

Christian Warfare

Ephesians 6:10-12

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:10-12 (NKJV)

This week, our study of these scriptures takes us “head on” into realms of existence that are far outside our own and far outside our ordinary means of understanding, realms where the laws of men and even the laws of physics fail to explain or even touch, realms where physical matter does not exist, a world where everything is “spirit”, realms where God and His angels move and have their being, but so also does satan and his fellow devils.

And out from that realm, those devils are able to wage war against we who remain in the flesh, you and me, they being able to see and hear and know all that we do, but us walking throughout our day blinded to their presence and unaware that they are all around us all of the time.

My question as we begin our study of these mysterious realms and of their inhabitants is, “Do you believe these words to be true and real, really real? And do you believe, as these words are telling us, that there is an actual war that is taking place in and around our body and soul every moment of every day”? It is my hope that through our studies of these scriptures over the next few weeks, God will reveal the truth of these mysteries to our searching souls.

So then, right now, what are we, what are you, what am I willing to receive from God’s Spirit regarding all of these mysterious things?

I often make reference to a song that was popular several years ago, “From A Distance”, by Bette Midler. It is a song that pictures God watching over the people and the activities of the earth from high above the heavens, “at a distance”. And one of the lines in the song speaks about how from that distance there is an appearance of “harmony” among the people. And they appear to be friends. But they are not!

While that song has some serious flaws in its concept of God, there is still some truth within its words. From a distance, there truly is an appearance of "harmony", with everyone going to and fro doing all of the many activities of personal and family life. But it is not at all the way it appears from a distance. Up close, we find that discord and disharmony fill the souls of men and women. Disputes and divisions abound. And there are wars and rumors of wars taking place everywhere on the earth.

The "real truth" behind those outward appearances is that the three enemies, "the world, the flesh and the devil" are all busily at work, rampaging throughout the hearts and lives and loves of every soul, with conditions always going from "bad to worse" at every turn.

And yes, I do know that my words paint a discouraging picture of our people, our world, and our ways of life, but I can see no other way to describe it. It is simply what we have in front of us every day, all throughout the day. There truly is a "warfare" taking place, a very real "warfare"!

And yes, most people who hear my words might say, "You're not really telling me much that I don't know. I have eyes and ears. I can clearly see the terrible mess the world is in".

And I know that to some measure, they can! There are so many, many miseries taking place throughout the world, it doesn't take a brilliant mind to see the trouble we are in. But are people really seeing the real problem? Or are they only seeing "from a distance"?

A common expression within these scriptures is, "He who has eyes to see, let him see". And also, the words, "seeing, they do not see, hearing, they do not hear". Those are expressions from God that describe a kind of "disconnect" that takes place between the "natural seeing eyes" and the "spiritually perceiving heart". In other words, people can see with their "natural eyes" all the many things taking place on the surface of daily life, the pain, the suffering, the ever-increasing absence of love and compassion, but they seem to be able to go no further. They cannot "see" with any depth of "spiritual understanding", what is really taking place. They live under the control of a confusing kind of "blindness", a "blindness" that is brought about by that special ever-present "darkness" we studied about in earlier chapters of this Book. There in verse 8 of chapter 5, we read . . .

8 for at one time you were darkness,

And in verse 11 of chapter 5

11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. (Ephesians 5:8, 11)

As we said in those earlier messages, the truth is this . . . that there really is a special kind of prevailing “darkness” that exists all throughout the earth, a strange, inexplicable condition that the ordinary mind is unable to comprehend. And that darkness is pervasive, covering over and enshrouding all the people and all the activities that take place all over the earth each day. And unlike the nighttime darkness that we are accustomed to, this special darkness actually has a “personality” all its own, a “nature” that seeks to reach into, and to invade and to dominate and to control everything that takes place within every heart and every soul that resides within that darkness, the things people think, the things they say and the things they do. And that nature, that personality is evil, so very evil, wickedness beyond our imagination flowing out from the spiritual rulers and powers and principalities and demonic spiritual hosts that live within that special darkness. Listen!

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(Ephesians 6:12)

Folks, think with me for the few minutes we have left today. And let's ask the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of our hearts so that we can begin to truly see and to “spiritually perceive” the presence and the evil works of these creatures of the “darkness”, how they live and interact with each of us as we go about our ordinary day.

Simply put, and as scary as it may sound, you and I must fully accept that there are untold horrors and terror and misery being brought upon humankind by those “spiritual hosts” within that darkness at every moment all throughout this natural world. But strangely, their presence, as they ply their evil arts, is utterly imperceptible to mankind's ordinary senses, and so they go virtually unnoticed. That darkness and the miseries that take place there in that darkness is simply the “normal” for all the people who live there. It is all that they know.

And there is but one “remedy” that can dispel that blindness and that darkness from the souls of men. It is the “Light of Christ” as He brings redeeming salvation to our dead and dying souls.

And at the first moment of our salvation, we would love for our Savior to just reach in and lift us out from that darkness, but He doesn't. As we studied another time in the "Parable of the Weeds", it is God's desire for us to remain here in amongst the people and all the daily entanglements of the darkness, bringing the special light that we have received from Christ into the lives of as many here in this dark world that will listen.

And folks, that especially includes those dear ones within our own families and friendships. Bringing that light has been the focus of our studies over these past few weeks as we have been learning about how we are to love and minister to our wives and husbands, to our children, and even to those in our places of work. And now here, immediately following those instructions, we see where God wants us to begin to open our eyes and to recognize the real source of all of the difficulties and miseries that continually work to derail our efforts of love and ministry within each of those relationships.

We see that it comes from within that "ever-present darkness". And here, God doesn't hold back to spare our senses or our fears or our lack of understanding, but brings us stern warning about the imminent danger that swirls all about us each day, sounding an alarm and saying aloud to us that it is never just those things we are able to "see" with our "natural eyes" that is taking place, but that the real source is from far deeper. It is a "warfare" that is guided and orchestrated from deep within the "spirit world" of satan and his demons, that same ancient foe who was cast out from heaven and now lives and controls most all the things that take place daily upon the earth. Listen again to these words from our passage.

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As God often does in His warnings, He here first speaks about His provision of protection, His special protective armor. But then, He immediately forges on ahead and tells us exactly what the underlying source is for all the evil that is taking place. It is the devil, satan, and his demons. Listen again!

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Again, none of this should be new to us. Each day, we are able to see more and more of the horrors of evil men, especially as we see the news reports about the Islamic terror groups. They are evil and vicious and vile and completely without conscience.

But folks, God is saying to us that though these acts of men seem as bad as bad can be, and yes, their “sin natures” are fully involved in their conduct, they are still only what you and I are able to see taking place on the surface. The real orchestration, the real underlying driving force behind those behaviors of men is really satan and his devils at work in their hearts. Yes, we see the faces of those real people, their hooded garb, and they are fully participating in those heinous acts and will be fully accountable for the things they do. But the real reality is they are being controlled by and driven to their heinous acts by the indwelling forces of demons.

Who are these “demons” spoken about here? We see in verse 11 that first of all, it is satan himself. Verse 11,

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (Ephesians 6:11)

This “devil” is “diabolos”, the “accuser” of mankind, satan himself. He is the “prince of demons”, their absolute leader, the one who rebelled against God and was cast to the earth.

Then, in verse 12 we read,

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These first words, “for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood”, are a stern reminder that we must not concentrate our anger, or our efforts of battle against “people”. I know that I have said this to us already, but I must say it again. Yes, we see real faces of real men as they mistreat us. Those really are real men in that ISIS garb who wield those knives to behead their victims. And it is hard not to simply see men and nothing else. And yes, those men are actually doing the

awful heinous acts, and God will judge them personally for their deeds. But we must understand that the real force that is driving them to do the things they do is satan and his demons. Verse 12 again . . .

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Here next are “principalities, powers, rulers of darkness and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” In most every place these “spiritual beings” are mentioned in the scriptures, they speak of demons. and the inference in their names also gives an understanding that there is rank and authority among their wretched hoards.

Just as there is order and rank and authority in all of the wretched strongholds of men, mid-east terror groups, and whole nations like Iran and Iraq and Afghanistan and Yemen and on and on; and just as there is order in rank and authority in street gangs and drug cartels, so also is there rank and authority and order in the demonic kingdom. And to make matters worse, those demons combine with and reside within the souls of those real people, influencing and driving them on to do all of their wretched deeds of misery.

Folks, please, if we understand nothing else from these words, may we fully understand that it is all “connected” together, the demons and people, inextricably linked in their behaviors and evil deeds.

One final thought before we close, the words “heavenly places”, or “high places”, or “heavenlies”, depending on how it is translated in your version of scriptures, this is a realm of God’s kingdom that resides all around each of us every day, right in front of our “unseeing eyes”. And I hope to say more about those heavenly places in our next message.

But again, the question that I will ask us several times over the next few weeks as we study this special passage . . . “Do you believe these words to be true and real, really real? And do you believe, as these words are telling us, that there is an actual war that is taking place in and around us every moment of every day”? I warn us, that unless and until we are willing to believe these words, our souls will remain in perilous danger.

Listen!

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