

Spiritual Warfare

Over the past few weeks Pastor Dave and I have had a bit of an interim time period before beginning our next big study, and during this time we've celebrated the Lord's supper together and have bounced around through Psalms and Proverbs, and I had full intention of doing a "Taste of Proverbs" Part 2 this morning, but I felt strongly that I instead needed to go a completely different direction today, and teach a little on the subject of spiritual warfare. Now for some, this topic might sound a little scary, and if that's the case, then you're in the right place- because better understanding a subject typically will make it a little less scary. Today we're going pretty deep, right into the thick of a pretty crazy subject that the Bible speaks on, but my hope is that by the end of this morning's service, we'll all have a better understanding of what has, is, and will be taking place behind the scenes in the spiritual realm, and we'll be able to leave here with some tools and understanding that will better equip us for spiritual victories in our lives.

Ephesians chapter 6 is often referred to when studying spiritual warfare, and in that chapter Paul describes the armor of God. Paul gives an illustration of a Roman soldier, describing a belt of truth, a chest plate of righteousness, shoes of the gospel of peace, a shield of faith, helmet of salvation, sword of the Spirit. This passage is an amazing study, but we're not going to dive into the specifics of each piece mentioned this morning, but rather I want to bring your attention to what is said right before each piece of armor is described. In Ephesians 6, verse 11, it says to put on the full armor of God, and then in **verse 12** it says this...

This is significant what is being said here. In this day, it's very easy to quickly put the blame for the troubles of this world on bad *people*- whether that's individuals, organizations, rogue military forces, or other nation states. And what this verse is telling us, is that mankind's

struggle is way more *spiritual* than physical. Yes, there are bad actors in the world- individuals doing bad things, governments doing bad things- but the real villains are not people, but rather spiritual beings- spiritual rulers, powers, dark evil forces that are operating behind the scenes in a realm that is not visible with physical eyes.

Now, teaching on this subject is not easy, there's a lot we don't know, and there's not really one specific place in the Bible to turn to in order to better educate ourselves on this subject, but rather there's little pieces to the puzzle that are spread throughout scripture that can be used to paint a picture in order to help us better understand. And what I'd like to do, is to quickly walk through and point out some of these places, and attempt to tie them together in order for us to better understand some of the historical spiritual realities and boundaries God has set up, and then I want to give us some practical application tools to use in conjunction with our better understanding of the spiritual realm. Before we jump in though, I want to give credit to the late, Dr. Michael Heiser, who was a very brilliant theologian who spent a lot of his life pointing out and teaching on the connections I'm going to present to you today.

In our recent study through the book of Revelation, we read through the descriptions of God's throne room, in which are described other spiritual beings of authority. We understand that God, Yahweh, is the ultimate, supreme creator of all and that He has no equal, but it is apparent in scripture that there are other created, powerful, spiritual beings that interact with God. Obviously there are angels mentioned throughout the Bible, who appear to be mighty warrior messengers serving God, and Satan who is an evil spiritual entity, but then we also have something described as the "gods" and "sons of God." Now, before I make anyone nervous, I want to state very clearly right now that we believe in Jesus *the* son of God, and that Jesus *is* God revealed to the world in human flesh, and He is the ultimate spiritual ruler of this

world, who will be returning to set up His kingdom rule, to save His bride the church and judge those who reject Him. So with that being said, there seems to be something different being referred to when the Bible says the phrase “sons of god.”

For instance, in Genesis 6, we are told that the “sons of God” came down and took wives from humankind. I’ll come back to this passage, as it’s pretty critical to this subject, but we also have in the book of **Job**, **chapter 1 verse 6** stating that the “sons of God” came to present themselves before the LORD, and then **Job 38:7** says that during creation, when the stars were made, the “sons of God” shouted for joy. Psalm 86 exalts the Lord above the other “gods.” (**86:8**) In Daniel 3, the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, King Nebuchadnezzar looks into the fiery furnace and recognizes that there is a fourth entity walking around, but it is obviously different than the 3 humans he threw in there- he describes this 4th as “like a son of the gods.” (**Dan. 3:25**) Now, it’s not super clear if angels are separate entities from the “sons of god,” or if perhaps they are one in the same and there are a few different ways the Bible describes them; but either way, we have to take notice that there are other powerful, ruling beings that are of lesser ranking/status/power than Yahweh the creator God revealed to mankind through the name Jesus Christ.

With this understanding, we can now revisit Genesis 6. There it is said that these lesser ruling beings took wives from mankind, and that the result was some sort of hybrid race- the Nephilim, giants. “Naphal” is the Hebrew verb for “to fall,” and “iim” is just the Hebrew plural indicator of the word. So Nephilim means the fallen ones, or, it *could mean* “the ones who make others fall.” There is a third possibility as well, there’s an Aramaic word that is very close to this that translates as “giant” so perhaps this word isn’t even Hebrew but maybe it was borrowed from Aramaic. And the passage indicates, in **verse 4**, that this hybrid race of people were the mighty men, men of renown. It seems

they were so huge, so strong, so powerful, they became legends, perhaps these Nephilim were even the source from which other religions and mythological tales were birthed.

Now, if we keep reading in Genesis 6, we see that right after the mention of this hybrid species, right after the description of the race of mankind becoming corrupted- it goes on to say that this eventually led to most all of humanity- the whole world becoming corrupted. And the Lord grieved what the world had become, it says in verse 5 that "every intent of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually." (**Gen. 6:5**) The idea seems to be that this corrupt hybrid race of half angelic entity/half human was not able to be redeemed. Human DNA had become corrupted, the human race had turned fully evil with no ability to change- it seems that the substance of mankind had lost the ability to be able to express repentance and receive redemption. As a result, God was left with no other choice other than to wipe out the corruption and start over. But it says of Noah, **verse 9**, that he was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Now that phrase "blameless in his generation," can also, according to the Hebrew, be understood as pure, uncorrupted, without defect in his generations (plural). In other words, the meaning could very much be that Noah's ancestry did not contain any of the rebel "sons of god" DNA.

Ok, so you probably know the story, Noah builds the boat, God sends the flood, Noah and his family and a remnant of all the animal species are saved, and the rest of every living thing is wiped away. When we get to the New Testament, we find verses referencing this flood event and referencing what happened spiritually with these rebellious angels/rebellious sons of God. **2 Peter 2** starting in verse 4 states "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, held for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the

world of the ungodly;” and the passage goes on to list other events, and culminates with the idea that God is just and will protect the righteous and punish the wicked.

Jude 1:6-7 states “And angels who did not keep their own domain but abandoned their proper dwelling place, *these* He has kept in eternal restraints under darkness for the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these *angels* indulged in sexual perversion and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.” What seems to be conveyed in the language of these 2 verses is that these angels, these sons of God- rebelled against God, and committed sexual perversion, mating with human kind, and as a result, God sent those angels who rebelled in this manner to a place of imprisonment, punishment, darkness, hell, where they are being held for judgement, that will occur later on as the book of Revelation describes.

Now, while those angels were held accountable and were imprisoned, the mixed race of Nephalim that they produced, died in the flood- but what the non-Biblical book of Enoch claims is that their soul composition is genetically different than a pure human soul, and so the result is that the souls of these Nephalim became what we now know as demons. The idea is that perhaps the human element part died, but the angel-spirit-being element lives on, and is constantly on the hunt for a new host to inhabit. This understanding gives us little more insight into some of the things Jesus said on this subject, for instance in **Matthew 12**, Jesus states “Now when the unclean spirit comes out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find *it*. **44** Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came’; and when it comes, it finds *it* unoccupied, swept, and put in order. **45** Then it goes and brings along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they come in and live there; and the last *condition* of that person

becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation.” That verse alone probably deserves a lot of explanation but, just real quickly, the basic idea is that a person who tries to get their life together without inviting Jesus in, could possibly end up in a worse state than before.

Now, this concept of a spiritual being having relations with a human and producing a hybrid giant species who looks for a new host when it's body dies, this concept did not end with the flood. Well after the flood, after the human race re-populated the earth, after God rescued the Israelites from Egypt through Moses, when they arrived at the land of Canaan, the land God wanted them to enter and live in- the spies sent there to scope out the land returned back and reported that there were giants living in the land- and they were terrified. Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who still had hope and faith that God would protect them against the evil giants of the land.

And God specifically told the Israelites to cleanse the land of these giants. That's always been a hard concept to understand, knowing God is loving, kind, patient, merciful- but if we understand that the “people” God said to eliminate weren't truly people, but rather an irrecoverable, genetically corrupted, hybrid species of angel and human- then it makes a little more sense that God would command such a thing. Years later, during David's reign as king over Israel, we see that this hybrid giant species was still not completely eradicated. It wasn't just Goliath, but other evil giants are mentioned as well in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles, described there as descendants of Rapha and descendants of Anakin. So it seems that, after the flood, fallen angels having human relations might have happened again, perhaps around the time of the tower of Babel, recorded in Genesis 11. And as I mentioned, when we arrive to the New Testament, it seems that evil spirits looking for hosts was quite common knowledge at that time, and a huge part of Jesus' ministry was casting out these evil spirits from people.

We quite often describe Jesus' life, death, resurrection as the act that cleanses us from our personal sin- our belief, trust, faith in Him is our response to God that allows for us to receive forgiveness, salvation, right relation with Him, eternal life. And this is all true, but the language of the New Testament conveys that what Jesus did was *more* than just this. What Jesus did was declare to these powers of darkness that the world would no longer be subjected to their rule- the corruption that had occurred would have a limit, Jesus came to free the captives, He announced the creation of a new kingdom nation in which He would rule, with His followers being co-heirs with Him. **Colossians 2:15** speaking of Jesus, His work on the cross, His resurrection- states it like this: "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display *of them*, having triumphed over them through Him."

It's because of Jesus that we don't need to fear evil spirits, or demonic activity- Jesus came to set the human race free from the heavenly powers that rebelled against God. He came to free and offer protection from the influence of corrupted souls and from the dark powers of Satan. And the book of Revelation celebrates the final victory that King Jesus will have in forever putting away the dark influences of this world- casting them into the Lake of Fire.

Now, after having explained a little bit of the history and possible theology behind evil spirits, and after declaring Jesus' mission of freeing us and protecting us from these spirits in the present, and one day in the future eternally doing away with them- I want to now give some real world application, some tools for us to use in our day to day lives in order to be victorious spiritually. But before doing so, I want to warn you that there are 2 responses that can be dangerous when considering this subject.

The first response that would be dangerous would be to get sucked into an overly curious fixation on the dark spiritual world. Some people, after studying this subject, start to look for demons under every rock. Anything that goes wrong in life, it gets blamed on demons. Any personal struggle gets blamed on Satan- the devil made me do it. There are those who get so caught up in the concepts of the rulers, the powers, the world forces of darkness, the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*- that they lose sight of Jesus, and instead of simply upholding the light of Jesus, they are out there trying to attack the darkness. This would not be an appropriate way to process this subject.

In contrast, there are others who downplay this subject, or feel like it's too scary or too "out there" to logically consider, so thus they ignore it and put the idea of evil spirits out of their mind- and that would be a dangerous response as well.

My hope is that none of us would react in either of these manners, but rather that we'd be strengthened and encouraged by the work and protection of Jesus, but at the same time be alert and recognize possible spiritual attacks that take place behind the scenes, and know then what to do in response. I also want to be clear that the protection Jesus offers in this realm, is available only to those who have received Him, who have received His forgiveness and are filled with His Spirit.

Now, in a crowd this size, perhaps there are some who have seen, or felt, or have experienced nightmares in which they realized there was perhaps an evil presence being encountered. Perhaps there are even some here or listening online who have seen a person who was possessed or under the heavy influence of a demon. Those instances, while they do occur, are probably a little bit more rare. But more often, it seems to me that demonic activity and today's spiritual warfare is a little bit more subtle. And I want to give you a few

different example categories to be aware of in which I think the enemy of our souls attempts to mess with us.

All of the attacks I'm about to mention, share in common the fact that they are lies. Deception is the number one attack, the number one method of operation for Satan, for fallen angels, for demons. The first attack on mankind, occurred successfully in getting Adam and Eve, to believe lies- that God was not good, that Satan could be trusted, that Satan had something better to offer than God, that Adam and Eve knew better than God. These were the deceptions presented that were received, acted upon, and that forever changed the lives of Adam and Eve and that forever changed the lives of their descendants. Jesus, in John 8, says that there is no truth in Satan and that He is a liar and the father of lies.

The first subtle, but common spiritual attack I want to mention is what I'll call 1.) *The inserted lie* Quite often this lie is presented as a thought that comes from nowhere, or a negative reoccurring statement that we are tempted to fixate on, that enters our mind, that if we were able to pause and look at scripture or pause and absorb the full reality of the situation, we would realize that the inserted thought is untrue. Lies like, God could never forgive you of such and such. Lies like, no one loves you, or you don't belong, or the Bible isn't true, or there's no hope for your marriage, or you'll never amount to anything good, or nothing will ever work out right for you, or no one will be hurt by that little hidden sin.

Now, if we want to win this particular type spiritual battle, there are 2 things that really help with this. First, we have to know what the Bible says. We have to know the truth so well, that we can recognize when we encounter a lie. If we don't spend time in God's word, if we don't internalize and apply what is written, then we're going to have a really hard time recognizing an attack presenting a lie. The second thing that

really helps against these attacks is having brothers and sisters in Christ with whom we can share the thoughts that are entering into our mind. Often these type attacks result in us wanting to pull away from good relationships- friends, family, church- when actually the best thing to do would be to get *closer* to the good healthy relationships we have. The good relationships you surround yourself with, if you are authentic and vulnerable with them, they will be able to quickly recognize better than you yourself, what is true and what isn't. When we are wrestling with something, often we are just too close to the situation to be able to see clearly, and we need someone on the outside who can look in and say- "no, that's not true, and here's why..." A spouse, a friend, a family member, a small group at church, a pastor- walking in close community with the body of Christ is a huge defense against the attack of an inserted lie. And here's a verse that is worth knowing and meditating on to keep in your arsenal, it's **Philippians 4:8** "...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

The second type of lying attack is perhaps even more subtle, and it is what I'll call 2.) *the busyness lie*. This attack manifests itself through us feeling that we are too busy, too overwhelmed, too stressed, too distracted to think about Jesus and His character, love, goodness, plans for us. Now granted, not every season of busyness is a direct demonic attack, often times we make ourselves too busy, and our own choices stress us out, but evil forces are surely pleased when we are distracted and too busy to set aside some time each day to absorb the truth of God's word, or to pray about our concerns, or to attend church and interact with other like-minded believers. We can live lives spiritually defeated by busyness, by believing the lie that there are lots of things way more important than our relationship with Jesus and more important than our relationship with His followers. It's probably worth mentioning that pornography fits this category, we believe the lie that we

need to fill our minds with entertainment, excitement, a rush, a thrill- only to end up later feeling deceived, distracted, defeated. It's not only pornography that can have this effect, but we can even get unhealthily sucked into the news or social media or scrolling through reels. I have 2 passages to give you as tools for your tool belt that combat this type of attack, the first is **Phillippians 4:6-7** "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." So we are to surrender the anxiety, the stress, the busyness, the distractions to God through prayer, from a place of a thankful heart to the Lord, and we are told the result will be that His peace will guard our hearts and minds in Jesus.

The second passage is this, **2 Corinthians 10:5, 6** "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage battle according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 *We are* destroying arguments and all arrogance raised against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ..."

The idea is that yes, we live in this world and are made of flesh- we have worldly concerns and things we have to deal with here- but the real battle is a spiritual one. May we not be deceived into getting overly focused and preoccupied with things that are only temporary in nature, while ignoring the really real things that will last for all eternity. And then personally I so much love the part that says "*we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." The wrong thought enters our mind- we give it over to Jesus as a prisoner. The lustful thought appears from nowhere- we arrest it and let Jesus take it away to jail. The lie that no one loves us enters in and we immediately pass it onto Jesus as a prisoner. We are to let our obedience to Jesus become the guard, the gatekeeper of our minds- taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Lastly, I want to mention a third attack, and that is 3.) *the something other than Jesus lie*. The Bible is very clear that Jesus is exclusive. In **John 14:6** Jesus says that He is the way, the truth, the life, and that no one comes to the Father [God] except through Him. Our spiritual enemy would love for us to think that either we don't need Jesus- perhaps there's another option- or that we need Jesus plus something else in order to be OK. I personally believe this will be an attack that will become more common the closer we get to the end times and Jesus' return. I think there will be attacks that attempt to diminish His value, or attacks aimed at convincing people that He is not enough, or attacks presenting that there are other ways to achieve peace, knowledge, unity, success, provision within humanity *apart from Him*. Even as I speak now, there is a conference being planned for this coming November, for world religious and government leaders to met with the goal of uniting the world's religions under one religion of moral code that was present during Noah's day. We are truly living in a time in which we need to be on guard against movements that seek spiritual unity apart from Christ. Here are two passages that combat this type of lying attack: **1 John 4:3-4** "and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and now it is already in the world. 4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world." Even as a young boy, I remember recalling from memory and reciting out loud, when I felt a spiritual attack "greater is He [Jesus] who is in me than he who is in the world." The second passage is from **Phillippians 2:9-11**, it says, speaking of Jesus, "For this reason also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and *that* every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." It's all about Jesus- because of Him we are considered part of God's chosen family, because of Him we are able to overcome this world- at the name of Jesus and at His name alone every

knee will bow- including the knees of those who are under the earth- every mouth will declare that He is King and Lord.

Now these passages aren't like magic phrases to recite when we sense a possible spiritual attack. But rather, we say them, even if we can't remember them all word for word- we say phrases from them, outloud, when feeling like we might be being attacked, because the idea is that the attack is rooted in a lie that we must recognize, and we must then replace that lie with truth- and these verses are some examples of truth that replace lies. By voicing the truth of these scriptures, we are saying no, I will not be defeated by a lie, I am holding on strong to the truth of God to whom I belong, to whom I place my faith. We resist the attack by filling our mind and our environment with truth from God's word, as **James 4:7** says- "Submit therefore to God. But resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James is telling us to submit to God- to agree with God, to acknowledge that He is right, to repent of our own ways and submit to His ways; and in contrast we are *not* to submit to the devil- to his lies, to his demons, to their temptations- no, we counter against them through resistance, and that evil has no other option but to thus go away. If we fill ourselves with God's truth, with His Spirit- then there won't be room for other spirits to take advantage of us.

Before we close the service, I want to encourage you with this month being October, to be sensitive and alert to the Holy Spirit concerning Halloween. Some Christians abstain from taking any part in the holiday due to it's association with the spirit realm and the occult, but if you do choose to participate in some way, please make sure that it is in a way that is honoring to the Lord and not honoring to powers that Christ has come to defeat.

I want to pray for us, but before I pray, I want to let you know of two resources that are available if you want to dig a little deeper into some of the things I've mentioned this morning. I have a copy of Dr. Michael

Heiser's book "The Unseen Realm," that I have available for anyone who might want to borrow it and read. This book covers a lot of the Biblical, theological history concerning this subject, so if you have interest in learning more of the "heady" possible theology behind the Nephilim and the fallen angels, then feel free to borrow this book, give it a read, and then bring it back for someone else to read. The second resource I have for you is a book called Bondage Breaker, by Neil Anderson, and this book covers in detail applicable, practical steps for real life, day to day victory over spiritual attacks. Again, feel free to borrow it, read it, and then bring it back to have available for someone else to read. If all 3 of the copies get taken, then also know that if you do a search for this book, there is a downloadable PDF copy on the internet that shouldn't be too difficult to find- if you need help with that, reach out to me and I will send you the PDF copy. Ok, let's pray.