

11. The unseen warfare

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Many teens in America say they have had experiences that could only be described as supernatural or spiritual. For instance, seven million teens say they have encountered an angel, demon or some other supernatural being. More than two million teens say they have communicated with a dead person through medium practice. One-tenth have participated in a seance.

One out of 12 have tried to cast a spell or mix a magic potion. 30% have had their palm read, 27% have had their fortune told and 9% have consulted a psychic. Nearly two million youth claim they have psychic powers. Teens with few friends or undergoing intense stress are more likely than average to turn to witchcraft or psychic powers to cope with their feelings of vulnerability and insignificance.

Not just for teenagers in America, but also the majority of people in the world are interest in the occult and paranormal phenomena very much today. The Hollywood movie industry has certainly capitalized on this heightened curiosity, not to mention the numerous television programs, newspaper columns, magazine articles, video game manufacturers and book publishers that have hyped these topics as well.

Unfortunately, bits and pieces of the truth about the demonic world mixed with sensational stories and exaggerated remarks make many people to have a distorted understanding of the satanic realm.

The teaching of Scripture on this subject stands in stark contrast to the misinformation that is commonly accepted by many people, even the Christian believers. Some of the biblical data about demons is found in this chapter we are about to study are most profound.

A. VISION OF THE GLORIOUS MAN

Daniel 10:1-9 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar. The message was true, but the appointed time was long; and he understood the message, and had understanding of the vision. 2 In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. 3 I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. 4 Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that is, the Tigris, 5 I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz! 6 His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude. 7 And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. 8 Therefore I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength. 9 Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

The events recorded in Daniel 10 took place in 335 or 334 B.C. If Daniel was born around 620, he would have been in his mid-eighties during this period. We know that Cyrus, during his first official year as king, gave the Jewish exiles permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

While serving under Cyrus, Daniel received a message that foretold a “great conflict” involving the Jews and the nation of Israel. The prophet “understood the message”, and it apparently shook him up, because the text states that over a period of three weeks he mourned, fasted and neglected personal grooming in order to petition God in prayer.

In other words, he didn’t take a bath for three weeks. Whew, I bet he was smelly. A couple days ago, I had to mow the lawn in the the morning. My wife Karen wouldn’t come near me because I was so stinky from my sweat.

In v4-6, we find a description of this glorious man. It says, “His body was like beryl”. The Webster defines ‘beryl’ as “Transparent varieties in white, green, blue, yellow, or pink are valued as gems.” It sounds beautiful. Many biblical scholars think that this is noting that the description is remarkably similar to what John saw in Revelation 1:12-16.

But Daniel’s companion didn’t see the vision. However, they were terrified. This is like the latter instance of Saul on the road to Damascus, when his companions could not hear the same voice from heaven that he heard. These cases remind us that we can be close to the presence and power of God, yet miss the message through lack of spiritual perception..

B. THE PRAYER AND THE RESPONSE

Daniel 10:10-12 Suddenly, a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands. 11 And he said to me, “O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.” While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling. 12 Then he said to me, “Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.

I find five principles of prayer we should consider:

1) Believers’ prayers are immediately heard by God.

Prayer is not a therapeutic exercise to comfort one’s heart. It is our communication with Almighty God. God simply response our prayers according to His will.

Prayer doesn’t require poetic language, intelligent words or great oratorical skills. If God can hear a child’s simple and heart-felt prayer, He can hear anyone’s. We are the ones who think we shouldn’t pray out loud in front of others, because we don’t want to be embarrassed for whatever the reasons are. That is pride.

Like Daniel, we have immediate access to God through prayer. However, as the next verse points out, we will not always receive prompt replies to our petitions.

2) Demonic forces can delay answers to prayer.

Daniel 10:13-14 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. 14 Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come.”

Due to the heavy resistance from the prince of the kingdom of Persia. Obviously, this prince is not a human who tried to fight against the angel. It was a high ranking demon who was in charge of the kingdom of Persia.

Does this mean that God cannot respond to His believers' prayers because of the demonic forces? Absolutely not. That is what the Hollywood and satan want us to think.

No matter whatever kinds of tricks or resistances satan and his cohorts put out, our God can simply override them without any problem. However, God uses the demonic resistances that hinder His answers to the believers' prayers to bring out the godly characters in us.

Romans 5:3-5 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Another very important thing we must remember is that all the authority and powers the devil and his demons have are allowed by God for His purpose. There is not a thing they can do without God's permission.

Job 1:12 And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

As we read in this portion of the Scripture, there are ranks and hierarchies within the heavenly angels and demonic realms.

Ephesians 6:12 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.

Very little of unseen spiritual warfare is revealed to us and we should not try to know more than is revealed about it. Because the demons can take our eyes off from Jesus to a wildly imagined rabbit chase. They would do anything for us to take our attention away from our Lord Jesus.

3) Wrestling in prayer is exhausting work

Daniel 10:15 When he had spoken such words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless.

The spiritual battle believers wage can sometimes take a physical toll. Even so, we can readily agree that fatigue is a small price to pay for curbing evil and furthering good.

Romans 15:30 Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me

The Greek word for 'strive' is "sunagonizomai" where we get our English word 'agonize'. You and I are to agonize in prayer. Real prayer is agonizing. It is getting through the barriers to release spiritual power.

4) Following wearisome times of prayer, strength returns in extra measures

Daniel 10:16-18 And suddenly, one having the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to him who stood before me, "My lord, because of the vision my sorrows have overwhelmed me, and I have retained no strength. 17 For how can this servant of my lord talk

with you, my lord? As for me, no strength remains in me now, nor is any breath left in me.” 18 Then again, the one having the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we learn that angels are ministering spirits who are sent out by God to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation. Even Jesus Christ was strengthened by angels after going without food for forty days and being tempted in the wilderness. Today, the Lord still uses His heavenly ministers to encourage us in our walk with Him and to protect us in our fight against satanic powers.

5) Overcoming demonic forces is not a once-and-for-all matter

Daniel 10:19-21 And he said, “O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!” So when he spoke to me I was strengthened, and said, “Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.” 20 Then he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come. 21 But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince.

The angel who brought God’s answer to Daniel said he would be returning “to fight with the prince of Persia,” who would be succeeded or aided by another demon called “the prince of Greece”. However, this angelic messenger assured Daniel that he would not leave until he had explained the vision to him.

The conflict between God and Satan is still being fought today. Christ’s death on the cross has ensured Satan’s defeat, but it has not yet ended the war. However, we who are Christians have God’s promise that the ultimate victory over satanic powers is ours.

1 John 4:4 He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

In 2 Kings 6, we find a story that records an amazing incident in the life of another prophet – Elisha. This man of God was surrounded one night by a Syrian army that had been sent to capture him. Elisha’s servant saw this great military force when he went outside in the early morning hours. Struck by fear, he ran to Elisha and asked, “What shall we do?” The prophet’s response displayed insight that his servant did not possess: “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are them.”

C. THE THINGS TO REMEMBER

1) If we could see the invisible, we would be amazed at the presence of good and evil forces around us.

2) Even if we are not enabled to see the invisible, we should be encouraged by the invincible God; the Holy Spirit is within us.

3) What the devil is not

The devil is not a nobody. He exists and is engaged in an aggressive strategy of persuasion. He also is not a comic character. He isn’t a little imp that sits on your shoulder with horns and a pitchfork, dressed in red tights. Furthermore, he isn’t all-powerful like what the Hollywood movies try to show. His power is formidable but limited within the perimeter of God’s permission. His influence is pervasive but not omnipresent.

4) What the devil is

He truly is alive and well on planet earth. He is relentlessly at work, invisible, deceptive, and brilliant. Add serving under him is a power structure of demons ready to do his bidding. He is anything but amusing. His work is wicked. His strategies are sinister. But although he is the god of this world, he is limited in his authority. And as Christians, we have no reason to feel afraid, victimized, or intimidated.

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.
- *Edmund Burke*