

Is the Phenomenon of Being Slain in the Spirit Biblical?

Being “slain in the Spirit” is indeed biblical, and I’ll tell you why it is.

But before I can present the “why,” I must define the “what.”

There are many different terms coined for the manifestation of which I write: *slain in the Spirit*, *falling under the power*, *overwhelmed in God’s presence*, and others.

Many believe that the phenomenon is either purely psychological or, in the more extreme view, demonic in nature. Now I want to make it completely clear that I do not make this a priority in my ministry. The “slain in the Spirit” manifestation is not essential to my core beliefs about Christ.

My faith is founded on the life, death, resurrection and identity of Christ. So rather than teaching that “falling under the power” is primary, I teach that it is only incidental.

I do not seek the manifestation. Rather, I seek God. And, in doing so, the manifestation is sometimes experienced. Someone being “slain in the Spirit” can occur during a spiritual encounter with God, but if someone is not “slain in the Spirit,” that doesn’t mean they didn’t have an encounter with God.

Because many ask about it, I have been inspired to write a Biblical explanation and defense of the “slain in the Spirit” phenomenon.

The Definitions

I want to define what I mean by “slain in the Spirit.”

Here is my definition: A temporary, physical response to a spiritual encounter with God that involves some or much difficulty with standing.

Now, it's important to realize that there are people who fake these encounters, and, at the same time, there are people who simply allow themselves to fall in an almost ritualistic fashion.

There's the genuine, there's the fake and there's the ritualistic. Don't confuse the three. The one of which I write is the genuine—I mean the one that holds truest to the definition I presented. It is, by definition, genuine. But I will lend you its scriptural support in later sentences.

The Ritualistic

Some people voluntarily fall out of reverence, because they sense God's presence. In some cases, it's not that they are trying to fake an experience but rather that they are, in their known traditional way, responding with respect to the presence of God. You can tell the difference between when someone voluntarily falls out of reverence and when someone falls as a result of being touched by the power of God. So someone could be experiencing the presence of God and, even though they're perfectly able to stand, fall out of reverence. It's almost a tradition in some Pentecostal circles. For some people who grow up in a church culture that is accepting of the manifestation, falling over when a preacher lays hands on them becomes just as much a part of their tradition as bowing their heads when they pray. In many cases, it's not that an experience is being faked, but, rather, a tradition is being upheld.

I must go as far as saying that these people are not deceitful or evil. Is bowing out of reverence evil? Is closing your eyes when you pray evil? Do those who practice this do so with the motive to fake an experience? Not the ones in this context.

For them, it is not that they are trying to fake an experience. They are simply being ritualistic, as their tradition has taught them to be. This ritualistic “slain in the Spirit” is not evil or deceptive, but I do not necessarily support it.

The Fake

Then, of course, as with anything good, you have those who intentionally fake the experience.

Some people, when they feel absolutely nothing, act as though they are experiencing the manifestation when, in fact, they are not. These people, too, can be easily identified.

These are the ones who are being emotional or deceitful—sometimes a little of both.

Sometimes, they are not trying to deceive others per se, but they are emotionally deceiving themselves. Other times, they may be so desperate for a “slain in the Spirit” experience that they work themselves up and into a frenzy. Perhaps wanting to be regarded as spiritual or perhaps being starved of attention, some people deceitfully fake a holy and pure spiritual experience. I definitely do not support such behavior.

The Genuine

What I am specifically writing of is the genuine encounter with God that causes your physical body to react. I am writing of the effect God’s presence has on an earthly vessel.

The Negative Arguments

So what are some of the arguments against the “slain in the Spirit” manifestation? What issues do people take against it? And why do some vehemently deny that it is biblical? Categorically, though specificity might seem to reveal more, there are four basic arguments that opponents of the

manifestation will use. They are as follows:

1. Being “slain in the Spirit” is not biblical.
2. Being “slain in the Spirit” is present in other religious faiths or it can be counterfeited.
3. It’s purely emotional or lacking in purpose
4. It brings glory to man, not to God.

On Thursday, I will address each of these four arguments.
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Note: This is the first of a three-part series. Tune in Thursday and Friday for parts two and three.

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