8-18-19

Ephesians 6:10-13

Last week, we took a look at the Christian doctrine concerning satan and demons. They are beings that God created who were originally good angels. In his pride, satan rebelled against God and convinced a third of the other angels to follow him. Satan and the demons are actual individual beings, they are not merely describing some sort of force or idea. They are very active in the world today; however, they are restrained by God. Satan and those with him have an absolute and unending hatred for God and their whole objective is to destroy anything He has made.

While God does restrain these evil beings, we still have to deal with them. That is why Paul tells us to stand and tells us to put on the whole armor of God. We, as Christians, are engaged in war; we are engaged in a very serious war and it is best for us to understand that it will continue until our death. The enemy does not give up and he will not stop. We cannot give him any leeway because he is absolutely merciless and he will kick us when we are down. To try to ignore satan is a very dangerous way to live life; furthermore, we are called to this battle for the glory of God and to ignore satan is to go against the will of God.

We might ask, “Why do we need this armor?” Satan and his forces do attack us. As Paul mentions, he has his schemes or his wiles. We need different armors for different attacks and to protect different parts of our soul and we also need a weapon. All of this is spiritual, all of this is supernatural. All of this is very real. Once we become Christians, satan has lost our soul, he can’t get it back. However, he can try to interfere with our lives so that our God-given ministries will be diminished or neutralized. This can cost others their soul, or weaken the church. We must be strong in the Lord and put on all the armor He provides for us; daily.

Along with understanding where satan is coming from and where he is going, we need to be aware of his tactics or his schemes. As we read through the Bible, we can learn the different ways he has of attacking us. The Bible is very straight forward about failings of God’s people and we can learn from these.

Make no mistake that we undergo spiritual attack, simply because we are Christians. Jesus warned us in

Matthew 10:25

It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more *will they malign* the members of his household!

The head of our house is Jesus and we are the members of His household. Jesus was accused of working with the devil, of being evil. We can expect the same. The thing is, that these people making the accusations are being driven by satan. Satan is the god of this world. We see this from 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving

Because satan has blinded the minds of these people, they think they are free, but they are slaves of satan. And satan will use them against God’s people. And this is why we are told that our battle is not against flesh and blood. The evil spirits are the ones driving the people who give us problems; the evil spirits are the ones driving the people who demand laws and policies that are against God. Yes, we must deal with the people, but we need to understand that they are driven by the most horrible of masters.

Have you ever had somebody, just out of the blue, give you problems? They don’t know anything about you or you them; yet they cause you grief. The demons know that you are a Christian, and they will set the other person in a mood to be against you. That is what is happening; and that is one of the tactics of satan. He will use non-believers to get in the way of your ministry; or to dishearten you; or distract you.

We must never make the mistake of thinking that satan is not intelligent; he is smarter than any of us and he has had thousands of years to learn about us and to practice his deceit. Subtlety or craftiness is one of his main weapons and he uses it with great skill. Demons are capable of putting ideas into our minds and we need to work on discerning these ideas and getting rid of them. We first learn of this tactic in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:1

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?”

In this way, satan got Eve to take her focus off God and every good thing He had given and focus on the one thing she was to stay away from. He also brought to her mind the very idea of questioning God; something that would have never come to her naturally. He didn’t use a direct challenge; it was very indirect. He tried the same thing on Jesus during the temptation in the desert. In two of the three temptations, satan began with “If You are the Son of God”. What a subtle challenge! And he will do the same to us; we must be ready.

Jesus told us something of satan’s character in John 8:44. He tells us that satan “does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” We cannot believe satan or his demons, they lie. We can again find our first example of this in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:2-4

The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die!

“You surely will not die!” What a bold-faced lie. And we know that she did die. In sin, her spirit suffered separation from God and died. Her body did likewise some time later. And through this lie we all suffer the same consequence. We see his lies again in the temptation of Jesus when he quoted Scripture. The words he quoted were true, but he had them out of context and misapplied; coming from his mouth they were a lie. We must know our Bible so that we don’t fall for this kind of deceit.

Jesus warns us of people who are energized by satan.

Matthew 24:24

For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

These false Christs and prophets are liars and we know from Scripture that they will deceive many. We can look around our society and the world and see that they have arisen and have deceived many. These people do what satan tried with Christ, they will quote Scripture, but they will twist it and misapply it. They are simply following their god; the god of this world.

This Scripture also introduces us to another of satan’s tactics: signs and wonders. Whether by trickery or actual power, satan can perform miracles. These must be really great wonders if they come close to deceiving the elect of God. We know from the Bible that angels have the ability to simply appear, even in closed rooms; we have also read that they can ascend to heaven in smoke from a fire. If the angels have this power, most likely satan and the demons have it too. Revelation tells us that satan will give great power to perform wonders to the false prophet. Even fire coming down from heaven and animation to a statue of the beast.

Again, we need to know our Bibles. Anyone claiming to be Christ is lying. The Bible tells us that when Jesus comes back, it will be very bright, very loud, and all the world will see it when it happens. False prophets and teachers will twist Scripture. It can be very difficult to detect where the twisting takes place; but once it is discovered, the false teacher must be treated as such and removed from the church. Also, it doesn’t matter how wonderful or miraculous something might be, if the person goes against Scripture, they are of satan.

If satan and his demons and the people they control always presented themselves as the monsters they are, it would be easy to spot them. But Paul gives us a warning in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

When satan is working through someone while disguised as an angel of light, they can be very difficult to spot. In this verse, the word “deeds” is very important. Eventually, over time, these people will be distinguished by their actions. It will become evident that their lives do not match what they say. This is why it is so important to avoid giving a new person a leadership role in a church. Plenty of time must be given for their true character to come through.

We have been looking at satan’s methods of subtly, craftiness, and trickery; but as Peter tells us in 1 Peter 5:8

Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Sometimes, God does allow satan to unleash direct physical attack, which he is more than happy to do. Jesus also told us in John 8:44 that satan was a murder from the beginning. The classic Biblical account of this type of attack is in the book of Job. Once given permission, satan incited a group of Sabeans to attack Job’s herds, taking his oxen and donkeys and slaying the servants. He also brought fire down from the sky to destroy Job’s sheep and kill the shepherds attending them. Next, satan caused the Chaldeans to steal his camels and kill those who tended them. Finally, satan caused a powerful wind to collapse the house his ten children were in, killing them.

Because all these things didn’t cause Job to turn against God, satan was allowed to cause boils to break out all over his body. While in pain and misery, the devil gave his wife the idea to tell him to curse God and die. Meanwhile, Job’s three friends showed up to comfort him by accusing him of wrongdoing. Of course, satan is the accuser.

What we see here is the power that satan can have regarding nature, disease, and influence over people. We can have times like these; it just seems that one thing after another goes wrong. During these times, we must continue to cling to God; because He has allowed it for some good reason. During suffering is a good time to examine our lives; it is a time for reflection to make sure that we are living as Christians. It may be that, like Job, we are living righteous lives and these things are taking place for God’s glory and for our future blessing. It may be that God is showing us something we need to change. Either way, we bless God for His loving care.

These things should give us some idea of the power of satan and the forces we are dealing with. We should also be humbled and know that our own strength is no match for him; we must be fully dependent on the Lord. That is why we are told to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might”. But in that strength, we are to “put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand”. God pits us against an adversary that we have no chance against; but He provides the strength and the equipment for us to be victorious. All is to His glory.

Prayer

Lord God, we are amazed by You. You have placed us in the midst of enemy territory against a foe that is too powerful for us. Yet, the victory is already ours. It is ours because of the work of Your precious Son, Jesus Christ.

He has defeated the enemy; satan is beaten. Jesus has taken the sting out of satan’s most formidable weapon; death. We no longer need fear death, because it is now simply the doorway to eternal life with You.

We thank You that You have counted us worthy to fight in Your army. We admit that our victory is entirely by Your strength and by the spiritual armor that You provide. We ask that You continue to protect us and give us strength that we may endure to the end, so that You receive glory, to the shame of the powers of darkness.

We pray this in the powerful name of Jesus

Amen