

DELIVERANCE

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Introductory thoughts and questions.

This study comes your way because one of you requested it. Please keep those requests coming in, and if I feel it is a subject I can and/or should be tackling, I will.

Deliverance is a good Bible word, so yes, we should study it. But as always, we must study it from the Bible whence it originated, not from the culture in which we find the church in our age.

Tell me, when you hear the word “deliverance”, what comes to your mind? Men shouting over a demon-possessed child? The Exorcist movie? A drug rehab institution? A red-hot prayer meeting? A man waving his jacket over a crowd of people? Then you may be a bit surprised, even disappointed, at the results of this research.

On the other hand, way on the other hand, those churches that find it impossible to fit the miraculous, the other-worldly, into their worldly philosophy of church, well these findings may be a bit of a shock for them too. If deliverance is from God, and it is, then it will cut across our materialistic ways and open our eyes to another sphere altogether.

On my prayer list I have actually entered the word “deliverance” in regards to some serious weaknesses that my flesh continues to exhibit. I want to be delivered from these things. We pray in the Lord’s model prayer, “Deliver us from evil.” Did that have to do with demon spirits? Was Jesus asking us to pray daily or at least often, to be set free from a devil?

Have you ever met someone who said he had a “deliverance” ministry? What did he mean? In the light of even the little bit I have shared so far, is that term able to be lined up with Scripture? On the other hand, did not the apostles have a deliverance ministry in the sense in which this is most often used today? That is, did they not cast out demons, delivering people often from years of bondage?

Of course we must approach the subject of, “Can believers have demons?” Is there ever a case when a born-again believer was “delivered” in this sense? But if deliverance means only demons, how shall we all pray the Lord’s prayer? Surely Christians aren’t allowed to pray such a prayer if demons cannot control them...

So you see, it's a can of worms, this "deliverance" thing. But one well worth opening, in my judgment. Let's see what God said, and surely the Light will dawn on us.

Definitions/Translations

First we need the Bible word or words for deliverance. That piece of information is in fact the key to the whole mystery. But that info is hard to come by, as there are so many words translated "deliver, delivered, deliverance, etc" in both Hebrew and Greek. Let me zero in on just a couple:

"Yasha", the Hebrew word from which comes a whole family of names such as "Joshua", and "Yeshua", is translated "save" in some places and "deliver" in others. "To bring salvation", "to be safe" are the basic meanings of the word. *Salvation and deliverance are overlapping terms.*

"Sozo" is the Greek word most often used with reference to salvation in the New Testament. It means to "save, deliver, protect" and is translated "heal, preserve, save, " etc. Again, *salvation and deliverance are overlapping terms.*

The concept holds true in both Testaments, that when one is *saved*, one is also *delivered*. *Deliverance and salvation are the same thing.*

Why make such a point about something that seems so obvious? So that we can start interpreting what we are seeing and hearing in the modern church world in light of the Biblical concepts, rather than the other way around!

What we have come to understand of the meaning of deliverance is simply not the same as what the TV evangelists are telling us.

First, let's be clear about the English definition of deliver or deliverance, so we are all on the same page for sure: The English word comes from the Latin *de liberare*, "to set free from." I know you can deliver a package and deliver a pizza, etc, but that's another word altogether. This deliverance is "the act of or state of being delivered or being set free." In short, deliverance is a rescue, or an escape.

How is the word "deliverance" used in Scripture?

Now that we are clear about meanings (I hope) let's see how the word is used in Scripture, and talk about concepts in the Bible that don't even use the word, but give us the same idea.

Didn't Jesus say that whomever the Son *sets free* (delivers) is truly free? Jesus is the Deliverer. Yeshua (in Hebrew). Jesus (in Greek). The Savior. *It's all the same!* Any rescue that Jesus Himself initiates is deliverance, or the synonym, salvation. A person set free from a demon has been *saved* from that demon.

Are you saved? If by that we mean, have you been set free, then you are also delivered. The preacher who gave you the Word of God that saved you had a deliverance ministry! Billy Graham was the agent for my initial deliverance. He preached truth, I heard it, my heart was touched deeply, I repented of sin, the joy of the Lord filled my soul. I was set free. Delivered.

That might be a disappointing announcement for those believing that deliverance involves foaming at the mouth or running around a church building. I was seated in a car (at a Christian drive-in), totally fried by the love of God. Happy in the Lord. Free. Rejoicing. Saved. Therefore, delivered.

Deliverances in Israel

Let's go back awhile. Back before Jesus came to Earth. Back to Israel. I'm reading from Exodus 14:30. "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore." The footnote in the NKJV reads "delivered" instead of "saved." Same Hebrew, *Yasha*, two English words, but words that are synonyms.

The enemy had hemmed in Israel. Satan wanted to finish off the Jewish race here and now. Pharaoh had them bound, not only in Egypt, but later in the wilderness before the Red Sea. God comes on the scene and sets them free, in the glorious story we all know. That is deliverance, salvation. Yes, Moses had a "deliverance ministry."

In Exodus 18:8, the same Moses is relating to Jethro all the hardships which Israel had undergone, but also how the Lord had "delivered" Israel from all of them. Satan has a plan for bondage. God has a plan for freedom. This is deliverance.

The Psalmist also talks of how God had "delivered" His people in and eventually from the wilderness. The history of Israel is deliverance history.

David experienced God's salvation often. One time was when he escaped from a Philistine king. "For you have 'delivered' my soul from death, he says in Psalm 107:6. He claims in another place (Ps 34:6) that all righteous people will be afflicted with trouble, but that the Lord will "deliver" him from all of it.

Deliverance in Jesus' ministry

I hope I am not being tedious, but I wish to drive home the point that deliverance has been with the people of God for a long time. It then was personified in the God/Man Jesus, the ultimate Deliverer. Listen to His stories:

I think first of the woman “bound by Satan.” Her story is told in Luke 13. Unfortunately, the latter half of the narrative is overshadowed by the legalists who saw not a deliverance, but a law-breaking healer. Let’s go back to the first half. This sickness was caused by a spirit, verse 11.

That’s significant. To put sickness and (demon) spirit in the same description is not politically correct among us today. We like to say that Jesus doesn’t do miracle things like this any more. But I ask you, does Satan still do the things like he used to do? Did He take a break because our theology will not accommodate spirits and such? If he is still working, don’t you think Jesus is too? Satan never went to our Bible colleges and had the miraculous conveniently explained away for him. He still invades people’s lives.

Let’s write it down: Yes, Satan still binds people. Makes them sick. Sends spirits to them. Not necessary to argue about whether “Christians can get a devil,” but we will add here that Jesus calls this woman a daughter of Abraham. She was a Jew. Seemingly in “good standing.” We’ll make no more conclusions from that.

The point that is important here is that what we call healing and what we call deliverance can overlap. We do not see Jesus “casting out” a demon here. Only laying hands on her. What He prayed at the moment will forever be hidden to us. We assume there was a prayer of some sort, but even that is not stated. The healing was accomplished, and Jesus describes the event as a woman having been released from the bond of Satan, a bond reinforced by one of Satan’s personal emissaries, that we call a demon.

So was this an exorcism or a healing? Call it what you like, it was a deliverance. Deliverance is about setting free from any sort of bondage laid on one by the enemy of our souls.

Any other connections between demonic spirits and physical healings in Jesus’ Deliverance Ministry?

Remember the time the disciples failed to cast out a demon that needed casting? Mark 9. A Jewish man has a son “possessed with a spirit,” that makes him mute. That was the man’s assessment. And it was understated. That same demon would slam his dear boy to the ground and cause him to foam at the mouth. It would throw him into the fire, and had nearly killed him on several occasions.

A little like epilepsy, the doctor might say. But the man was convinced it was a spirit. And Jesus concurred. Mark labels the spirit “unclean” and Jesus proceeds to call it a “deaf and mute”

spirit. He tells the spirit to leave and never come back. As an angry drunk who makes a show of vengeful anger and slams the door on his way out of a bar from which he has just been evicted, the disturbed demon rushes for the door throwing the boy into one last fit that seemed to end his life. One final miracle was Jesus' raising the boy from death or near-death.

Now that is deliverance. The dramatic kind. But the elements are all still there. A person bound by Satan, overcome by One stronger than the enemy Who sets the captive free.

The story of the Gadarene demoniac is just as powerful, and probably even more familiar to most. We will not comment on this one.

But before we leave the life of Jesus, we need to look at other incidents which tell the same story with less fireworks. How about the woman taken in adultery? Is unfaithfulness and sexual immorality a bondage? Was this woman not captured by it? She was set free also, doubly. First, Jesus convicted the religious leaders away from their intentions, saving her life. Then He spoke the word, not only of forgiveness (neither do I condemn you), but of consecration (sin no more). I believe that woman was set free from sin from that day forward. That too is deliverance.

And the man at the pool of Bethesda. Healed of a disease that had bound him 38 years, and also warned about never returning to the sin that had brought him to that place. Set free.

And the woman at the well. A change of heart so dynamic that an entire village came to Christ.

Deliverance in the ministries/letters of Paul and Peter

Jesus commanded His disciples to cast out demons in like manner. And they did. Not as a separate "deliverance" ministry, but as a tool to use as occasion demanded. Peter was confronted with demon-filled people like Elymas/Bar-Jesus whose demonic powers were countered with the power of God in Peter. Paul, reluctantly, after several days, decided he must deal with a spirit of hell that was advertising for Jesus. Always an undesirable combination.

Demons were always out there, threatening. Demons are out there today. We don't wrestle with flesh and blood. You don't fight against Satan in person, either. He is not omnipresent. He has agents. They are located in many places on this planet. Don't assume they never come around. Be ready to fight the enemy on any day of the week.

What do the writers of the New Testament letters, especially Paul, give in the way of advice about deliverance? Relatively little. But what is there needs our attention. Can Christians, truly born-again Christians have a demon living inside of them, controlling their lives? There is simply no evidence of such anywhere in the New Testament. But do Christians, even apostles, need deliverance? Absolutely!

You see, as I have said, our culture defines deliverance as the casting out of a demon. But the Bible does not so define it. When we define the word correctly, we find that we are all involved in deliverance ministry as a part of our ongoing struggle in the Christian life. Consider these passages from your New Testament, and join the battle today for the delivering of believers... (all from KJV)

Romans 7:6. In Christ we have been already delivered from the law:

*“But now we are **delivered** from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”*

Romans 7:24-25. Paul cries out in agony about his sinful nature, from which he needs daily deliverance.

*“O wretched man that I am! who shall **deliver** me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”*

Romans 8:21. One day this body will be set free from its bondage. This is a deliverance yet to come.

*“Because the creature [created being] itself also shall be **delivered** from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”*

Romans 15:31, 2 Corinthians 1:8-10, 2 Thessalonians 3:2, 2 Timothy 4:17-18. A deliverance Paul needed and we need every day: protection from those who would harm us or our message. Satan attacks through other people, not just demons. If other people try to stop our work, we have the power to be delivered in the name of Jesus. Notice, deliverance in the past, present, future. Count on it.

*“That I may be **delivered** from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;”*

*“And that we may be **delivered** from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.”*

*“For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who **delivered** us from so great a death, and doth **deliver**: in whom we trust that he will yet **deliver** us.”*

*“Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was **delivered** out of the mouth*

*of the lion. And the Lord shall **deliver** me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."*

Galatians 1:4, Colossians 1:13. The most important of the deliverances.

*"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might **deliver** us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."*

*"Who hath **delivered** us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:"*

Hebrews 2:15. We are delivered from fear when we come to Christ.

*"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And **deliver** them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."*

2 Peter 2:9. We are also delivered from temptation. It was Jesus who taught us to pray for this very thing in the Lord's prayer: "...but **deliver** us from evil."

*"The Lord knoweth how to **deliver** the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:"*

The doctrine of deliverance, as you now see, is broader than we had imagined. Definitely broader than we will see on TV or read in the pop theology books. Deliverance embraces every attempt of Satan to bind an earthling and secure him in his kingdom. Deliverance is the work of the one prophesied by Isaiah and quoted by Paul. (Isaiah 59:20, Romans 11:26. Note the overlapping of Redemption and Deliverance in these two verses!)

*"And the **Redeemer** shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD."*

*"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the **Deliverer**, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:"*

Deliverance in my own life

I have had my own run-ins with the demonic, as have you. At age 14 I started having epileptic seizures. That's what the doctors called them. Human diagnosis. As you see in the stories above, human diagnosis is not the whole story. I woke up from these episodes with an awful feeling of fear and distorted realities upon me. In my first one, it seemed my parents were trying to kill me.

I did not understand spiritual things in those days, though I had been part of a standard Christian church. The miraculous parts of Scripture were under-played and I grew up not knowing there was a world of spirits all around me. So when the doctor told me to take these pills, and that I probably could never grow out of it, I swallowed everything.

Twenty years of this, and lots of praying, and more knowing of who the real Jesus is, and what His Word really said, somewhere along the line the seizures stopped. The medicine was pitched. That was over 35 years ago. I have no seizures. I am delivered. Free from it.

I am technically a heart patient, for now 20 years. But I live. Doctors, operations yes. A lesser form of deliverance, but I have been spared to live and teach these many years.

A nervous breakdown which could have sent me to a mental institution only 6 years ago, didn't. Lost adrenalin. Fear. Appetite loss. Then, serious praying by myself and others. Love. Godly music 24/7 for weeks. Gradually a come-back. Same Satan. Same deliverance. I'll take it.

Final thoughts

Jesus is the Savior (from sin) and Jesus is the Deliverer (from demons). That's how we like to say it. First Savior, then Deliverer. But this discounts stories in Scripture of those who were exorcised before there was any talk of sin. Persons who were healed first, then forgiven.

Better to say Jesus is the Savior/Deliverer -which includes the healer- for they are the same word in the original! When I am bound by *anything* the question is always, what must I do to be saved/delivered? The answer is Jesus. Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved/delivered on the spot.