

24. Satan and demons – Invisible enemies

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Do any of you remember Casper the Friendly Ghost? If you remember his first appearance, you just dated yourself, because his first appearance was in 1939. You can say that he is an old fart. As his name indicates, Casper is a ghost, but is quite personable in the comics, books, and movies where he appeared. Though Casper might have a cute nickname “the Friendly Ghost”, but the truth of all the ghosts is that they are demons in disguises who directly work for Satan himself.

In most cases the images of demons which we come across through books, movies, and comics are silly, funny, and not so scary. That is exactly what Satan and his cohort demons want people to think. They don't want people, especially Christian believers to think about them as real threats to their lives, nor do they want people to know about their true identity and what kind of havoc they cause behind the scene.

The devil and his demons are very real. Though we cannot see them with our physical eyes, that doesn't make them any less real. Right now, even as we are studying this particular subject, there are ferocious spiritual battles raging all around us – God's angels against Satan's demons, both powerful and active.

Last Sunday, we examined the purpose and work of God's angels in the believer's life. If you believe that God and His angels are real, you also must believe that Satan and his demons are very real and they have very clear objectives that were described by Jesus Christ Himself.

John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

That is what the devil and his demons want to do to you. They want to steal your joy in the Lord; to kill your testimony of Jesus Christ; and to destroy your faith in your Savior.

A. THE POWER AND LIMITATION OF SATAN AND HIS DEMONS

Our God is omnipotent which means all-powerful; omniscient, all-knowing; and omni-present, everywhere at the same time. But the devil and his demons are NOT in any of these. They are smart, but have limited knowledge; their power is limited; and they have to be one place at a time.

B. THE BEGINNING OF SATAN AND HIS DEMONS

Where did Satan actually come from? According to the Bible, Satan, formerly known as Lucifer was once a high ranking beautiful and powerful angel in heaven. But his pride got into his head. He wanted to be worshiped rather than worshiping the Lord God.

Ezekiel 28:15 You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you.

Isaiah 14:12-15 “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! 13 For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ 15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.

C. THE DEMONIC RANKS AND FILES

Contrary to how Hollywood portrays about the massive power of the devil, he is no match of our Almighty God. But he does have a very efficient and powerful demon force that is extremely well organized according to the Bible.

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against (1) principalities, against (2) powers, against the (3) rulers of the darkness of this age, against (4) spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Since the Bible is largely silent about its organization, we really don't need to know the inner workings of all the demonic powers.

D. WRONG THEOLOGIES REGARDING THE DEMONIC FORCES

Rather than sticking with what we can learn from the Bible, many Christian Bible teachers or pastors choose to come up with their own unbiblical theologies regarding the devil and his demons for the sake of sensationalism and jumping on the band wagon.

1) Territorial Spirit theology

In 1986, a Christian novel "This Present Darkness" by Frank E. Peretti hit the bookstores across the country by storm. It remained on the CBA top best sellers list for over 150 consecutive weeks after its release. It is a nice novel that makes Christian believers to be aware of the spiritual warfare around them.

From this book's influence to the American Christians, some charismatic theologians came up with 'Territorial Spirit' theology which insists that demons get to have certain geographical areas in the world to rule over. Yes, they pretty much made a theology out of a fiction novel.

2) Christian demon possession theology

In the NT, we read about individuals who are possessed by demons. Is it possible for a person to be possessed by a demon today? The thought of being possessed by demons would scare snot out of many people, especially believers of Jesus Christ since they know what demons can do.

To make the matter worse for many biblically ignorant believers, some wacky theologians came up with the idea of Christian demon possession theology.

If you are not a born-again believer, you are open game for the devil and his demons. You are a sitting duck with a bull's eye on your forehead. You have no protection against Satan. But if you are a born-again believer of Jesus Christ, you are His property. God has no competitor. No one can snatch any believer of Jesus out of His mighty hand.

John 10:28-29 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

Many charismatic denomination pastors claimed that they have been casting demons out of Christians in their regular church services. Some even made list of the demons that Christian believers were possessed by. Here are a few:

- Demon of junk food, demon of gluttony
- Demon of excessive talking (do ladies get this one more often???)

- Demon of disco – If you are possessed by this demon, you would get a strong desire to wear a white suit and sing Bee Gees songs.

Yes, as Christians, the demons can tempt us; harass us; even oppress us, but they cannot possess us or take control of us. Because we have the Holy Spirit who is God in us as the followers of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit does not have a “time share program” with demons in our hearts. Either you are altogether for God or for demons, not half and half.

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

Did you notice that this verse does not say, “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the other side of your heart.” Non- sense. There is a Chinese word for that kind of theology – Ding-dong Poo.

Does it mean that unbelievers can be possessed? Yes, the Bible has many examples of them, especially in the NT. If unbelievers dabble into “Dungeons and Dragons,” “Ouija boards,” astrology, horoscope, eastern philosophy, witchcraft, hypnosis, ever-so-popular vampire concept lately and doing mind- controlling drugs, all of those are the gateway to the demonic possession for them.

Concerning the devil and demons, there are two extremes that we must not get into:

- **We must avoid the tendency to see a demon behind every bush.**

Some believers think that every bad thing happens in their lives is done by demons. When they sin against the Lord, their typical line is “The devil made me do it.” Come on, get real.

If you have lustful thoughts or ungodly ideas, it is not that you are possessed by demons of lust or demons of deception. Rather it is your own flesh, your own carnal desires. People tend to put the blame on everyone else and everything else instead of accepting responsibility of their own sins. This can lead people to fanatical fear .

By putting the blame on demons for your sins, you are actually giving them the credit that they didn’t do. They are thoroughly delighted when believers do that, because it fans their pride.

- **We also must avoid treating the existence of demons with unbelief and mockery.**

The devil and his demons are not a figment of your imagination. This idea can lead people to a false sense of security.

3) Binding and reviling demons

Matthew 16:18-20 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

Some charismatic denomination Bible teachers took this portion of Scripture out of context and taught their congregation to bind demons and revile them by calling names. They claim that we can bind the devil’s power with our commands at our will and loose our wealth and health as we please. They are wrong .

This was a very familiar phrase to the Jews, because their rabbis often spoke of “binding and loosing,” that is meant to be “forbidding or permitting.”

Jesus did not give His apostles and disciples the authority to make binding decisions regarding anything on earth that had not already been decreed in heaven. This should give them confidence in what they are doing. In other words, Jesus did not say that God would obey what we do on earth, but that we should do on earth whatever God had already planned. The church does not get man's will done in heaven, rather it obeys God's will on earth.

Jude 9 Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

According to this account, Michael the archangel was sent to bury Moses' body, but the devil intercepted him, claiming the body was his. Instead of showing disrespect or fight against Lucifer, Michael left the matter with the Judge of all creatures, by saying, "The Lord rebuke you."

Notice that Michael is battling in God's authority, not his own. And if he does this, how much more should we! Some Christians get drunk on the doctrine of "the believer's authority" and they order demons around like a lap dog – or speak of him in comical and mocking terms. Follow Michael's example!

Saying, "I bind you demons in the name of Jesus," or reviling them is nothing more than waste of your time. If you have that much energy and time, pray to the Lord in faith that He would fight the battle for you.

I know this is a hard pill to swallow to some people, but we must follow the Word of God, not men's made-up doctrines or mysticism in the church.

E. DEMONIC ACTIVITY WILL INCREASE

1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons
As this Scripture says, in the last days, demonic activity will be commonplace and intensified as you can see what is happening around this country. The devil and his demons know that their number is almost up. Their objective is to take as many people to hell with them as possible, because they know that it would hurt the heart of God.

F. JESUS IS OUR DEFENSE

So do we need to be worried sick about demonic activities around us? No, please keep in mind that Jesus has already won over Satan on the cross of Calvary. He dealt the decisive blow against the devil and his demons when Jesus cried out three words – "It is finished." The Lord Jesus set the captives free from the bondage of Satan and death.

Colossians 2:15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

If you are a born-again believer, you don't have to run around in fear of what the devil is going to do against you. Your eternal life is absolutely secure in Him.

Instead of looking for the devil, seek for the Lord through the Word of God; instead of looking for the identity of the antichrist, seek Jesus Christ; instead of looking for the adversary – the devil and demons, seek your Advocate. Jesus is our Advocate and Defense Attorney.

G. APPLICATIONS

- 1) The devil and his demons should not be ignored, but at the same time we should not be fearful of them either. Because our God can protect us and keep us safe.

- 2) Do not fall for men's false theologies regarding demons, or get into time-wasting mysticism of the church. Spend your time to know Jesus, not satan and his demons.