

Shayla: Who has the authority to get rid of demons like Jesus did?

Meforshim:

Not just the Twelve,¹ but all of Jesus' disciples were given the power to drive out unclean spirits.² At first, they were not always successful because they didn't realize how much prayer and fasting played a part in the matter.³ Besides, they had not yet been granted the Holy Spirit.

After Pentecost, Peter was able to exorcise demons with complete success.⁴ Paul was able to exorcise a young demon-possessed girl without fanfare or ritual by simply commanding the demon in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.⁵ The spiritual authority Paul commanded at the Master's behest was so compelling that even facecloths or work aprons that had touched his skin could make evil spirits leave people.⁶

Lest we think that one had to be one of the twelve apostles or at least one of the Seventy to have this authority, let's keep Philip the evangelist in mind. The crowds paid riveted attention to his messages, for unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed during his services.⁷

One does not have to be a Christian to be able to exorcise. Jesus said that some would exorcise and yet not make it into heaven.⁸ He also stated that some of the Pharisees' own sons were able to drive out demons.⁹ Luke records that itinerant Jewish exorcists tried to simply use Jesus' name as a new mantra to add to their demon fighting arsenal. However, seven of them (all brothers, sons of a guy named Sceva) discovered that there was great risk involved in this. Sceva's sons, obviously unbelievers, made an unsuccessful attempt to exorcise using Jesus' and Paul's names and got seriously trounced for their hubris.¹⁰

The parable of the man repossessed demonstrates the need for submission to the Lordship of Christ. Once the Holy Spirit takes residence within us, demonic forces cannot re-enter. If we simply try to reform ourselves, without placing ourselves under the jurisdiction of the Spirit, we will end up in a worse state than before.¹¹

Jesus referred to exorcism as part of His great work.¹² He said, "I assure you: The one who believes in Me will also do the works that I do. And he will do even greater works than these, because I am going to the Father."¹³ He then gave us the Holy Spirit to empower us and included exorcism in the Great Commission.¹⁴

Paul confirmed this aspect of our Christian walk and exhorted us to be careful to wear our spiritual armor in our clashes with rulers, authorities, powers of darkness and spiritual forces of evil in the heavens.

¹ Matthew 10:1; Mark 6:7

² Mark 9:38-40; Luke 10:17

³ Mark 9:18, 28-29

⁴ Acts 5:15-16

⁵ Acts 16:18

⁶ Acts 19:11-12

⁷ Acts 8:5-7

⁸ Matthew 7:22-23

⁹ Matthew 12:24-27

¹⁰ Acts 19:13-16

¹¹ Matthew 12:43-45

¹² Luke 13:32

¹³ John 14:12

¹⁴ Mark 16:15-17