

SHOULD CHRISTIANS BIND SATAN?

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Satan and his henchmen receive quite a bit of attention in some circles today, probably a lot more than they actually deserve. While the Bible teaches a great deal about the devil and his ways, and we are not to be ignorant of him (2 Cor 2:11), a preoccupation with the subject is unhealthy for the child of God. It usually leads to seeing Satan and demons behind every adversity and, in the cases of obvious evil opposition, often leads to attempts to bind or expel these wicked forces by direct and aggressive confrontation. The Bible, however, presents a different picture of this whole matter.

Scripture teaches that through the cross work of Jesus Christ Satan is a totally vanquished foe (John 16:11; Col 2:15; Heb 2:14). Deep down the devil himself seems to know this (Rev 12:12), although his capacity for self-deception is enormous. However, he does have near-supernatural power which the believer must understand and respect. Thus while a Christian may lose a battle against the devil and his minions, he will never lose the war (1 John 4:4). Satan's past *defeat* means that ultimate *victory* is promised to the believer.

How is today's Christian to meet the enemies of his soul? Is some form of "deliverance" required? Does it necessitate the hidden insight or the unusual maneuvers of an expert in the field? The truth is, the believer has complete sufficiency in Christ for every facet of the Christian experience, including the daily struggle with sin and Satan. He has the provision of the full armor of God (Eph 6:10–20), the complete instruction of the Word of God (2 Pet 1:3–4), the omnipotent power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 John 4:4), the direct access to God in prayer (Phil 4:6; Heb 1:16), plus the mutual strengthening of the saints in the local assembly (Acts 2:42; Heb 10:25). What more could possibly be necessary? To add some kind of special power techniques that only a few elite leaders possess, or to promote some secret passageway to victory that only the especially anointed have discovered, is to insult the power and grace of God.

The primary source for instruction in the Christian life is the New Testament epistles. These tell us how to deal with demons and Satan's activity. First, the epistles give no specific instruction on how to cast out demons. As a matter of fact, they don't even give any criteria or tests to determine demon possession. The Apostle Paul at Ephesus encountered great occult and demonic traffic and had a significant ministry in casting out demons (Acts 19:11–22), yet the epistle to the Ephesians says nothing about any of it. Furthermore, casting out demons is not listed as a spiritual gift in any of the gift lists (1 Cor 12–14; Eph 4:7–16; Romans 12:1–8). All of this suggests that Christians have no mandate to wade into these murky depths. Evidently the new birth and the full armor of God are sufficient for the ongoing church age.

Second, the Christian's basic tactic is to *resist* the devil (Jas 4:7). Note that the armor of God in Ephesians 6:10–20 is actually defensive in nature, including the "sword" of the Spirit. (This was a small dagger used for piercing and hacking defensively.) By means of this spiritual panoply, the believer is able to "resist" (withstand, stand against) (v. 13) and to "stand firm" (hold the line, maintain ground) (vv. 11, 13). This does not speak of aggressive offensive warfare. Nowhere is the believer told to go looking for Satan and his henchmen; they will come looking for the believer (1 Pet 5:8).

Third, believers are not told to bind Satan, rebuke him, attack him, or expel him. This is to be left for God to do by His power and in His time and manner. Michael the archangel did not rebuke the devil but left him in the hands of the Lord (Jude 9). Similarly, Paul, after much

prayer, committed his thorn in the flesh—a messenger of Satan—to the power, will, and grace of God (2 Cor 12:7–10).

All of this says that the believer's duty is to resist the devil through prayer and obedience to the Word of God. The divine promise is that he will flee (Jas 4:7).