted by an invisible presence.
- Objects in one’s home move or fall, lights go on and off.

*Source: This document was compiled by John Covell. If you have questions concerning this topic or the information presented in this document, you may contact John at [johncovelltx@gmail.com](mailto:johncovelltx@gmail.com)*