



## The Devil Made Me Do It

### Part 2: Demonic Control

We are currently examining the capabilities that the “devil” has to affect individuals’ lives. We pointed out in our last issue that the Greek word “daimonizomai” is usually translated in Scripture as “demon-possessed” when, in fact, it does not carry the meaning of “possession” at all. For this reason many modern theologians believe that it may more accurately refer to a broad continuum of varying degrees of influence by demons.

At the extreme end of this continuum are the cases in which demons can actually override the person’s will and take control of various aspects of his or her life (2 Tim. 2:26). This control can be constant (Mark 5:2-5) or intermittent (Luke 9:38-39). It may involve a single demon or a whole host of them. Many of the examples of demonization described in the Gospels and Acts seem to fall at this end of the continuum. In my last issue I consented to calling this level of control “demon possession.” However, I think a better designation would probably be “demonic control.”

Although Scripture does not reveal the causative roots of this most extreme form of demonization, we can postulate from the experience of those who have dealt with such cases that it may involve a deliberate “contract” made by, or on behalf of, the person with Satan or what may be perceived as other “deities” or ancestral spirits. When this virtual “selling of one’s soul” to Satan occurs, demons seemingly can gain such a degree of control that they can affect the person’s mental health, physical health, behavior, and speech as well as endow the individual with supernatural abilities.

The two demon-possessed men of the Gaderenes (Mat. 8:28-34) provide the most vivid example in Scripture of the mental effects demons can have on an individual. These men were so “out of their minds” that they dwelt in caves away from other people. They disdained wearing clothing (Luke 8:27) and would scream and cut their bodies with stones (Mark 5:5). In this case a whole “legion” of demons was involved (Luke 8:30). We know that the demons were causing these symptoms because when these men were delivered of them, they were instantly restored to their right minds and put on clothes (Luke 8:35). For this reason the *possibility* of demonization must not be ruled out in people with mental illness today, although it does not always seem to be involved.

Demons having the legal right to exert control in a person’s life can also affect his or her physical health. Examples are given in Scripture of their being able to block one or more of the physical senses of the body, thus causing the individual to be blind, deaf, and/or mute (Mat. 9:32-33; 12:22; Mark 9:17, 25; Luke 11:14). They can also cause crippling of the body (Luke 13:11). While those effects are generally exhibited in a constant fashion, controlling demons can also intermittently cause convulsions, accompanied by foaming at the mouth and grinding of the teeth. They may even try to destroy the person by physically throwing the body into water or fire (Mark 9:20-22). These intermittent episodes can be so intense that when they end, the person’s body feels badly beaten and depleted of strength (Luke 9:39).

Demons can also speak through a person when they are in a position of control. When Jesus approached demonized individuals, the demons often shouted out their recognition of Him as the Son of God. This was sometimes followed by an expression of panic concerning what He might do to them (Mark 1:23-24; 3:11; 5:7). In Acts 19:15

demons verbally interacted with those trying to cast them out and revealed that they also knew who the Apostle Paul was. The demons controlling the men of the Gadarenes revealed their name when Jesus asked them for it and also implored Jesus regarding their fate when he cast them out (Luke 8:30, 32).

The supernatural strength that demons can manifest when they have control over a person must not be underestimated. The demoniacs of the Gadarenes were so violent and uncontrollable that others tried to bind them with chains but to no avail, as they had the supernatural strength to break the chains (Mark 5:3-4). Acts 19:13-16 describes an incident in which unbelievers attempting to cast a demon out of a man ended up being assaulted, overpowered, stripped, and wounded by him. Demons can also enable an individual to tap into supernatural knowledge, giving them “psychic abilities,” such as predicting the future (Acts 19:15; 1 John 4:1).

The purpose for this kind of demonization is difficult to understand. Perhaps it is done to destroy the image of God in a person’s life or to give people a sense of the reality and power of Satan. In third world countries demonic manifestations such as these seem to keep large populations of people in reverential awe of the spiritual realm and the need to live in proper abeyance—and bondage—to it. Oh, that more of God’s people would heed the call to bring the power of the Gospel into their lives, for Jesus alone can set them free!