

CBC Sunday School
Angels and Demons: Satan and Spiritual Warfare
April 2, 2023

“Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril. When you are ignorant of the enemy, but know yourself, your chances of winning or losing are equal. If ignorant both of your enemy and yourself, you are certain in every battle to be in peril.” Sun Tzu, The Art of War

I. Discussion

Ephesians 6 calls us to put on “the whole armor of God” that we may stand against the schemes of the devil. What are the schemes of the devil? How does he normally oppose God’s people, and how can we stand against such schemes?

II. Satan and His Works

A. Names of Satan

1. Personal Names

- a. OT – Satan
 - i. Means “adversary”
 - ii. Found 27 times in the OT. 10 for human adversaries. 17 for “Satan.”
 - iii. 15 references to Satan are in Job, and 2 are in Zechariah 3:1-2.
- b. NT – Diabolos
 - i. Means “slanderer”
 - ii. Occurs 37 times in the NT.
- c. NT – Satanos
 - i. Means “adversary” – just as in OT.
 - ii. Occurs 36 times in the NT.
- d. NT – Beelzebul/Beelzebub
 - i. Comes from name for pagan god, often associated with Baal.
 - ii. Was adopted as a name for the prince of demons.
 - iii. Occurs 7 times in NT, all in the gospels, and specifically in the dispute about Jesus’ power to cast out demons.
 - iv. See also ‘Belial’ in 2 Corinthians 6:15.
- e. Note the heightened number of personal references to Satan in the NT.

2. Descriptive Names

- a. Accuser of the brethren – Revelation 12:10
- b. Our adversary the devil – 1 Peter 5:8
- c. The father of lies – John 8:44
- d. A murderer – John 8:44
- e. Dragon – Revelation 12:3
- f. The serpent of old – Revelation 12:9

- g. The power of darkness – Colossians 1:13
- h. The prince/ruler of this world – John 12:31
- i. The prince of the power of the air – Ephesians 2:2
- j. The evil one – Ephesians 6:16; 1 John 5:19
- k. The wicked one – Matthew 13:19
- l. The god of this world – 2 Corinthians 4:4
- m. The tempter – 1 Thessalonians 3:5
- n. The enemy – Matthew 13:39
- o. Abaddon/Apollyon/destroyer? – Revelation 9:11

B. Works

1. Rules the Present Evil World System
 - a. Matthew 4:8-10 – Satan offers Jesus rule over the kingdoms of the world.
 - b. Acts 26:18 – Turn from darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to God.
 - c. 2 Corinthians 4:4 – The god of this world has blinded minds of unbelievers.
 - d. Ephesians 2:2 – Satan is called the prince of the power of the air.
 - e. 2 Timothy 2:26 – Escape the devil's snare, having been held captive by him.
 - f. 1 John 5:19 – The whole world lies in the power of the evil one.
2. Rules the Realm of Demons
 - a. Matthew 12:24, 26 – Beelzebul is the ruler of demons.
 - b. Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:7-9 – The devil and "his" angels.
3. Thwarts the Spread of the Gospel
 - a. Matthew 13:19 – The evil one snatches away the seed of the gospel.
 - b. Matthew 13:38-39 – The devil sows tares among the wheat.
 - c. 1 Thessalonians 2:18 – Satan thwarted Paul from going to Thessalonica.
 - d. 2 Corinthians 4:4 – The god of this world blinds the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.
4. Tempts God's People to Sin
 - a. Luke 4:1-13 – The temptation of Christ. At the close of the temptation of Christ, the devil departed until "another opportune time," implying he would try to tempt Christ again.
 - b. 1 Corinthians 7:5 – Satan is involved in temptation to sexual sin.
 - c. 2 Corinthians 2:11 – Satan schemes against Paul and attempts to outwit.
 - d. Ephesians 4:26-27 – Anger may give the devil a foothold to induce further sin.
 - e. Ephesians 6:10-20 – The evil one and his forces wage war against believers.
 - f. 1 Timothy 3:7; 2 Timothy 2:26 – The devil lays snares for believers.
5. Brings about Sickness, Oppression, and Death
 - a. Luke 13:10-17 – Jesus healed a woman who for 18 years had a sickness caused by a spirit, and who was bound by Satan.
 - b. Mark 5:1-20 – The Gerasene demoniac was possessed by a legion, presumably under the command of Satan.
 - c. 1 Corinthians 5:5 – The unrepentant sinner is to be handed over to Satan for the "destruction of his flesh." (There is dispute as to whether this reference to the "flesh" is physical or spiritual in nature.)
 - d. 2 Corinthians 12:7 – Paul's thorn in the flesh is a messenger of Satan.
 - e. Hebrews 2:14 – The devil has the power of death.

6. Enters or Possesses Individuals
 - a. Luke 22:3-4; John 13:2, 27 – Satan possesses Judas.
 - b. Mark 8:33; Matthew 16:23 – Get behind me Satan. Peter's words are identified with those of Satan.
 - c. Acts 5:3 – Peter says that Satan has filled Ananias' heart (this may be either possession or influence).
7. Accuses God's People
 - a. Job 1:9; 2:1-6 – Satan accuses Job of only believing because of privilege.
 - b. Revelation 12:10 – Satan is the accuser of the brethren.
8. Lies and Deceives
 - a. John 8:44 – The devil is a murderer and a liar, who has no truth in him, and is the father of lies.
 - b. Genesis 3:13; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14 – Eve deceived by serpent.
 - c. Matthew 24:24 – Satan's false sign and wonders will endeavor to mislead, if possible, the elect.
 - d. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 – Satan works by displaying power that reinforces lies, deceiving those who are perishing and refuse to love the truth.
 - e. Revelation 12:9; 13:14; 20:3, 8, 10 – Satan is the deceiver of the world.

III. What Is Spiritual Warfare?

- A. Approaches to Spiritual Warfare
 1. Evangelism/Discipleship-Based
 - a. Demons can't inhabit believers because of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
 - b. Demons can influence, but their influence is lessened as we are sanctified.
 - c. Sole focus should be on evangelism and discipleship. Do these and you will not need to worry about the demonic.
 2. "Power" Encounter – Interview and Expel the Demon
 - a. Popular among Vineyard movement and IHOP.
 - b. Often associated with extreme manifestations of the demonic.
 - c. Interview demons and learn who they are, where they come from, where the demon has a foothold, what sin it is associated with, etc.
 - d. Assert Christ's power, victory, and authority over demons. Bind it in the name of Jesus.
 - e. Demand demon flees from the area or person – exorcism.
 3. "Truth" Encounter – Counsel the Person with the Gospel
 - a. While our fight is against flesh and blood, that is not a fight we can win. It is a fight that Jesus has won, and we only have victory as we submit to Him and stand on the truth of the gospel.
 - b. The key truth of the gospel is that Jesus has won the decisive battle on the cross, and if we are in Christ, we are seated with Christ in power.
 - c. Satan attempts to influence or control through temptation, accusation, and deception.
 - d. All of these tactics can be countered by understanding the truth of the gospel, who we are in Christ, and how we are to follow Christ.

- e. Jesus Himself stands against the devil by utilizing Scripture properly interpreted and applied.
- f. Therefore, in this understanding, the key to dealing with the demonic influence is not to ignore it, nor should we attempt to go to war with the demonic. Rather, we counsel the person under the influence of the demonic to understand who they are in Christ, and how to stand against the schemes of the devil. It is discipleship with a keen awareness of potential demonic attack.
- g. We may address the demon, but we do so under the authority of Christ, and with the understanding of the truth of Christ's authority and victory. It is "Christ-focused" more than it is "demon-focused."

B. Considerations

1. The Name of Jesus Is Not Magic

- a. We cannot expect to use "the name of Jesus" or "plead the blood of Jesus" and assume victory over the demonic, simply by using His name. See the sons of Sceva in Acts 19:11-20.
- b. Any effort in spiritual warfare must rely on genuine union with the Lord and trust in Him, rather than religious or "magical" incantations.

2. Exorcisms Are Not Prescribed in the New Testament

- a. As we have seen, we are called to be aware of the schemes of the devil and demons, and to oppose them. The New Testament is not hesitant to speak about the demonic.
- b. However, we are nowhere commanded to engage in exorcisms or removals of spirits as seen in the ministries of Jesus and the apostles.
- c. Whether or not we think such exorcisms are appropriate or in line with Scripture, we should all recognize they are not expected to be a normal component of the everyday Christian life.

3. Some Are Gifted to Discern Spirits

- a. All are called to be spiritually discerning. See Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1.
- b. Some are especially gifted to discern spirits – to discern between the truth of God's Word and the deceptions of demons. See 1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22.
 - i. Some see this gift as the ability to discern between kinds of "spirits," i.e. to determine what kind of demons are present and active.
 - ii. Others see this gift as essentially the ability to discern between truth and error. To discern spirits is to discern what kind of a spirit, good or evil, a teaching is associated with.
- c. We do not see any gift or calling to exorcise or demonstrate power over demons. We do see that some are gifted to discern truth and error, which seems to have implications for how we are to handle demonic influence.

4. Normal Spiritual Warfare

- a. It should be noted that the normal means of grace are themselves acts of spiritual warfare.
- b. Prayer, Scripture, fellowship, worship, preaching, evangelism, doing good works, producing fruit, loving one another, and all that the Spirit of God does through us are all acts of spiritual war.

- c. While we are aware of the devil's schemes, we should be more focused on living lives in the Spirit of God and Christ.
- 5. The Enemy of the Flesh
 - a. More than the demonic, the New Testament focuses on defeating the enemy of our own sinful desires.
 - b. For Paul, the chief enemy is our own "flesh," which receives far more consideration in the epistles.

IV. Can Christians Be Possessed by Demons?

A. What Do We Mean by "Possess?"

- 1. Possess Can Mean "Own"
 - a. This would refer to a demon having ownership or mastery over a person.
- 2. Possess Can Mean "Influence"
 - a. This would refer to a demon influencing the behavior or thinking of a person.
- 3. Possess Can Mean "Dominate"
 - a. This would refer to a demon dominating or having control over a person.

B. Parameters Regarding Possession

- 1. Ownership
 - a. The devil never owns a Christian.
 - b. We have been rescued from dominion of darkness, and transferred into kingdom of the Son.
 - c. We are temples of the Holy Spirit and citizens of the kingdom of God. See Colossians 1:13; Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:4-6; 1 John 3:7-9.
- 2. Influence
 - a. Satan even attempts to attack Jesus this way in the temptation of Christ. If Jesus can be attacked, it seems that we would also be susceptible.
 - b. Clearly, people and even Christians can be influenced by the demonic. We are called to stand against, flee from, and be aware of the devil's schemes.
 - c. Even though we are indwelt by the Spirit, we can give sin and evil influence. See 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.
 - d. Because we are in Christ, we never have to give influence to the demonic. In Him, we have what we need to resist the devil. See Ephesians 6:10-20.
- 3. Domination
 - a. As Christians, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It does not follow that we can be indwelt or fully controlled by demons. See Ephesians 1:13-14.
 - b. Paul's thorn in the flesh was a tormenting by Satan. But that falls far short of the domination we see of those possessed in the gospels.
 - c. Christians are never under the ruling authority of darkness. However, it may be that Christians can cede control to evil/the demonic through sin. This may be behind Paul's warning in Ephesians 4:27 not to give the devil a foothold.
 - d. The devil can never take authority over a Christian. Can Christians give it away through sin?
 - e. Peter in Matthew 16:22-23 and Ananias in Acts 5:3 may be examples of believers giving away "control" to the devil.

V. Our Assurance in Spiritual Warfare

A. Christ Has Won the Battle – Christus Victor

1. Colossians 1:13 – He has delivered us from kingdom of darkness.
2. Colossians 2:13-15 – He disarmed the rulers and authorities on the cross.
3. 1 John 4:4 – He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.
4. Romans 8:37-39 – Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ.
5. 1 John 3:8 – The son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil.
6. Hebrews 2:14-15 – Through death Jesus destroyed he who has the power of death.

B. Satan and Demons Will Be Fully Conquered

1. Matthew 25:41 – Eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.
2. Revelation 20:10 – The devil was thrown into lake of fire and brimstone, where they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR DEALING WITH THE DEMONIC

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Jesus triumphed over Satan and all his demons through His work of redemption, particularly by canceling the power of sin over us at the cross (Matt. 12:28-29; Eph. 1:19-23; Col. 2:13-15). Satan is already condemned and his final destruction is sure (John 12:31; 16:11; Rev. 20:7-10).

The principle of authority is that we are in the kingdom of Christ. Jesus is Lord and head of all powers and authorities. Satan and his forces have *no* actual legal authority over the believer. Despite his claims and how much he may take advantage of our sin, unbelief, weakness, ignorance, or fear, he is disarmed. We are members of the kingdom of light and therefore all sins were forgiven, all condemnation is ended, all cultic vows, promises, covenants, etc., were rendered null and void when we came into Christ's kingdom authority (Col. 1:13-14; 2:9-15). One must never compromise this principle by agreeing with the demonic claim that sin gives the demon actual legal authority to invade a believer or attach itself to your soul or body. Believe in God; disbelieve Satan.

Our primary weapons against demonic stratagems are faithful application of the fundamentals of the faith (Eph. 6:10-20; 1 Pet. 5:6-9). Light expels darkness.

The only spiritual information to be received as given is that which comes through the Bible interpreted naturally. Be particularly cautious about deeper meanings or uses of passages out of context (Matt. 4:6). All other spiritual knowledge, information, experience must be carefully tested. Expect that any information from demons, who are liars by nature, will be deceptive or facts given for dark purposes.

Basic patterns of ministry are found in the Bible. Patterns that differ substantially are always suspect.

Avoid every form of contact with the demonic including astrology, new age paraphernalia, demonic movies, video games, and music, charms, séances, Ouija and many other places where the demonic is present obviously or subtly. (Lev. 19:26, 31; 20:6; Deut. 18:9-13; Acts 19:18-20).

Using deliverance as a substitute for dealing with our flesh or in place of spiritual disciplines, is dangerous.

Most sins don't need any kind of demonic intervention. Demons often claim credit for sin or a tragedy, trying to profess more power than they possess. Allowing this to go unchallenged may lead to an unwarranted sense of helplessness on the part of a believer.

One must be very careful not to give Satan and his demons too much attention. This can lead to fearfulness or overestimation of his power, to a fascination with evil, or even a kind of satanic worship. Don't seek to know anything more about the demonic than what is taught in Bible or is pastorally necessary. Biblical accounts of deliverance do not involve discovering information about demons' origins, hierarchies, attachments, territorial jurisdiction, or specific functions. Jesus asks for a name only once (Mark 5:9) and then does not use the information the demons give. This indicates that knowing these sorts of things is not necessary for success in spiritual warfare. It also suggests that we curb our natural curiosity about such things.

While all sins are forgiven in Christ (Col. 2:13-15, 1 John 2:2), confession (speaking truth from the heart, which differs from saying I am sorry about what happened) is necessary to experience the forgiveness of guilt, the cleansing of shame (1 John 1:9) and the reconciliation of relationship (Rom. 5:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; Col. 1:19-22). Believers confess their sin, accept Christ's blood bought cleansing, renounce sin's place in their lives, and recommit themselves as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:12-14; Col. 3:1-17). Evil spirits can take advantage of us if we refuse to confess sin we have done or sin done to us, using it as an opportunity to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10; Eph. 4:27).

Scripture describes demons oppressing people apart from any specific sin or opening. God Himself declared Job righteous, yet he was attacked (Job 1:8). Jesus, the sinless one, was attacked repeatedly (Matt. 4:1-11; 16:23). Jesus dealt with many demonized people without addressing specific sin or openings. He heals, cures, drives out demons without repentance of sin as a prerequisite for casting out the demon (Luke 6:18; 7:21; 8:2; 9:1; 13:32; cf. Mark 6:13; Mark 7:24-30). As the devil harassed and afflicted Job, demons can cause physical maladies, to direct evildoers to assail others, or to inspire nightmares.

As children of God, regenerated and indwelt by the Spirit, we are responsible and empowered to resist Satan's stratagems (Eph. 6:10-18; James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:7-9; 1 John 4:1-4; 5:1-5; 18-19).

We may agree with a lie (no Christian would ever do what you did; sin gave the demon right to invade), receive a curse (you are an idiot; you are going to be ill), or accept an accusation (you are so filthy; if anyone knew, they would despise you). These can become a stronghold (2 Cor. 10:4-5) that must be torn down by discovering the stronghold, confessing the lie and affirming and receiving God's truth.

Believers may be deceived, accused or tempted and may yield to demonic attacks or give demons influence in their lives – though they do not have to. An evil spirit can empower, energize, encourage, or exploit a believer's own sinful desires, unbelief, weakness, ignorance, or fear (Matt. 16:22-23; Acts 5:3).

This is a typical pattern of prayer to deal with demonic attack or influence. It is important to note that the specific wording is unimportant. Power and authority comes from truth:

1. Lord Jesus Christ, I acknowledge that this (name the specific situation or area of sin or influence) may be empowered by demons and evil spirits. If it is, I want nothing to do with them.
2. Lord Jesus Christ I confess that you triumphed over these demons and evil spirits by the power of your shed blood that purchased forgiveness for all my sins and by your death, burial and resurrection that provided my new life in Christ.
3. Demon, in the name and authority of Jesus, I command you get away from me, now. Lord Jesus Christ I ask that you send these demons and evil spirits away from me.
4. Lord Jesus Christ I thank you for hearing and answering my prayer. Please reveal to me anything in my life that might give demons and evil spirits opportunity in my life. Please fill me anew with your Holy Spirit so that I will be empowered to live out your life in joyful obedience to you and freedom from sin and harassment.

Believers are commanded to stand firm on biblical truths and resist the devil (Eph. 6:13; Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9). The word "resist" means active opposition (Acts 13:8; Gal. 2:11; 2 Tim. 3:8) including rebuke spoken directly to the demon (Zech. 3:2; Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; Jude 1:9).

When Jesus was attacked by the devil, He spoke well-interpreted Scripture aloud to the devil and commanded him to get away (Matt. 4:1-10). This is the same pattern (stand firm and resist) commanded for believers (Eph. 6:13; Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9). He did not argue theology (could the devil actually have given Him the kingdoms of this world?), or ask demons for information or hierarchies.

If believers continue to allow demonic influence, they may become entangled in a behavior so deeply that they may need help from other believers to escape (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; Gal. 6:1-4; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Heb. 12:1-13). They could be dominated by a demonic personality in a way akin to a wife being dominated by an abusive husband, exhibiting personality change or loss of a sense of personal control. This is particularly true when there is direct personal involvement with demonic or occult activities, ceremonies, or rituals (1 Cor. 10:20; 2 Tim. 2:25-26). However, a believer will never be abandoned by the Holy Spirit or left to merely human resources as in the case of an unbeliever (Psa. 27; 90; Isa. 41:10-16).

Getting rid of demons in such cases is done by a believer using their authority in Christ to give a direct command to the demon. This must always be done in concert with the entrapped believer. 1) Dear Father, it is by your authority that we proceed to deliver "name" by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. 2) [to the demon] In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by His authority, I join with "name" in commanding you to leave "name." You have no right to be here. You are trespassing upon God's property. Get away, now. 3) Father, we pray that you will empower this rebuke we have just issued in Jesus' name.

I may preface the prayer by commanding the demon in the name of Jesus not to hurt anyone and to be silent. I help the believer reaffirm basic theological truths such as those in the first two paragraphs. In doing so, it is always good to ensure that people are actually believers. It is important to remember that the demon has no legal right to oppress, no matter what they may claim. I do not involve myself in arguments or dialogue with the demon. It is important to command rather than attempt to persuade the demon. All prayer is done to God in normal tones of voice. It is Christ's power, not mine, that works. I'm only His instrument. Demons are sent away by Christ's authority, not by formulas, rituals, the power of their names, etc. A grave danger of deliverance ministry is a subtle temptation to pride and power.

Our goal is always to bring non-Christians to Christ and build Christians up so that they will be able to resist Satan's stratagems (Eph. 6:13; Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8). Enable people to do their own spiritual work. Help them personalize and live out their identity as children of God.

It is the will of God for every Christian to walk in the freedom of our salvation through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and in the love of the Father. Satan seeks to fool Christians into thinking that he has authority to boss us around. He doesn't! Stop giving the world, the flesh and the devil any opportunity to defeat us. Follow Galatians 5:1 and live free from sin and Satan!