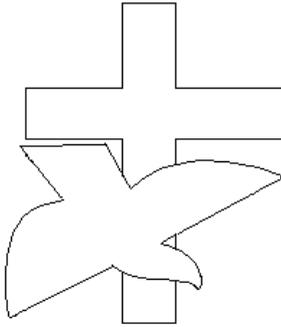


Divine Healing Ministries



The Ministry of Deliverance

**Some Thoughts and Suggestions
from Canon Lendrum**

The Ministry of Deliverance

A new expression?

There are certain words and phrases in vogue today which were not in common use a few years ago. Words or phrases like ‘cool’ and ‘gay’ and ‘spin doctor’ would have had no meaning for earlier generations. Someone has used a word or phrase which he thought, fitted certain situations or conditions and others have latched on to it and it has passed into common usage. It has been accepted.

That happens too when Christians invent expressions to describe certain Christian practices. I suspect that earlier generations might have been puzzled by ‘*slain in the Spirit*’ or ‘*the ministry of deliverance*’.

Where it came from

I think it is safe to say that the expression ‘*ministry of deliverance*’ is a product of the Charismatic Renewal. If it was used before 1960 it was not as well known as it is today. I cannot recall hearing it in my student days. Indeed, there are many things generally accepted as normal in the Church today which received little or no mention in days gone by.

Deliverance from sin

The two words ‘*ministry*’ and ‘*deliverance*’ conveyed different meanings or ideas. Ministry was something done by the ordained ministers or priests of the church and deliverance referred to being set free from the power of sin. Jesus said ‘*Everyone who sins is a slave to sin... if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed*’ John8:34-36. The writing on a wall on the Shankill Road has got it right: ‘*Jesus sets the prisoners Free*’.

A different meaning

The first thing we need to do is to define what is meant today by the Ministry of Deliverance. In modern use it means more than deliverance from the power of sin. It refers to setting someone free from the presence and control of evil spirits and therein lies its '*seriousness and its danger*'. This is not a prayer for healing. It's a form of what used to be called exorcism.

Caution

I must begin, therefore, with a note of caution.

Fashionable

1. This practice of performing a Deliverance Ministry has become so common that it might be described as fashionable. There is a tendency to use it when we are dealing with someone who puzzles or baffles us. We rush too quickly to the conclusion that this person who is telling his story and is asking for prayer needs to be delivered from an evil spirit. We need to guard against the temptation to '*take the easy way out*' when we run out of ideas. The probability is that evil spirits are not the cause of the problem and it is wrong to declare that they are, unless you have good reason to believe so.

Alarming

2. It is a very alarming and possibly harmful thing to suggest to anyone that he is controlled or troubled by an evil spirit. You may have that thought in your mind and you may have good reason for thinking so— but you may be wrong.

Dr Martin Lloyd Jones tells the story of a friend of his who became ill and began to use very foul language to his wife and family and all who came to see him. Everyone who heard him was amazed and baffled because the man had been a devoted servant of Jesus Christ all his life. Where did he learn such language? Such filthy words? Everyone was appalled. Dr MLJ was summoned to his bedside. His family believed their loved one was demonized and needed to be exorcised. As is well known, Dr Martin Lloyd Jones was not only a gifted preacher and Bible teacher. He was also a medical doctor of great repute. He saw immediately the cause of the man's problem. He was suffering from a severe chemical imbalance and required medical treatment. When he received the necessary treatment his behaviour returned to normal.

The lesson for us is plain. Strange or unusual behaviour is not necessarily caused by the presence and activity of evil spirits.

Too enthusiastic

3. Not everyone is called or gifted for this ministry. Paradoxically, those who tend to rush in to cast out evil spirits are those not trained or equipped to carry it out successfully. Sometimes it is the young, immature or enthusiastic person who 'rushes in where angels fear to tread'. They may emerge unscathed but leave behind the one they are trying to help damaged and upset. And the Church's Ministry may be brought into disrepute.

Some who are interested in this ministry and feel themselves drawn to it, may be so for the wrong reasons. They need to be careful and examine their motives. It is important to ensure that they are not getting into it to satisfy curiosity or seek popularity or demonstrate power. That is not what it is about.

An important qualification

Perhaps the attribute most suited for this work is reluctance with a willingness to obey. Obviously, other gifts are required such as faith, courage, leadership and authority but reluctance and a willingness to obey are a necessary safeguard against getting involved for the wrong reasons.

Do evil spirits exist?

The words of C. S. Lewis are wise and balanced. *‘There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight’.* C.S. Lewis: Screwtape Letters.

In a short paper it is not possible to discuss at length the activity of evil spirits and how that impinges on peoples lives in this world. It is sufficient to note, in a Christian discussion, that Jesus cast out evil spirits and gave his disciples authority to do likewise. (See Mark 1:32-34; Luke 10: 17; Acts 5:16)

Our concern is not with the existence and activity of spirits or demons. That is not a problem for those who believe in Jesus and accept His teaching. However, we do need to face up to the possibility that some Christians can develop an unhealthy interest in spirit activity.

What is the Ministry of Deliverance

There is no authority to which we can go to find a full answer or official definition. It is not an expression or phrase in scripture. Obviously it is intended to be a form of exorcism, but that too is a

word that is not in scripture. Collins Dictionary defines exorcism as '*the expulsion of evil spirits from a person or place by prayers and religious rites*'. That sounds like serious business and so it is.

The exercise of the Ministry of Deliverance rebukes the spirit and commands it to depart, forbids it to return and seals up the channel or line that it has established into the person's life.

Let's be practical

If you are involved in praying for, or ministering to, those in need - someone may come to you with a psychological or spiritual problem: depression, addiction, anger, lust, hatred or some other recurring affliction. They tell you their story. What do you do?

Listen

- (a) Listen and say as little as possible. Your foremost duty is to show interest, sympathy and understanding. It may be necessary for you to give encouragement to the one who is opening his heart to you by asking leading questions. Under no circumstances should you probe beyond what the person wants to reveal and you should never register shock.

Look

- (b) Look for a *natural* cause of the problem. Does it arise from the person's background or circumstances? Is it a weakness or trait that may have been inherited? Does it spring from a past or present relationship? Has there been some traumatic experience in the past that is buried deep within? Is there a guilt problem? There is almost

no end to the things you need to consider as you look for a natural cause. Indeed it may take a qualified psychiatrist to discover the things that are playing a part in someone's condition. Do not jump easily or quickly to the conclusion that there are spirits present and there is a need for the Ministry of Deliverance.

Love

- (c) Love this troubled person with the love of Jesus. Any kind of ministry that doesn't flow out of a heart of love and compassion is not the ministry of Jesus. Ministry in His Name is gentle, thoughtful and kind. Such ministry will not be marked by a 'rushing in' to cast out evil spirits.

Follow Jesus' Example

- (d) If you believe in your heart that spirits are either the cause of the malady or are taking advantage of a natural weakness, you must look for a way to deal with the situation without distressing the individual. There is, I believe, an example of that in the life of Jesus. When He returned from the synagogue with His disciples to the house of Simon Peter on the Sabbath, He found Peter's mother-in-law sick with a fever. It was a big disappointment. They were expecting lunch. The disciples asked Jesus to help her. *'So He bent over her and REBUKED the fever and it LEFT her. She got up at once and began to wait on them'* Luke 4:38-39.

The natural interpretation of this incident is that Jesus discerned it was a spirit that afflicted her and when He '*REBUKED the fever it (the spirit) LEFT her*'. I wonder if Peter's mother-in-law ever knew that she was being afflicted by a spirit! Perhaps not. She didn't *need* to know, to be delivered.

So here is a way of undoing the work of a spirit without distressing the one you're trying to help. *Address the malady!* Rebuke it as Jesus did. Command it to go and never to return. Do this in the Name, and with the authority, of Jesus. If the malady is caused by the presence and activity of a spirit, it will leave. If not, you were wrong in your diagnosis!

For convenience of analysis we can divide exorcisms into two kinds –major and minor.

Major Exorcism

John Wimber spoke of those requiring major exorcism as '*severely demonized*'. Others have used the term '*possessed*'. Neither term is used in scripture. In the case of major exorcism, the exorcist may be dealing with a person not in control of himself. He may become violent and blasphemous. His voice or vocal chords may be taken over by spirits so that they speak to the exorcist through him. The voice may be different and speak words of mockery, argument, defiance or blasphemy. (See mark 1:23-25; Mark 5:1-9)

This is not a pleasant situation. To deal with it, a team of dedicated and gifted exorcists is required. It is not the kind of ministry in which many will want to be involved. Happily, it is not a common occurrence in this part of the world, but it does happen. I have no doubt that there are plenty of people around who have been taken over by evil spirits to some degree and may be described as '*severely demonized*' but they are not looking for

the ministry of the church.

Minor Exorcism

Those who do seek the help of the church are more likely to be those who need minor exorcism. That which used to be called Minor Exorcism is called today by the more polite name of the Ministry of Deliverance. What lies behind it is the idea that certain maladies are caused by the presence and activity of spirits. There is almost no limit to what troubles, some people believe, can be ascribed to demonic or spirit activity. They range from addiction to irrational impulses, such as anger, lust, jealousy, depression and various other moods and psychological conditions. I have heard people talk about smoking demons, religious demons, lustful demons and many, many others. There is almost no limit to the problems that I have heard people attribute to spirits. There is a possibility that some of these conditions may need a deliverance ministry, but we would be well advised to explore other avenues of approach fully before coming to this conclusion.

Be careful what you say

I have no doubt that spirits can and do impinge on human life. They can play some part in causing (or, more likely worsening) the things that trouble and oppress human kind. But great care has to be taken not to give people the impression that they are 'occupied' or 'indwelt' or 'possessed' or 'owned' by evil spirits. There is all the difference in the world between being attacked or afflicted or oppressed by spirits from 'without' and being controlled or directed or possessed by spirits from 'within'. Indeed it may be true to say that all of us have gone through the experience of being attacked from 'without' at times and we didn't realise it. The sudden row that blew up on the way out to

church! The unexpected difficulty as we do something important for the Kingdom of God! That overwhelming temptation when we thought we had conquered it! Spirits are always around to take advantage of our weaknesses.

Who benefits?

People who can benefit from the Ministry of Deliverance are those who find difficulty in shaking off these attacks. The spirits seem to have a particular line or channel through which they can come at will to attack.

The follow up

In the case of a person being helped or healed by a successful ministry of 'rebuking a malady' there must be a follow up which will involve at least two things:

- I. *A sealing* of the channel or line down which the spirit has been coming to cause pain and suffering. The sealing against the spirit's return is done by a pronouncement of authority and power in Jesus' Name. *'I seal off this channel that has been opened into this person's life and close it for ever against any spirit that would seek to use it, in the name and with the authority of Jesus Christ'.*
- II. *A filling* of the vacuum that is now left by the departure of the spirit (see Matthew 12:43-45). Or, to use another metaphor, *the building up* of a defence against any further attacks (see Ephesians 6:10-11). This should be done by encouraging and leading the one who has received this ministry to do three things.

Repentance

First, to repent of anything that could cause an attack from spirits: e.g. occult practices such as the use of a ouija board, fortune teller, medium or pornographic material. It could also be caused by an illicit relationship or some form of illicit activity.

Faith

Secondly, to reaffirm faith by making a new, clear cut and definite act of faith in Jesus as Saviour, Lord and Friend.

Commitment

Thirdly, to invite the Holy Spirit (also known in scripture as the Spirit of Jesus, Acts 16:7) to enter his heart and life.

This threefold act of commitment is necessary to ensure that a Christian will live victoriously over the world, the flesh and the devil.

An Example of Deliverance

I recall dealing with a disturbed ten year old child. She was full of anger at times and was very conscious of how she felt. When a child of that age says to you '*I am full of anger inside me*' you have to take notice. You can't ignore it. It was making her mother's life unbearable.

I saw three possible reasons for this anger. It may have come from her genes. Her father had given his parents trouble when he was young. It may have come from her circumstances which were very trying and unfortunate. Or it may have had something to do with the presence of an evil spirit. She was anti-religious, anti-Church and anti-God at times.

I came (rightly or wrongly) to the conclusion that all three causes

operated in her condition. But the last thing I wanted to do was to convey to this intelligent child that she was being afflicted by an evil spirit. So, what was I to do?

I decided to talk with her alone. That wasn't easy because of the anti-religious outlook. I talked with her about how everyone has genes and that means that we can bring bad things as well as good things with us into the world. The anger she experienced inside her and that burst out in fits of rage at times was not a good thing but it was not her fault.

I told her too that I was aware of her unfortunate circumstances in which she was being deprived of things that other children enjoyed and that too was making her angry. I assured her that I knew it was not her fault. Having built up a rapport with her, I told her I would like to pray with her and she raised no objection.

Taking authority

First, I explained to her that I had noticed three things in her that would have to go, if she was going to be happy. (I had discerned what those three '*things*' were. They were anger, hatred and a critical spirit). So, in a short time of prayer, I commanded Anger to leave. I commanded Hatred to leave. I commanded Criticism to leave. At no time did I suggest demons or evil spirits to her.

I concluded by encouraging her to put her trust in Jesus who loved her. Then I laid my hands gently on her head and asked the Holy Spirit to fill her life.

The Result

She is not yet a perfect little girl. Of course not. But her mother who reports her behaviour to me on a regular basis assures me

that she is remarkably improved and a very different child.

The Ministry of Deliverance is a valid part of the ministry of the church. It needs to be exercised with compassion, wisdom and care—and always to the glory of God. When properly used it can be very effective, and people who may have been suffering for years can be set free instantaneously.

My plea is that it should be used with great care, wisdom and sensitivity. As C. S. Lewis suggested above, nothing would please our adversary more than that the Ministry of Deliverance should become the '*in thing in Christian Ministry*'. That could do more harm than good! So those who feel God is guiding them to become involved in this ministry should receive proper training and authority from the Church.

INTERDENOMINATIONAL DIVINE HEALING MINISTRIES

Healing Services

Every Monday night at 8 pm in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast
Every Tuesday night at 8 pm in St Finnian's Church, Cregagh
(not July and August)

Intercession Service

If you would like prayer for yourself or for someone else you
may ring 028 9031 1532
Just leave your first name and what you would like prayer for,
and we will pray every day for a month

Personal prayer for God's strength, peace and healing

Monday to Friday 10 am - 1 pm (by appointment) at
32 Townsend Street, Belfast BT13 2ES
Telephone: 028 9031 1532

Drop In Centres

St Peter's Cathedral, Falls Road Tuesdays 10.30 am - 12 noon
Shankill Methodist (corner of Berlin Street)
Thursdays 10.30 am - 12 noon

Holy Communion and prayer for healing

Every Monday at 1 pm in St George's Church, High Street,
Belfast (near the Albert Clock)

Divine Healing Ministries

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