

DEMONS, THE DEVIL, DELIVERANCE, AND THE CHILDREN OF GOD - Part Three

Sunday, July 17th, 2016, 6:00 p.m. - Teaching #1903

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Ephesians 6:10-20 - "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. [11] Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. [12] 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. [13] Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. [14] Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, [15] and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. [16] In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; [17] and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, [18] praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, [19] and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, [20] for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak."

Last week we considered in depth the nature of the *inward* spiritual battle the Christian faces. We saw the emphasis in every letter written to the church in the New Testament that our battle is with *our own fallen inward desires*. These desires make us vulnerable to the work of Satan through the temptations of this age. He is called the ruler of this world by the Apostle John because of his present freedom to entice Christians away from glorying supremely in Christ and giving their hearts and wills to the corrupt and fading joys of this age.

Whenever people momentarily choose to take their deepest satisfaction in anything other than denying themselves and glorying in obeying and sacrificing for Christ spiritual warfare has taken place and they have been defeated. This is life's deepest and most meaningful spiritual battle and many Christians are defeated without even knowing the warfare took place. Behold Satan's genius.

And then we saw the answer to these genuine inward spiritual battles with the devil is found in *crucifying the flesh* rather than *expelling demons*. That's where we finished up last Sunday night.

But it would be a mistake to assume we Christian face only *internal battles* as we follow Christ in this present age. So I will continue with last week's numbering of points:

b) **SECOND, the *external* battle for the Christian is with the *world* through the influence of the *Devil***

I only have time to develop two thoughts here:

i) ***The Christian deals with the Devil (singular), not the demonic (plural).***

If you look carefully, you can actually see this shift in emphasis in the New Testament. As you read through the Gospels you will constantly see Jesus (and sometimes His disciples) dealing with the powers of darkness as they take the gospel to the lost. Almost always they encounter a *demon*, or *demons*.

But then, as you move into the epistles - the letters of instruction to the *Church* - to *believers* - the emphasis is never specifically on *demons* (plural) but the *Devil* (singular):

2 Corinthians 2:10-11 - "Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, [11] so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

2 Corinthians 11:13-14 - "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. [14] And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."

Ephesians 6:10-11 - "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. [11] Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."

1 Thessalonians 2:17-18 - "But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, [18]

because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us.”

1 Timothy 3:6-7 - “He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. [7] Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.”

James 4:7 - “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

1 Peter 5:8-9 - “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. [9] Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.”

I believe this singular emphasis on the Devil is very intentional in the Epistles. The Devil is the **external** enemy. Because he’s not omnipresent, everyone knows he can’t indwell all those Christians who are wrestling with spiritual problems.

And since demons are not even mentioned as an inward presence in believers, the devil has to use **means** to multiply his influence and extend his reach to as many believers at the same time. He doesn’t **have** to get **inside** believers to mess them up spiritually. He doesn’t deal with us that **personally**. He uses another **means** to get this job done. And the means **isn’t** demonic.

It’s the **second** external battle in which the Christian must be engaged:

- ii) ***The Devil seeks to influence our lives through the inward attraction of our flesh to the ideas and activities of the world.***

In his opposition to the Christian, the Devil’s tool isn’t **demons**, but the **world**. That’s why Satan is called the **“ruler of this world”** - **John 12:31** - “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.” That’s why the Bible says **the whole world “lies in the power of the evil one”** - **1 John 5:19** - “We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”

The world is the **tool** the Devil uses to appeal to the Christian’s affections. That is the simplest definition of New Testament spiritual warfare I can give you. That’s the **how** of the battle. For the Christian, the battle doesn’t engage **personalities** in conflict. The battle is **spiritual at it’s root** (Ephesians 6), but it is only **indirectly** with the Devil.

This has powerful implications for the Christian. You are involved in spiritual warfare, **not when you are looking for demons in your inner self**, but when you are picking out shows on Netflix. You’re involved in spiritual warfare when you are so hungry for that promotion at work, you will sacrifice home and church to climb the ladder. You’re involved in spiritual warfare when you spend so much of your income on home and clothes and recreation you can’t afford to honor the Lord with your tithe.

Remember these **three key components of spiritual warfare: The Devil uses the world to appeal to your affections.**

Understand, the Devil isn’t working on you **directly by personally invading your being**. That’s why you really don’t need to bother talking to him about anything at all. He’s not interested in you enough to even listen. The Devil is using the **world** - its entertainment, its goals, its dreams of success, its hungers and appetites, its love of money and power - the Devil is using all these things.

Read Romans chapter seven. You have a traitor in your own being. Not a demonic traitor - but your flesh - your own inner fallen nature - that is **very easily fascinated with the attractions of the world**. It’s your own **desires**. That’s where James (and the whole New Testament) says the problem lies. We naturally **love** the world.

And so the remedy is to gear your energy to where the battle is actually fought:

1 John 2:14-16 - "I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. [15] Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. [16] For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world."

Please notice that this text is all about spiritual warfare. It's all about "**overcoming the evil one**" (14). Do you want to overcome the evil one? Don't yell at him. Refuse the natural inclination of the flesh to love the world. Draw near to God. Crucify the love of the world in your own desires. The rest of the battle with the powers of darkness will take care of itself.

More next week.