

Know Your Spiritual Enemy

Daniel 10:12-13; 2 Corinthians 2:11

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Often in churches, when the subject of the unseen, spiritual world is discussed, the focus is upon the work of Satan and his fallen angels, but little is said about the work of God's mighty, holy angels in doing His will to protect and care for God's people and to restrain and battle evil doers (whether seen or unseen).

We may only think of God Himself being the One who protects us, cares for us, and restrains evil, but Scripture tells us that God uses His mighty angels to carry out His will in the world, church, family, and in our lives. God intends this truth to be a great encouragement to us that there are innumerable, unseen warriors for the Lord that accompany us day and night. Though the enemies of darkness may appear overwhelming in the nation, government, culture, and even in churches, they are no match to Jesus Christ who has already overcome them through His death and resurrection and no match to His mighty angels.

We need not panic when we see the evil works of the devil all around us expressed in false religions and blasphemy, tyranny in trampling upon our God-given rights, hatred of divine institutions (marriage, church, and civil government), sexual perversions of every kind (not hidden behind closed doors, but publicly displayed), murder of the unborn, mutilation and trafficking of children, mass murders, persecution, wars and the list goes on. We are tempted by the enemy to think that these wicked forces are insurmountable and to give up, to surrender, because it is hopeless to fight against such powerful enemies. But that is a lie of the father of lies—Satan. My hope is that over the next several sermons that we might understand that our God, His angels, and the spiritual resources that we have been graciously given are far more powerful and efficient in overcoming evil than anything the devil can bring against us.

Ignorance of this spiritual battle on our parts plays into the plan of the devil to discourage us, to accuse us, to deceive us, and to oppress us. By God's grace, let's dispel some of that ignorance today. Over the next three weeks, we will consider: (1) Know Your Spiritual Enemy; (2) Know Your Spiritual Enemy's Tactics; (3) Know the Resources God Has Given to You to Overcome Your Spiritual Enemy.

I. Review

A. This is a sermon that follows from the previous sermon which introduced a spiritual battle between God's holy angels (Gabriel and Michael) and a fallen angel, the "prince of Persia" (Daniel 10:12-13).

B. As we considered those verses, we saw a battle in the unseen world to influence King Cyrus either to show his disfavor to the Jews in hindering the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem (through the Samaritans in Ezra 4:4) or to show his favor to the Jews in supporting the work of rebuilding the temple.

1. This was a battle about which we would have known nothing if not revealed here for us (because it was a very real yet unseen battle in the spiritual world).

2. Though we considered briefly in that sermon the spiritual warfare that rages between Christ's angels and Satan's demons in seeking to influence kings and nations, let us consider this very real spiritual battle more personally in our personal lives as Christians.

II. Know Your Spiritual Enemy

A. I am not addressing this spiritual battle to frighten anyone, but rather to expose the enemy of our souls whose greatest weapon against us is our ignorance of his deception, lying, and hiding in the background while tempting us by the pleasures of this world and lusts of the flesh.

1. We tend to focus primarily upon that satanic activity (and it's very real) in demonic

possession, mass murders, the sexual trafficking of children, and the tyranny of leaders in violently persecuting Christians for their faith in Jesus Christ. But the more common exercise of satanic power in this world is by means of daily temptations to follow him rather than to follow Christ.

2. The adversary knows us (by way of his scouting report). If we know little about him, we are at a decided disadvantage from the outset. We are warned in Scripture that our ignorance of our spiritual enemy will give him an advantage in our lives (2 Corinthians 2:11).

B. The most common names given to this enemy in Scripture.

1. "Satan" means adversary. His whole identity/mission is to oppose God, His will, and His saints. This name is used in the Old Testament several times (1 Chronicles 21:1—"provoked David to number Israel"; Job 1:6ff—he stood against God and God's servant Job; Zechariah 3:1ff—in a vision, Satan stood beside Joshua, the high priest, to resist him before the Lord). "Satan" is also used 34 times in the New Testament.

2. "Devil" means slanderer/false accuser. He is called "the accuser of the brethren" (Revelation 12:10). "Devil" as a name for Satan does not appear in the Old Testament, but is used 57 times in the New Testament.

3. Satan is also called "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4)—not by right, but by the majority of people that are deluded by him and follow him. He is the false god behind all of the false religions of the world. In fact, the sacrifices of pagans to their false gods were really worship offered to "devils" (Deuteronomy 32:16-17; 1 Corinthians 10:20). The pagans thought they were worshiping their gods, but it was devils they worshipped (so it is today). That is a great satanic delusion.

4. The devil is also called "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2) because he is the acknowledged chief ruler among these spiritual enemies of God in the unseen world.

C. What else should we know about this spiritual enemy?

1. Satan and his demon forces were originally created holy, but fell due to pride (1 Timothy 3:6). Jesus said that hell was prepared for the devil and his angels after their fall (Matthew 25:41). Those who follow the devil (rather than coming to Jesus Christ alone by faith alone) will eventually join the demonic hosts in that eternal place of torment.

2. According to Holy Scripture, Satan and his fallen angels are our CHIEF adversaries as Christians in this world rather than that which we see with our natural eyes in wicked and tyrannical rulers, in depraved and perverse acts, or in false religion (Ephesians 6:12). I certainly am not denying there are many earthly enemies to Jesus Christ and to biblical Christianity, but Scripture teaches they are not our CHIEF enemies. It is so important that we clearly understand the true nature of this battle on earth with the powers of darkness is not a fleshly battle (a political battle, civil battle, legislative battle), but is chiefly a spiritual battle (not that we should avoid all lawful means to bring reformation in the civil, ecclesiastical, and familial realms). But if we focus our energy supremely in what we only see, Satan's kingdom advances on earth because we are fighting a spiritual battle with carnal weapons.

3. Satan and his demons are powerful, but limited in power—God is omnipotent. He did not create God; God created him. He can only do what God permits him to do. Satan is like a dog on a leash that can only do what his master allows him to do (Job, Peter, Paul and the messenger of Satan). God uses Satan to bring judgment upon nations and people who rebel against him (Revelation 9:11—the Muslim invasion of many nations was the work of Satan). The devil and his wicked forces cannot change a person's heart and will—only God can do that. They work by influence to gain a person's consent to their temptation. Even demon possession is the result of people consenting to the influence of demons (like the driver that is high and runs his car into another car—that influence was consensual and led to being under the control of that substance). We are always responsible for our own sins. We cannot use the excuse, "the devil made me do it."

4. Satan and his cohorts are knowledgeable, but limited in knowledge—God is omniscient (Psalm 147:5). Satan only knows what he sees and hears or what is revealed to him. He cannot read our

thoughts—only God searches the heart (Psalm 139:23-24). They observe the sins and weaknesses of our speech and conduct, and their temptations are set before us by way of suggestions to us through the pleasures of the world and the lusts of the flesh. His suggestions are stronger than those of mere humans because he knows our weaknesses better than any mere human being. Satan does not know the future—he guesses and seeks then to bring events to pass based upon his guess (that is why his prophets fail). He may know the future by what is revealed in Scripture.

5. Satan and his wicked hosts are throughout the world, but are not omnipresent—God transcends all space and beyond (1 Kings 8:27). Like the holy angels of the Lord that are sent to do His will, so must the demonic forces be sent on their evil missions to a particular location.

6. Satan (like all created spirits—both good and fallen) does not grow physically weary or tired. He is relentless in pursuing his evil goals. He is single-minded and completely sold out to do evil. It's one thing to face an enemy that becomes weary and needs rest due to physical limitations, but this spiritual enemy never sleeps and is always plotting and planning how to bring destruction to man and to the divine institutions of God; how to pervert the truth of Christ in order to deceive; how to set temptations especially before Christians to bring us to discouragement, hopelessness, and to make us ineffective in our lives, families, jobs, and church. Let us not forget that God never slumbers or sleeps (Psalm 121:3), nor do His holy angels whom He sends to help and strengthen us (just as God's angel touched Daniel and lifted him up).

7. In facing such a committed enemy, ought this not to move us to strive all the more to be wholly committed to Jesus (Romans 12:1-2)? Knowing this about my enemy makes me to desire to lean more upon Christ and His mercy/grace, to commune more with Him in prayer, to read and commit to memory more of His Word that I might be strengthened and might battle the enemy with the sword of the Spirit, and might delight to walk in obedience to His holy commandments.

8. I make these points not to build up the enemy or to make the enemy seem invincible (because they are not), but to make sure we don't underestimate the enemy. That is another way that he gains an advantage in our lives—if we hardly consider him at all.

II. Application

A. We do not read in the Old Testament of explicit demonic possession in Israel (though demonic activity was at work). However, when we come to the New Testament, it is one of the miraculous signs and wonders that pointed to Jesus being the Messiah—His power and authority over the devil and his demons (Matthew 12:28). At times, the demons came out with violence and with a loud voice (Mark 1:26; Matthew 8:29). Why? It was an evidence that they did not want to come out, but had to submit to the supreme authority and power of Jesus Christ (under whose feet they were cast). God brought forth the abundance of demonic possession at that time to make clear that Satan and all his hosts were subject and under His supreme control. He was King of kings. Even Satan's attempt to destroy Christ on the cross was turned against him to seal his doom through Christ's sacrificial death and bodily resurrection (Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14).

B. We have a formidable enemy, but we have an invincible and blessed Christ who has delivered us out of Satan's kingdom into the safety and blessedness of His glorious kingdom. We are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us (Romans 8:37-39). Satan can roar like a lion and can tempt us, but we are now and or all eternity held safe near the loving heart and in the almighty hand of Christ our King who has already defeated the devil and all his wicked forces (John 10:10).

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