

# “The Demonic is Closer than You Think” // Luke 11:14-26, et al // “The Unseen Enemy,” November 2023<sup>1</sup>

## Announcement

Well, let me introduce myself for those of you who may not know me... I'm J.D. I'm your pastor.

(Last weekend I ran into some Summit members in Starbucks and they were like, “Hey, Pastor, how's it going?” and I said, “*Well, just got back from all my traveling, and ready to get back in the saddle...*” and the girl was like, “You've been gone?” And the other one said, “Yeah, dummy, that's why we've been seeing Bryan every week...”)

So, yes, for those of you not paying close attention, **I am NOT Bryan**; I have been gone for a few weeks. I know some of you think all middle-aged pastors look alike but we don't.

But let me just state the obvious: Here at TSC, when it comes to teaching pastors, we have an embarrassment of riches, don't we? What an incredible job Pastor Bryan did with the book of Jonah, and what a gift he is to us, Amen? And then Pastor Curtis preached and we've had 271 baptisms over the last couple of weeks, including one person Veronica and I have been praying for personally for a long time. Our Knightdale campus is baptizing 14, and they haven't even

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<sup>1</sup> Works Consulted: *Spiritual Warfare*, Karl Payne; Craig Groeschel, “Spiritual Warfare,” sermon preached at LifeChurch, 2012. And others as noted throughout.

been open a month! And there's a bunch more scheduled for this weekend. But the point is: Summit, we are truly blessed. May he increase and may we decrease.

## **My time away was incredible--such a gift. It went basically in 3 phases:**

- In **Phase 1** Veronica and I visited some of our church planters in Europe and then did a little R&R over there. What God is doing through some of our members that we've sent out there is incredible. **Many say Germany is the most secular place in the world right now**--and the stats definitely back that up. But our members there, Russell and Ingrid Woodbridge, who serve as team leaders there, organized a dinner where I spoke to a room full of gifted young leaders who are planting growing, multiplying churches: One of the churches has surged to 1000 people (which is unheard of in Germany), and right before I got there they had seen 400 professions of faith in one weekend--we're prayerfully thinking of going back over there next year with some people to do a church multiplication project.
- And then London... Several of our members there have established a vibrant, shining gospel community in Queens Park, one of the most diverse sections of the world's most diverse cities.
- **Summit, God is at work around the world and your prayers and your sacrifice is not in vain. He's given us fruit in some very dark places.**

- **Phase 2 was me and the family took a short beach trip.** Not much spiritual happened there unless you consider sleeping late, overeating and languishing by the beach all day “spiritual.” I do, as a matter of fact. I did read a ton of books though.
- **In Phase 3, I took a personal retreat.** I wanted to be out in nature, quiet, with just the Lord, but (and I know this will be disappointing to some of you), I’m not really a “set up your tent and cook your own food” kind of guy, so I found a glamping option that sets up tents for you; tents with wood floors and electricity and a hot tub and “room service”. It was my kind of camping... but it was 3 days of silence and prayer and time alone in the Gospels.
- And I feel renewed and refreshed and ready for the next... **20 years.** So, let’s get started.

**We’ve got 3 weeks before Thanksgiving (3wks,** according to the Bible, before you are allowed to put up Christmas decorations--the Bible says, “To him who putteth up Christmas ornaments before Thanksgiving, the plagues of the apocalypse shall come upon him.” That’s in the book of I-say-so, ch 4) And I wanted to use these 3 weeks to share some things God taught me during my time away, and some things he’s put in my heart for us. (I typically like to work my way through books of the Bible—that’s the safest way. So this will be a little different than our usual way.) But I hope it doesn’t feel too random, but there are some important things I believe God wants to say to us.

This weekend, if you have your Bibles, open them to Luke 11. I’m actually, I’m going to read a few different passages here to begin, and if you’re fast with your fingers you can try to keep up (**Just out of curiosity, how many of you grew up doing Sword Drills?** Sword Drills

were what our youth pastor would do when he didn’t have any other games planned for our youth nights (we couldn’t afford video games and pool tables like we have now--no, we played games with toilet paper rolls or competed to see who could stuff the most marshmallows in their mouths and say “chubby bunny” (anybody remember that game?)--but when the youth pastor forgot all his supplies, we did Sword Drills, where he’d call out a reference and everyone would try to find it, and if you found it first, you’d stand up and start reading it out as loud as you could. I don’t like to brag but I was the CHAMP. The other boys envied me and the girls admired me, at least that’s how I remember it. But, bottom line--if you are a sword drill champ, you can probably keep up with me; otherwise just turn to **Luke 11, hold your place there,** and I’ll catch up to you in a moment).

*I want you to listen for a theme:* **Ephesians 6:11, 12, 16** Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil... For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.... Above all, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.

**Genesis 3:1,** Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”

**Acts 5:1,** But (a member of the church) named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, [2] and with his wife’s knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles’ feet (but he claimed he was

donating all of the proceeds). [3] But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?”

**Ephesians 4:26**, Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no place to the devil.

**Luke 11:14**, Now Jesus was casting out a demon that (made the man) mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled.

**Here’s my point in reading all those passages:** There is no way to take the Bible seriously and not see that the demonic is an active part of life...

- **The Bible presents certain temptations as demonically charged**-- Eve’s deception in the Garden of Eden was led by the chief of all demons, Satan; Ananias and Sapphira lying to Peter—that is attributed to Satan’s influence on them; Paul even identifies unforgiveness and bitterness as something demons induce to establish a presence in your life.
- **We see from Luke 11** that Jesus attributed even some physical maladies to demonic activity. Not all of them, by any means, but some.
- **Jesus would go so far as to summarize his ministry** as being sent to proclaim liberty to captives--and when he says that, he’s primarily talking about delivering spiritual captives from demonic strongholds. Jesus never picked up a sword and led a jailbreak. But he did routinely free people from spiritual captivity.

- Satan and his demons are called **the gods of this age**; the **princes of the power of the air**; the spirit at work in the sons and daughters of disobedience
- **The authors of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Hebrews and Jude** all call the Christian life a struggle (warfare!) against evil forces.
- **Peter urges us to be on guard against** the one who wages war against us and seeks to devour our souls.
- **The book of Revelation** depicts all of history as a cosmic war between Satan and his demons and Jesus and the people of God, with the climactic scene of that book being a **decisive battle** in which Jesus finally vanquishes them.

**So here’s the question:** If they are this dominant of a theme in our Bibles: **How much do you consider these kinds of spiritual forces in your life? When’s the last time you thought about it? In the lives of your kids? What if this weekend**, as I stand up here with the Word of God open, more is happening in your heart and around you than what you brought in here? When was the last time you thought about his influence in your life?

And I know when I start talking like this, **I lose some of you. You are like**, “Come on, man. In ancient times they thought of demons as responsible for physical and psychological problems, but now we know that diseases have viral causes and emotional problems are often connected to trauma or physiological things. Believing in the demonic realm is superstitious and naive.”

**And let me be clear:** I’m not disputing that our problems have physical and environmental causes, and Jesus doesn’t dispute that

claim either. The Bible doesn't pit the physical and spiritual realms against each other.

**But here's what I'm asking you: When you consider the depth of evil in the world,** does it really make sense to think of it in exclusively physical terms?

I mean, how plausible is it, really, when you look at some of the worst genocides in world history--**Cambodia under Pol Pot**; the **viciousness of the French Revolution**; what happened in China under Mao Tse Tung or in Russia under Stalin, how much sense does it make to write all that off as just ideology gone wrong? Or to think **that at the root of the Holocaust was just a man with chemical imbalances and an inflated sense of national pride**? Or consider the **savage attack that Hamas** went on a few weeks ago targeting children and babies--or to look at the brutishness and savage cruelty of the slave trade in otherwise educated and enlightened countries and say it was merely greed?

In the face of enormous, heinous, senseless evil, most of us sense, *"There is something dark and powerful going on here."* And that's probably why **the vast majority of people throughout history**--and the vast majority of people in the **world today**--recognize the reality of supernatural spiritual forces at work. I mean, **if you think that all the evil in the world** can be explained away by merely physical factors, no offense, but **maybe you're the naive one**. You're certainly in a very small subset of people in world history who thinks that way.

At the very least, it's clear that Jesus and the Apostles saw the world this way. It's your choice whether to believe them; I'm just telling you that's how they saw it.

**C. S. Lewis famously said, "Humanity falls into two equal and opposite errors concerning the devil. Either they take him altogether too seriously or they do not take him seriously enough."**

Fair enough. But for us at the Summit, I think we're clearly in that latter category of not taking him seriously enough--and **I want to suggest that that is due, in part, to a wrong view of how the demonic realm works.**

You see, when it comes to **Christians in churches like ours**, we think that there are only 2 categories:

- The first is **Demon Oppression**, which is demons working externally around us--they can put temptations in front of you; maybe plant ideas in your head; occasionally be behind some run of bad luck in your life.
- The only other category is "**possession**," where a demon totally takes over somebody's body; he's in total control; and we say, "But that can't happen to a Christian because a) JESUS owns the Christians and b) the Holy Spirit lives in us, so no demon could ever totally possess us." And that's true. If you belong to Jesus, no demon could ever totally possess you.

But I want to suggest that limiting our viewpoint to those two categories doesn't account for all the Bible says about demonic forces in the life of the believer.

Did you know, for example, the Bible never uses the word “demon possession”? (That’s a term we’ve developed, but it’s not the Bible.) The biblical word is “demonized,” and here’s why I draw the distinction: “Demonized” is not nearly as “all or nothing” as possession implies. Possession means, “you belong to someone,” and that’s never going to be true of a Christian. But “demonized” is a little different.

Let me suggest a different paradigm besides just oppression or possession that I think does a better job of depicting the activity of the demonic in our lives. (And I borrowed this from a great little book by Karl Payne called *Spiritual Warfare* my dad asked me to read over the break.)

- **Here it is:** Imagine you leased a large house from someone. They own it, but you lease it in its entirety. And because it’s such a large house, there’s a bunch of rooms you can sublet. And so you rent out several rooms to other tenants, but some of them turn out to be bad tenants; they play music way too loud in their rooms; bring in seedy company; there’s even really awful smells coming from their rooms that make you wonder what is going on in there. (I watched that disturbing special on Jeffrey Dahmer where the whole housing complex could smell what was going on in his room.) Here’s the thing: he didn’t own that room at all. At any point the owner could tell him to leave, or the landlord could tell him to leave. If you said, “Hey, you’ve got to get out, your lease is canceled,” and they said, “By what authority are you telling me to leave?” You’d say, “By the owner’s authority! He doesn’t want you here and he owns the place.”
- The Bible presents the demonic like that. If you’re a believer, Jesus is the owner of the “house” of your life. But you, as the manager, have the ability to sublet rooms, and when you entertain a sin, or you believe a lie, you allow demons to inhabit that part of your house. They move into that part of your life and

they can bring all kinds of destruction with them, and destruction that affects not only that part of the house, but the whole thing.

- That’s why Paul in **Ephesians 4:26–27** speaks of holding onto bitterness as “giving place” to the devil. You’re “giving a place,” or “subletting a room,” to the demonic. And he’s using that “place” to bring destruction. He uses that room to introduce other lies; more confusion; sometimes psychological problems; other times, even physical sickness.
- But here’s the thing: that demon doesn’t own the room, and you can, at any time, in the name of the Master, tell them to leave, but to do that you have to take back whatever ground you’ve given them through unconfessed sin or believing a lie.
- Let’s call that 3rd category **not oppression or possession**, but occupation. Oppression: happens all the time. Total possession: can’t happen to the believer. Partial occupation: happens when you allow sin or lies into a part of your life.

**So 2 questions I want to answer:** 1. *What does demonic activity in your life feel like?* And then, 2. *How do you rid yourself of it?* How do you know if it’s happening to you? And how do you rid yourself of it?

### 1. What does demonic activity in your life “feel” like?

First, let me be clear, it’s almost never like what you see in the Exorcist movies, where they knock stuff over in your room (why would they even do that?) or you suddenly catch their mean, reddish eyes glaring at you in the mirror when you’re home alone and turn on a light real fast.

No, you’re going to **experience his activity in your life primarily through lies** he gets you to believe or **temptations that become incredibly powerful** and captivating in your life. They at first don’t

feel evil; they feel pleasant. (These things can lead to psychosis or physical maladies (I mean--we see some of that stuff in the Bible, but those are only the further stages of demonization.)

Demonization starts with oppressive lies and invading temptations. Paul refers to these in **Ephesians 6:16** as **"flaming darts."**

- **That's very vivid imagery**, isn't it? One of Rome's most feared weapons was the flaming dart (**PIC**) It was basically a long, hollow javelin that was filled with fuel and set ablaze before they launched it.
- Satan launches these fiery darts into your consciousness. **John Mark Comer** says that **"A flaming dart = A thought with a will behind it."** Not just a thought—but a thought that seems to have a driving will behind it.
- **Have you had a sense of that happening?** We all have stray, sinful, or absurd thoughts, because we have a sin nature, but is there ever a thought that just presses its way into your consciousness that feels almost like you can't control it?

I pick up on it when somebody believes something that just seems so absurd and is really wrecking their lives. There's a voice they just can't shake that says:

- "You are ugly." "You're so unattractive." **And they're clearly not!**
- Or, "You'll never have any friends." Or "You're a failure."
- Maybe it's this growing sense of frustration, "No one sees you. God has forgotten you. Everybody has forgotten you. Nobody is concerned whether you live or die."
- Maybe that voice focuses on your relationship with God: My wife experienced it when she was in college as a voice often whispered in her soul, "You aren't one of the elect. You aren't predestined and that's why you always struggle in Christianity."

- Some of you experience it when you're at small group and you can't shake the thought, "You don't belong here. Whenever you speak, everyone else in the room thinks you're so dumb. Stay quiet. Better yet, don't come."
- Some of you experience it in your marriage as a voice whispering to you, "Your wife doesn't appreciate you." Or, "Your husband doesn't understand you."

I was listening to an interview with the Christian comedian Jon Crist recently; one of the funniest people out there, but a couple of years ago he had this big crash where it came out he was living this double life involving substance abuse and engaging in all these destructive and hurtful behaviors, that led to depressive and suicidal thoughts. He's gotten out of rehab now and seemingly doing a lot better, and in this interview he was explaining what led him to this dark place--not excusing, but explaining--and he talked about how at the Christian rehab facility they helped him identify all these lies he'd started to believe in childhood that just consumed his life. And what was most interesting to me was when he said, "I don't know why they became so convincing to me. I can see now that they weren't accurate. It all seems crazy now: what my parents were communicating was not what I was receiving. I was taking these random events and comments to weave a narrative that said I was forgotten and I had no value unless I could make people like me through humor. That fear drove me to despair that led me to alcoholism and abuse and serious depression." Now, I'm not the referee of what is demonic and what is not, but that's what our enemy does: he drives destructive lies into our consciousness like fiery darts that just consume.

**The worst part of a flaming dart** was what happened after it landed. All this fuel would spread out and start a bunch of other new fires, until eventually everything in the house was burning. A demon gets you to believe this lie which leads to other lies and sins which leads to more and more destruction.

**Here's another one:** I was listening to the testimony of a S Korean guy who recounted how he was living in this rebellious, wandering state and fell into a depression, and one night one of his great grandfathers appeared to him in a dream and told him everyone would be better off if he was gone, and that God would reduce his time in hell by 50K years if he would just kill himself because of how much pain he would save everybody. And so he took a knife and tried to kill himself. He had these awful scars on his neck and abdomen. He said, "I know now that that was a demon—but it didn't seem that way at the moment. It seemed right, compelling. The only way out."

Our enemy whispers lies in your life that give birth to other lies that drive you to despair.

And some of you are hearing those things right now. All week long, sometimes day and night, you hear things deep in your heart like, "You are ugly. Unattractive. No one could love you. You don't have any friends." Or, "You're a bad mom. You have no future. You'll never be saved; you're not savable. You don't belong in this church. Everyone here is looking at you. Get out of here now. All Christians are hypocrites. God's not real. Jesus is a hoax."

And, btw, one of the things that makes demonic lies so difficult is that they usually have some truth in them. The best lies always do. It's the narrative that the Enemy spins around them that is wrong.

**Someone asked me, "How do you know when the Enemy is the one speaking to you?"** For example, I was talking with one lady one time, and I'll change the details here, and she said, "I just can't escape the thought that I'm not a very good spouse and that's why my husband is going to leave me and I'm going to end up alone." (And btw, I knew this was untrue: she wasn't perfect, of course, but she was faithful and kind and supportive.) **But that fear, her inability to escape from this oppressive thought,** led her to these deep insecurities and all these unhealthy choices. And I told her, "You've got to recognize that

those thoughts that you can't shake are, I believe, the fiery darts of the demonic."

**She said,** "But how do I know this feeling I have is not the Holy Spirit convicting me of being a bad spouse so that I'll be a better one? Maybe that's just the reality, and I'm a bad spouse." And here's the answer:

- **Jesus said in John 10:** My sheep recognize my voice; they know the difference between my voice and the voice of a fake shepherd.
- **When the Holy Spirit speaks, it's in the context of hope. Yes, he convicts you of sin, but when he does, it's redemptive; he identifies what he wants you to change, gives you a plan to do it, and assures you of his ability to accomplish it in your life.** His voice leads to clarity, and love and life.
- When one of the **demonic realm** speaks to you, with a fiery dart, it is the context of condemnation and despair. It's never clear what they want you to change. There's certainly no hope or redemption in it. The voice just screams hopelessness and despair.
- Think of it like **a scene in a movie** where you see things happening **on the screen**, but the way you know what's really going down is by what the soundtrack is doing in the background: "*A man walks up to the door...*" If they put ominous music behind that scene, you think, "Oh, this is about to be bad; somebody gonna die."
- But--same scene, same characters, but you put in triumphant, or happy, bouncy music behind it, you know something good or funny is about to happen.
- When our Enemy speaks, it has the soundtrack of death, defeat, confusion and despair. When Jesus speaks, it is filled with invitation and clarity and love and hope. Any voice leading you to confusion and despair is your enemy's voice, even if it is using valid questions or true facts.

For years, I had what I now recognize to be demonic forces whispering in my ear, “You’re not really saved.” I actually wrote a book about it! And I always thought it was the Holy Spirit warning me—“you need to get saved; you’re going to be lost.” And the first time it was, because that conviction led me to true repentance and faith.

- But after that, that voice in me didn’t deal with specific sins or a specific action. It led me to confusion, and despair... I felt hopeless. I wanted to give up. I recognize now those were the flaming darts of the enemy. That’s not the voice of my Shepherd! My Shepherd never leads to confusion and darkness; he leads only to life.
- Even if Satan is pointing out true things in your life, if it’s leading you to despair, **recognize that as his voice and resist it.** One of Satan’s primary titles in the Scriptures is “accuser of the brethren” which means he loves to remind you of your sin, or where people hurt you, but in the context of despair. **That’s not your Shepherd’s voice!**

Friend, Satan’s goal for you, unequivocally, is destruction. Jesus said his purpose was “to kill, to steal and destroy.” Any voice moving you that direction I can assure is his, not Jesus’.

Write this down: ***In your life, the voice of despair is the voice of Satan and NEVER the voice of the Holy Spirit.***

*That leads me to question 2...*

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<sup>2</sup> Jewish Law demanded rigorous cleaning techniques after you’d gotten rid of any kind of disease or defilement. For example, if you had a mold problem in your house, you couldn’t just clean it with

## 2. How do we rid ourselves of the control of the demonic?

I love this next part of the message, because it’s really good news. What I’m about to say could set some of you free, forever.

**As disturbing as it is to think about the demonic,** the demonic is one thing you don’t have to be concerned about if you are ready to be serious about Jesus.

Let’s go back to **Luke 11** where Jesus gives the clearest instructions in the Bible of how to fight against the demonic. He says, v. [21] **When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; [22] but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.**

(Makes sense, right? A strong man can only be overcome by a Stronger Man. So, you read this and you assume that you’re the strong man and the demon is the stronger man who attacks you and takes away your armor, right?)

Well, not exactly. Keep reading, v. [24] **“When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ [25] And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order.** (So here the man is tired of all the mess this unclean spirit is bringing into their lives, and so they drive them out.<sup>2</sup> They read a bunch of books, get rid of bad habits; cut off bad influences, get into

soap and water and a bottle of Clorox. You had to remove that whole section of the wall. And if the mold came back, you had to burn the whole house downLeviticus 14:33–47



an accountability group; turn over a new leaf, however you want to think about it.

But vs. 26 Then (that unclean spirit) goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first.” Though you limit the effect of the demon for a while, eventually it comes back with 7 of his friends and you are powerless to resist them. You could barely manage one, much less 8 of them.

And that seems depressing, like it’s saying that we’ll never fully be able to withstand the demonic. But that’s when you realize we read the first part of the parable wrong.

We’re not the strong man who guards our house until another stronger than us attacks us and divides our spoil; no, the demon is the strong man and Jesus is the Stronger Man. Let’s read those verses again, this time recognizing who is who: [21] When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; [22] but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.

In this verse, and this is key--the demon is the strong man: he’s the one who takes up residence and is holding someone captive. The Stronger Man is Jesus. He overpowers Satan and drives him out. **Who are you?** You’re the property they are fighting over.

So now put those stories together. When you drive a demon away, what’s the only way to keep him out for good? Answer: let that room be occupied by the Stronger Man.

That’s why Jesus said this in the middle of this passage: vs. [23] **Whoever is not with me is against me...** If you haven’t put that room under the authority of Jesus yet, it’s just a cleaned-up-room that 7 demons can come back to any time they want. **There is no neutral:** it’s a room either fully submitted to Jesus--you’ve declared it *for* Jesus, he reigns there--or it is open to the occupation of the demonic. You see that?

But the moment the Stronger Man takes possession of that room, demons can’t touch it. They have to flee it.

That’s why James says, **“Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7)** That verse always confused me in James because it sounded like we could resist the demonic in our own strength, and Jesus’ whole point in the Luke 11 parable is that we can’t do that. After we resist him, he just comes back. But when you look at the verse in context, it says **“Submit to God. “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7)**

That’s exactly what Jesus says. Resist by surrendering fully to Jesus. Give this room over to Jesus; replacing the devil’s lies with Jesus’ truth. Because once you do, the demon has to leave because the Stronger Man is now in control of that room!

When I was a kid several of the boys in my neighborhood were older than me, and we used to all meet up to hang out together, but a couple of them were real bullies. One of them was like 16 when I was about 10. And one day we had our BB guns and he told me that you could shoot your foot with your BB gun and you couldn’t feel it

through your shoe. And he said, “Watch” and shot his shoes right where his toes and it didn’t seem to hurt--what I didn’t know is that he had curled his toes back. So I did it and it sent me into these convulsions of pain. Which is kind of funny now, and you could draw some conclusions there about my general lack of intelligence back then, but that’s just kind of how they were. Well, one day we were out playing football in my yard and a few of the older boys were getting all pushy and mouthy and really taking advantage of the younger kids, and I remember my dad just walked out on the porch. He didn’t have to say a word, but at that moment their terrorizing of me was done. His presence there said, “This is my house and my yard and that’s my son and you will not afflict him.” That’s what Jesus does when you surrender to him. “This is my child. My son. My daughter.” You resist him by letting the Stronger Man take over, and he flees. That’s what James meant. He only has power if you give him the ground by succumbing to the temptation or believing the lie.

Listen: **if you are a believer, and you suspect demonic oppression or occupation in your life, you don’t need an exorcist.** Jesus has placed the power to drive the demonic away in your hands through simple surrender and faith.

You just pray, “Jesus, I recognize by the despair this creates in my heart that this flaming dart is from my enemy—because if it was from you, it wouldn’t be creating this kind of confusion, this kind of despair. And I don’t even know how to answer his accusations--he says things that are true and make sense. But I recognize in the despair and doubt growing in my heart that this voice is not your voice, it is his. So I counter his lies with your truth.

“Though my sins were as scarlet, you have made them white as snow. You have put them away, as far as the East is from the West. I am now fully loved and accepted by you. There’s nothing I could do that could make you love and accept me more; nothing I have done that makes you love me any less. **(And BOOM, JESUS slams the door on Satan’s face in that room).** “I am seated with you in the heavenly places. Every promise of God is yes in Christ Jesus. You have given me a future and a hope. Before you formed in the womb you knew me; I am fearfully and wonderfully made, created for good works.” **(And BOOM, JESUS slams the door on Satan’s face in that room).** “Nothing can ever separate me from your love. Neither height nor depth nor principalities nor powers nor anything in all creation can separate me from your love, and as high as the heavens are above the earth--that’s how great his love is for those who fear him” **(And BOOM, JESUS slams the door on Satan’s face in that room).** “And my God shall supply all my need according to his riches in Christ Jesus, so I should be anxious for nothing but in everything with prayer and thanksgiving let my requests be made known to God and the peace that passes all understanding will guard my hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. I have nothing to do but to stand and be still, for the Lord my God will fight for me.” **(And BOOM, JESUS slams the door on Satan’s face in that room).** Or whatever truth you need to believe. **Our God is a door-slamming God, praise God.**

If you are a believer, you have the authority to drive out Satan through surrender and faith. You don’t need an exorcist. What you might need, however, is someone to pray with you or counsel with you to help you identify the temptation or the lie. That’s where prayer comes in. Prayer doesn’t increase your ability to drive out the demon—for a believer, you just need to surrender for that. What

prayer does is give you the ability to discern where the enemy is at work.

In Mark 9, a man brought his son, who was afflicted by a demon that caused convulsions, to Jesus' disciples, but the disciples couldn't cast the demon out. So they brought the father and his son to Jesus, and Jesus cast the demon out. **After the incident was over**, the disciples said, "Hey Jesus, why couldn't we drive him out?"

**"And he told them, 'This kind can come out by nothing but prayer.'" (Mark 9:29)** (and some MSS add *'and fasting'* here). Prayer gives us the ability to discern the demonic stronghold and speak the right truth into a situation.

And that's why it's helpful to pray with other Spirit-filled people. They can help you identify what lie you're believing or sin you're entertaining that is giving Satan ground. You see, the demon's entry point in your life was a sin you wouldn't confess or a lie you wouldn't believe.

## VAMP

Summit, **if we only wrestled against flesh and blood**, then maybe a good sermon and some emotionally charged music could do the trick. But if we wrestle against authorities and powers, it's gonna take more than that.

*"These kinds of things come not out except by prayer..."* And so I want to open up these altars. Some of you are dealing with stuff and you need to realize that there's a supernatural enemy at work and he needs a supernatural response.

Some of you have thoughts that are filled with despair... Maybe I've called it out this weekend: "You are forgotten. Unattractive. Hopeless. You can't be saved. You don't belong here. You don't have any friends. Nobody likes you; nobody is interested in you."

Or maybe it's something else that I haven't mentioned, but that oppressive conviction is leading you away from God and toward despair. **That's not Jesus' voice! it's the voice of an Enemy, focused on your destruction!**

For some of you, there is a voice telling you the world would be better off without you. End it. I don't care what form that voice takes, I don't care what evidence or logic that voice uses, that is the voice of your Enemy. Because the words of Jesus speak redemption and healing and life. He speaks into graves and dead men walk out; he doesn't speak to the living and drive them into graves; he spoke into darkness and brings forth light; he spoke into chaos and brings forth order, not vice versa. He turns graves into gardens, bones into arms, seas into highways. That's how you know the voice MY SHEPHERD.

In one of Jesus' most famous parables, he talked about a wandering son who ended up in a pig sty with the pigs... And one day, in his heart, he basically heard a voice saying, "Come home." That was the voice of his Heavenly Father. But I have to think that young man was also hearing other voices, which basically said, "Your dad would never want to see you. You've shamed him. He doesn't care. You belong with the pigs now. This is where you'll always be." Thank God the young man listened to the voice of the True Shepherd, his Father, telling him to come home, and not the ones trying to kill him.

You have a choice of which voice speaking to you this weekend you're gonna believe. Jesus, who speaks with redemption and hope; or the demonic, that leads to destruction and despair.

- **I will say it plain and simple: Some of you are captives this weekend:** for years, you have entertained lies the enemy has told you, and those lies have led you to addictions; or bitterness; or fear and anxiety, or manipulative, unhealthy behaviors, to despair.
- Things Jesus died to free you from. He died on a cross to put away every bit of sin and darkness and despair and confusion you'd brought into your life, so I can assure that if some voice is bringing those things back up, it's not him. It's time for you to slam that door and say, "Not today, Satan! I don't have time for your foolishness today. I need to spend time in here with the Stronger Man who has built this nice, cozy fire and prepared a meal for me in the presence of my enemies that he invites me to eat with him."

**And so if you're dealing with these oppressive things, I want you to come down here and open your life to the presence of the Stronger Man, and plead his help in your situation. Supernatural problems need supernatural solutions. You can be delivered from his occupation if you just ask.**

Listen: I want to be clear: coming down here to pray is not saying you are possessed by a demon. But maybe you recognize he's at work in your life, or in the life of someone you love and you realize you are up against supernatural forces. Spiritual battles need spiritual weapons.

Maybe you see him at work in your family or your marriage. Come and pray.

There are people here ready to pray with you if helpful. If not, just pass them by and kneel by the altar.

And like we did a few weeks ago, we have some of our elders standing off to the side. If you feel like, "Me, or someone I know, really has some stuff going on and I know more powerful spiritual forces are at work," and you want to pray for them, take advantage of those elders.

- If you are requesting prayer for yourselves, they are going to ask you, like we did a couple of weeks ago, "Do you have a sin to confess or an area you need to surrender?" Ultimately, surrender is how you give the keys to Jesus in an area of your life. So when they ask them, if you do, confess it and take it to Jesus, and they'll pray with you and over you for the release of that area of your life to Jesus.
- They may suggest that you pursue counseling or, at times, even medical help, but let these elders be a help to you. Spiritual battles require spiritual solutions.
- Again, they'll be standing off in the wings at each campus. Otherwise, come and pray--for yourself, or for someone, or with someone.

Our worship teams are getting into place now. When I stand you, you come.

Invitation