

Lesson #11

Deliverance: Models for Ministry (1)

A. *Jesus' Approach to Deliverance*

Upon a careful examination of the incident in Mark 5, together with other instances of his encounter with the demonic, we discover that there were at least 7 elements in our Lord's approach to deliverance. Not all are employed in every instance, but each is important.

1. He secures the name of the demon, or seeks to identify the spirit. "And he [Jesus] was asking him, 'What is your name?' And he [the demon] said to him, 'My name is Legion, for we are many'" (Mark 5:9).

Why did Jesus do this? (a) Perhaps to gain control over it? (b) Perhaps to let all know the full extent of demonic power he was confronting? (c) Perhaps to reveal to the man himself how serious his condition was?

One particular opponent of deliverance ministry makes this observation: "Notice that the demon was not named lust, gossip, adultery, hate, or any of the other names often given by demons to those involved in contemporary deliverance attempts. Instead of the current popular belief that names of demons are related to the sin or habit which they inflict upon their subject, the Bible reveals something quite different" (Ice and Dean, 106-07). What, may I ask, does it reveal that is "different"? No answer is given. On the one hand, we have no way of knowing with absolute certainty whether or not demons are named according to their activity or the sin(s) on which they focus their energies. But the above argument borders on being ludicrous. The authors appear to be saying that since the demon in Mark 5 is named Legion, no other demon can have another name! That is like saying, "Because I am a human and my name is Sam, no other human can be named John or Fred or Mary."

2. He binds the spirit, i.e., he prohibits it from some activity and thus curbs or breaks its power. See Mt. 12:29.
3. He rebukes the spirit, i.e., he censures or warns or denounces the demon. See Mark 1:25 ("and Jesus rebuked him [the demon], saying, 'Be quiet and come out of him'"). See also Mt. 17:18; Mark 9:25; Luke 9:42. As we noted in an earlier lesson, this sort of *rebuke* is not just a verbal reproof but a technical term for subjugation of the evil power.
4. He silences the demon. In Mark 1:34 we read that "he healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and *he was not permitting the demons to speak*, because they knew who he was."

Why would he not permit them to speak? Peter Davids (*More Hard Sayings of the NT*, 27) cites three possible reasons:

- a. "First, 'the teachers of the law' associated him with Beelzebub, 'the prince of demons' (3:22). Any tendency to show that he accepted the demonic would have given extra evidence to these opponents."
- b. "Second, to accept the testimony of demons about himself would give a precedent to his followers to accept (or even seek) testimony of demons about other things. This would threaten to make Jesus' movement an occult movement."

c. "Third, and most important, Jesus' whole mission was a call to faith based on evidence, not on authoritative testimony. . . . Therefore the demons were short-circuiting Jesus' whole methodology. His command to them was a sharp 'Shut up!' His invitation to the crowd at their expulsion was, 'See and believe that the Kingdom of God has come.'"

5. He would cast them out (Mk. 1:25; 7:29; Mt. 8:16)

6. He refused to let the spirit return.

"And when Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, 'You deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and *do not enter him again*'" (Mk. 9:25).

7. He would on occasion send them into the abyss.

"And they [the demonic spirits] were entreating him [Jesus] not to command them to depart into the abyss" (Luke 8:31).

Where/what is the abyss? Is it the place from which demons originate? If so, why would they fear returning there? Is it a place of imprisonment where they would be temporarily consigned, awaiting the final judgment? Or is it the place where they will finally be punished? Aside from its appearance here and in Rom. 10:7, the word *abyssos* is found only in Rev. 9:1-2,11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1,3.

Additional observations on Jesus' approach:

First, it is important to note that Jesus did not always consign exorcised demons to the abyss or in some place of permanent detention. As seen above in the account of the demonized young boy in Mark 9, Jesus simply said, "I command you, come out of him and *do not enter him again*" (v. 25). This implies that the recurrence of demonization after deliverance was a possibility and steps had to be taken to prevent such from happening. Evidently, often after being cast out from a person, a demon was free to return to the person or to enter someone else.

Second, Jesus criticizes the disciples for their lack of faith in dealing with the boy of Mark 9 (vv. 19,28-29). Evidently, due to their previous success in deliverance ministry, they had come to believe that divine power was at their disposal to use as they saw fit, apart from constant reliance on God. But this kind of demon, says Jesus (v. 29), can come out only by prayer. This is intriguing, insofar as ***there is not a single instance of deliverance by prayer in the NT***. Deliverance elsewhere always occurs by the word of ***command***. [It is also interesting to note that deliverance from an indwelling spirit is never granted in response to the faith of the one who is demonized, although it is sometimes related to the faith of others.] One can only conclude that in particular cases where an especially powerful demon is involved, prayer may be needed. "Mark focuses on the need for prayer because it clearly demonstrates that divine power is not under human control; it must always be asked for. Manifestations of the power of God, such as are needed when dealing with the forces of evil, come only in response to the attitude of trust and reliance upon God that is expressed in humble prayer" (Page, 164).

Would this, then, be prayer to the Father that *He* cast out the demon, or prayer to the Father that He impart to us the power so that *we* might cast out the demon?

Third, even for Jesus, the deliverance was not always instantaneous or without considerable resistance. See Mark 1:26; 5:8 (Lk. 8:29); 9:26.

Mark 5:8 is an explanatory statement to make clear why the demon was so agitated: Jesus had ordered him repeatedly to come out of the man.

Consider the analogy of a parent and his/her child. When I exercise parental authority and tell my two daughters to do something, or to cease from some activity, it is not unusual for them to delay their obedience. They will resist complying with my command, using any number of tactics. They begin to obey, then hesitate. They stall, they make excuses, they insist on arguing about whether or not it is right or necessary for them to obey me. They may try to distract me from the issue at hand by diverting my attention to something of equal or greater urgency. They move slowly, hoping I'll forget. They may even play me off against Ann, telling me that she said it was o.k. However, if I persist in the exercise of my authority as their parent, they will eventually do as I say, or suffer the consequences! The point for spiritual warfare is this. Our approach should not be, "Speak the word of command in Jesus' name **and** it is done," which usually leads to frustration and disillusionment. Our approach should be, "*Speak the word of command in Jesus' name UNTIL it is done.*"

Fourth, Jesus' approach was never ritualistic or mechanical or magical. He employed no elaborate religious formula nor did he engage in any physical confrontations with the demonized. Indeed, the people of his day were amazed by how Jesus dealt with deliverance (see Mk. 1:27; Mt. 9:32-33).

According to Mt. 8:16, Jesus "cast out the spirits *with a word*". Jesus never appealed to a higher authority when expelling demons, unlike Paul, for example, who cast out a demon from the slave girl in Acts 16 by appealing to "the name of Jesus Christ" (v. 18).

B. *Deliverance in the Book of Acts*

(1) *Acts 5:16*

(2) *Acts 8:5-8*

(3) *Acts 13:6-12*

This isn't a case of deliverance, which in itself is a noteworthy fact. It would appear that Paul believed Elymas to be demonized (he is a "magician" who is called "son of the devil"). So why didn't Paul cast out any demonic presence? Far from it, he inflicted him with divine judgment (v. 11).

(4) *Acts 16:16-18*

(5) *Acts 19:12*

(6) *Acts 19:13-17*

Several items are worthy of note here.

- Acts 19:13 contains the earliest known occurrence in Greek literature of the word "exorcist" (*exorkistes*) and the only occurrence of it in the NT. Here it is used of the Jewish "exorcists"; it is never used of Christians engaged in deliverance ministry (perhaps because of its magical connotations).
- Paul was engaging in a successful deliverance ministry in Ephesus, as v. 12 indicates. Although the connection is not explicit, it is instructive that Luke appears to link the presence of disease with that of demons as well as the healing from disease with the expulsion of demons.
- Also present in the vicinity of Ephesus were some *itinerant exorcists* ("who went from place to place"). These were not Jewish Christians, otherwise they would have simply appealed to the name of Jesus as the one whom *they* preached. Any reference to Paul would have been

unnecessary (v. 13). Also, the way the demon speaks of them indicates they were not true believers.

- The demon is here portrayed as an intelligent being, able to converse openly and clearly with humans, to distinguish between Christian and non-Christian, between true faith and false profession. Also, this demon appears to have something of a sense of humor. He is, at minimum, quite sarcastic: "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, *but who [the heck] are you?*" (v. 15).
- The question in v. 15 is not for the purpose of learning their identity (names) or obtaining personal information about them. It is a case in which the demon challenges their right to use the name of Jesus. "I know Jesus. I must bow to his authority and obey. And I know Paul acts in Jesus' name. But who the heck are you that I should obey what you say or pay any attention to your demands?"
- As John Stott points out, "to be sure, there is power --- saving and healing power --- in the name of Jesus, as Luke has been at pains to illustrate (e.g., 3:6,16; 4:10-12). But its efficacy is not mechanical, nor can people use it second-hand" (307). Christians, such as Paul, most certainly do have a right to the name of Jesus and demons must obey.
- This narrative demonstrates that demons are by nature violent and can infuse their victims with superhuman strength (v. 16).
- Does the narrative in Acts 19, especially vv. 11-12, 18-20, suggest that Paul's ministry of deliverance was to *believers*? Why would we assume that those in v. 12 from whom "evil spirits went out" were all unbelievers? See Arnold, pp. 91-92.

C. *Neil Anderson's approach to Deliverance*

Anderson advocates what he calls the *truth encounter* method of deliverance as opposed to the *power encounter*.

A *truth encounter* requires that the demonized or oppressed individual personally renounce the enemy, repent of all known sin, affirm the truth, and submit to the Lordship of Jesus. No one else need be engaged in the process. It is a form of "self-deliverance."

A *power encounter* occurs when you confront the demon directly and verbally command that it identify itself (name, function, point of entry, etc. [although this is not essential to the power encounter]) and cast it out (to the abyss, to wherever Jesus sends it). Jesus employed the power encounter approach, as did Paul in Acts 16.

Someone described this approach as follows: (1) *Expose* (discern and document that demonic activity is present), then (2) *Engage* (identify, name, function, point or ground of entry), and then (3) *Expel* (in the name and authority of Jesus).

Anderson rejects using a power encounter in deliverance on the following grounds.

- (1) Conversing with demons is never advisable because demons are liars (John 8:44).

Response: Certainly demons will try to lie, but they can be compelled to speak the truth when subjected to the authority of Christ. See Mark 1:24 where demons spoke the truth.

- (2) The epistles are our guide to deliverance, not the gospels or Acts. The epistles stress what we do for ourselves, not what others do for us. Says Anderson:

"I have not attempted to 'cast out a demon' in several years. But I have seen hundreds of people find freedom in Christ as I helped them resolve their personal and spiritual conflicts. I no longer deal directly with demons at all, and I prohibit their manifestation [How can he "prohibit" their manifestation without addressing them directly?]. I only work with their victims. As helpers, our success is dependent upon the cooperation of the persons we help" (208).

Response: Anderson gives no textual or reasonable theological arguments for rejecting the gospels and Acts as a pattern for deliverance. His position is probably the fruit of his dispensational approach to biblical interpretation. Also, while it is good for the individual to participate in deliverance, a) what about a child or someone who can't perceive the truth sufficiently to work through Anderson's "Steps to Freedom"? b) What if the bondage is so intense as to have crippled the person's ability and strength to work through the steps, or if a person is so thoroughly deceived that he/she doesn't believe the truth or effectiveness of the steps? c) What if the person has been blinded by the enemy (2 Cor. 4:4)?

Anderson's truth encounter is certainly good and helpful and ought to be employed whenever possible. But in cases of severe demonic stronghold or intractable resistance, a direct power encounter may also be required.

(3) Anderson asks the question, "If *you* expel or cast out a demon from someone, what is to prevent the demon from returning?" In other words, he says that without the involvement of the person, without the responsible activity and mental participation of the victim, the problem may disappear for a while only later to re-emerge.

Response: What prevents a demon from coming back is the same authority and power by which it was compelled to leave in the first place. In Mark 9 Jesus commanded, "never return." So, too, should we. Of course, the person can always re-open the door, but that should not prevent us from helping them get free.

(4) Anderson's approach is cognitive, being a form of self-deliverance. *We are not exorcists*, says Anderson, *but facilitators*:

"In a truth encounter, I deal only with the person, and I do not bypass the person's mind. In that way people are free to make their own choices. There is never a loss of control as I facilitate the process of helping them assume their own responsibility before God. After all, it isn't what I say, do or believe that sets people free – it's what they renounce, confess, forsake, whom they forgive and the truth they affirm that sets them free. This 'truth procedure' requires me to work with the whole person, dealing with body, soul and spirit" (*Released from Bondage*, 17).

Response: In the final analysis, it isn't what "I" say, do or renounce even in the power encounter, but what "I, *in the name and authority of Jesus*," say and do that brings deliverance. Let us also remember that there is no power inherent in truth. All power is in God. It is the God of truth who has power to set the captives free.