

Christian Warfare

Angels And Demons

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))

A curious thought has been occurring to me over these recent weeks as we have been studying through these scriptures about this other realm, the “spirit realm”, here called the “Heavenly Places”. I can’t help but observe how some of the most brilliant of minds of today, especially our scientists and physicists and mathematicians, struggle and go to such great lengths to explain away most things that cannot be seen with their eyes or detected with their instruments, while at the same time being willing to embrace such theories as the existence of “other dimensions”, those “other realms” of space and time that supposedly run parallel to our own physical dimension, supposedly having their own people and activities much like our own, just simply running on a different “timeline”.

The most prominent of those brilliant Physicists is Stephen Hawking, a man reputed by some to be the smartest man on the face of the earth today. Hawking freely expresses that he does not believe in God and that science offers a much more plausible explanation for the origins of the universe. And in his new book, “The Grand Design”, Stephen Hawking says that life in other dimensions (running parallel with our own) is very possible. He declares that the mathematics of the string theory predicts the existence of six extra spatial dimensions, “hidden” dimensions curled in tiny geometric shapes at every single point in our universe.

And again, along with Stephen Hawking, there are many other brilliant men and women, especially his followers, who believe the same theories.

So then, back to the curious thing that has been occurring to me, it is this . . . if the greatest of brilliant minds, such as, Stephen Hawking, who is a declared “unbeliever in God” can believe that there are other “dimensions” co-existing right alongside our own, why then do so many of us “born again believers” have such difficulty in believing these words that we have been studying about here?

Folks, belief in these “spirit realms” that are filled with angels and demons and “spirits of saints made perfect”, and having such places as “the city of the Living God”, is very little different from believing in those “other dimensions” that the godless scientists and physicists are so willing to believe in.

I myself am not able to comprehend such theories as the “string theory”, so I can’t know if those are good theories or not. But I have committed my soul to, by faith, believing in the truths of these scriptures. And these scriptures clearly tell me that those “other realms” spoken about here do really exist, and that they are filled with creatures and activities that, even though we can’t see them or know them through our natural senses, are nonetheless real as real can be.

So then, while I don’t believe in the “other dimensions” as put forward by these brilliant men, I do, very strongly, believe in the angels and demons who live and move and have their being in the “heavenly realms”, and further, that those angels and demons do, every moment, reach over into our natural realm and interact with us, with you and me. May I say this again so that there is no confusion about my words? I do not believe in those “other dimensions” as put forward by our physicists with all their “wisdom of the wise” knowledge. I am simply making a comparison, and asking why we “born again believers” find it so hard to believe in the simple truths that are being presented to us here in these scriptures.

Before we move on, may I point out another curious thing, a kind of “truism” that I would like for us to take note of in this “dichotomy of belief”. It is that at some point in all these considerations, both those brilliant physicists and we “less brilliant” Christian believers do actually meet on equal terms, that of simple “faith”. By that I mean that at some point as the mathematicians and physicists perform their many calculations, they will always hit a roadblock, at which point they can go no further with their computations. That is because the answers they are seeking are always just slightly out beyond their reach. And so, from that roadblock, they are forced into the position that we believers in God have already reached, and that is to “step off” the end of their calculations and go the rest of the way with “faith”, simple “faith”. Unfortunately their “faith” is not in God, but “faith” in their own theories, but it is still nonetheless a form of “faith”.

And it is a sad recompense for all their otherwise brilliant and hard sought-after efforts. Their searching might well gain them the whole world, but they will, in the process, forfeit their eternal souls. But again, I think it curious that everything that is believed ultimately is reduced down to “faith”, “faith” in something.

My question again for each of us who count ourselves as devout believers in Christ is this, “Are we ready to give up on our own obstinate ways and “by faith” accept and believe the truths that are being presented to us here in these words of our text that tell us that

12 . . . 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 6:12 (NKJV))

The warning coming out from these words is that unless we take the step of faith and begin taking these creatures and their influences and activities into account as we go about our daily lives, we will forever be fighting wrong battles with wrong people, always attributing our misfortunes to conspiracies and mistreatment by our government, or to the mean-spirits of our co-workers or our neighbors, or even our family members, while the real source of our troubles is coming out from a whole other place, those mysterious spiritual realms. Those words again . . .

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May I ask you . . . as you look around at the “goings on” in this world, is it easier for you to take the path of believing that our woes are simply coming out from the minds of ego-driven men, government leaders and politicians who are just self-centered and arrogant, or that our health problems are just random occurrences, or that people rob and hurt and try to kill us just because they are mean and greedy people.

Granted yes, all those things are most often very true. People do have big egos and they are mean and greedy. But these words here in the scriptures demand that we also ask ourselves, “is that all that is taking place, or are there perhaps some other underlying influences and provocations taking place that we had better consider?” Simply put, these scriptures tell us emphatically that yes, there is more, much more that is taking place.

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May I pause a moment and go back and remind us of a clearly given truth that must always be remembered as we study through these mystical concepts! It is that, it does not matter from whence the influence and provocation comes, whether it comes out from within a person’s own mind and soul as spoken of in James 1, or out from these “spirit realms” where the devil and his demons roam to and fro seeking whom they may

devour, or as usually is the case, from both at the same time, the result will always be that God will actually hold each and every person involved individually and personally accountable for their behaviors, and for each of their sins.

In other words, even if we at first are innocent and are then beguiled by satan into doing something wrong, we are still held personally accountable for our misdeeds. That was clearly demonstrated for us in the way that God dealt with Adam and Eve, and also with satan on the occasion of their sin. Yes, satan initiated the sin of Adam and Eve by tempting them to eat of the forbidden fruit. And for his sin of temptation, satan was held personally accountable by God; but so were Adam and Eve, each for their own sin. And that same accountability will be true as we consider these words before us here today in Ephesians 6; no matter the beginning source of our sin, each of us is held personally accountable for our own behavior.

And that is the reason for this special warning that God is graciously giving to us, a warning that things have not changed over these many millennia, that satan is still who he always has been, the “tempter”, the “accuser”, the “provoker of sin”. And that as we look into the faces of people, whether it be our friends, or our family members, or our national leaders, or a mugger on the street, or even an Arab terrorist, yes it is them who are doing their unkind and unholy deeds, but they are also being provoked, sometimes, perhaps even completely controlled by those principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the “Heavenly Places”.

Even as I was preparing this message, more Islamic terrorists were beheading more people there in those Islamic states. Yes, those terrorists are men and were exercising their own free will in their ungodly behavior, but I have no doubt that they were also being provoked, even controlled, from out of the “spirit realms” by the devil and his demons to do those awful things.

What do these scriptures tell us that those principalities and powers are able to do as they reach over from their realm into ours and wage their war against us? My best understanding comes from all that took place in the life of that dear saint, Job. There in the Book of Job, God reveals how He has given satan certain “freedoms” to interact with the people of our natural realm, and here specifically the man, Job. And from those scriptures, we can see that that interaction can be very, very severe.

But we also are able to see that God places limits on satan in the things he is allowed to do and the severity with which he can do his awful deeds of wickedness.

And may I pause for a moment and give this the special emphasis it needs. And that is that in all that we consider in this study, please, may we all understand that this battle is not between “equals”! Satan is not equal to God. Satan is simply another puny created being, powerful yes, but puny and insignificant when compared to God.

Here with Job, God is demonstrating how He allows satan and the other demons, the “spiritual hosts of wickedness” to reach into the life of Job and to bring misery and destruction in so many, many ways. Until these miseries began, Job had enjoyed great success, hedged about by God and protected from most all his enemies. But then when satan was “unleashed”, he and his fellow demons used all the weapons at their disposal to attack Job, first with the weather to blow down the houses of Job’s children and to kill all of them. Then satan sent hordes of robbers and thieves to kill Job’s servants and to steal all his animals. Then satan used the weather again and brought lightening down to destroy all of Job’s fields of crops. Then satan brought sores and boils and painful health suffering to Job. Then satan turned Job’s wife against him. And then, just as Job was hoping it would all end, three good friends who had come by to comfort him, suddenly turned against him and brought a seemingly unending tirade against his soul.

Folks, satan is clever. And he has so many, many weapons at this disposal. And he will use any and all of those weapons to try to defeat our souls, deaths in our families, and other kinds of family problems, financial difficulties and failures, severe health problems, problems in our marriages, and then good friends who desert us in our times of need.

Why does God allow satan and the spiritual forces of wickedness to attack and to hurt us? As difficult as it may be to accept, God does all of the things that He does “for our good.” And there are no “random” occurrences. God is very, very intentional with all that He does. And we are told in Psalm 119 that “God is good and He doeth good”. Everything He does is good!

Certainly, Job could not, while they were happening, see through the brokenness of his own condition to appreciate the things God was allowing to take place. But one thing did come through with Job. He stayed faithful to God and declared, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him”. And as a reward for his faithfulness, God restored, with abundance, most all that Job had lost.

Can we expect all the things that satan did to Job to come to us in the same way and with the same severity? Probably not! But Job’s circumstance is an example of all the things that satan is capable of as he plies his warfare against the people of God.

As for you and me, we really must be ready to face difficulties in this life. And yes, as warned about here, most all our suffering will be brought about by those demonic beings within those spiritual realms. Our family problems, our financial problems, our health problems, our relationship problems, our failures and corruption are not “random occurrences”. It is simply those demons doing what demons do. And they do their evil tasks well, breaking hearts and destroying relationships.

What can we do to respond to this battle that is being waged for our souls? Fortunately, behind the scenes, one of the things that God does to help us involves the angels that live there in those spiritual realms, good angels, angels sent to do battle on our behalf with the demonic forces of wickedness. Can we do as some of the popular contemporary songs suggest and call on “angels” to help us? No, we should not! But we can instead call on God for His help. And as we mentioned in an earlier message, we are assured in Hebrews 1:14 and in other scriptures like them that God will send His holy angels to our aid. Listen!

14 Are they (the angels) not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:14 (ESV))

And recall also the words of Psalm 34 . . .

7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. (Psalm 34:7 (ESV))

But while these angels do come to our aid, we must be careful to not get caught up in our dependence upon them. It is God and God alone who provides our real relief and protection from that spiritual warfare that is being waged against us. And the very best way to find relief and protection from those painful demons is to simply “submit ourselves to God, to “resist the devil” and to “draw as near to God as we can get” and those demons will flee. Listen!

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. (James 4:7-8 (NKJV))

And even more specifically, here also in our scripture passage, God tells us that the best remedy and protection available will come from our having “put on the whole armor of God”. Listen!

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. (Ephesians 6:10-11 (NKJV))

You and I are simply not able to do battle with the devil and his demons using our own power and wits. He is far more powerful and far more crafty than we can ever be. What we need to do is “put on” the protection of God.

Next week, we hope to begin to look at all the parts of that armor. And as we do, we will see the wonderful wisdom of God in the way that He provides protection for us as we respond to the war that is being waged against our soul. Listen as we close . . .

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