

MBC - 2/25/2018 - Pastor Doug Thompson  
**Spiritual Warfare pt. 1**  
**“Who Are We Up Against?”**  
 Ephesians 6:10-12

- Ephesians 6:10-12 <sup>10</sup>Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

When Paul says “finally,” he isn’t just signaling that he’s ending his letter, he’s getting ready to say something of monumental importance. Something we can’t miss or we could end up in a spiritual disaster. He has just described the Christian life as a walk worthy of Christ, a walk in unity with other believers, a walk in love, and a Spirit-filled walk - but finally, he says, this life must be lived out in the context of fierce, relentless spiritual battle against Satan and his demons. The Christian walk is a *warfare walk*.

And my friends this war is very real and it is all around us:

- Nikolas Cruz said that demon voices inside his head told him how to carry out his shooting and murder 17 people. According to Scripture, that absolutely could have happened, and according to Scripture, demons can even put thoughts in your head - and mine! I’ll show you that in a minute.
- When people see what they think are spirits of the dead - when they get messages from departed loved ones telling them things no one else could possibly know - demons could know! And I believe that is demonic impersonation and deception.
- What about UFO’s and extraterrestrials and alien abductions? I mean, I hope you are keeping up on the X-Files! Most of it is baloney, but I believe some of it is real and again, it is demonic deception.
- When unbelievers have near-death-experiences and go to a place of love and light, and see all their departed loved ones, and come back to tell us that this is what awaits us all - that is evil, cruel demonic deception. That is *not* what awaits a person who dies in his or her sins. But Satan would love for people to think so - who needs Jesus if that is true?

Satan and his demons didn’t retire after the New Testament was written! Right now they are inflicting physical harm, even death on people. Sucking people into horrible addictions; causing depression and suicide; spreading false doctrine and keeping people in spiritual darkness; splitting churches; destroying ministries. And maybe you’ve heard me tell the story that several years ago more than one person saw and heard an unknown being in the Thompson house.

I have one question for you this morning: “*Who ya gonna call?*”

Well I’ve got the answer for you this morning, and it’s in 1 Jn.4:4: “*He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world!*” Jesus Christ has already defeated Satan and his demons. He crushed the Serpent’s head on the Cross. And if you are a Christian—*if you are a Christian*—you need not fear Satan and his demons, but you *must* strenuously resist them. And that be-

gins with understanding who they are and what they are doing on planet earth. That's what we're going to look at this morning.

## I. Kingdoms in conflict.

Turn with me to—

- Matthew 12:26 [Jesus was casting demons out of people - even His enemies couldn't deny it, but they attributed what He did to Satan. This was His answer:] <sup>26</sup>And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? [What I want you to see is that there is a kingdom of Satan—and look, two verses later—]
- Matthew 12:28 <sup>28</sup>But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

There is a kingdom of Satan, and a Kingdom of God. The word for “kingdom” is *baseleia* and it means a sphere of reign and rule. Jesus was acknowledging that Satan has his domain, his kingdom, where he exercises his influence. But, there is a kingdom of God! When Jesus came into the world, Satan's kingdom was doomed, and Jesus powerfully illustrated this when He cast out demons:

- Matthew 12:29 <sup>29</sup>Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house.

The reason Jesus had authority over demons was because He is Lord over “*the strong man*” = Satan.

Get this - Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and He is Lord over Satan. Jesus' kingdom has broken into this age. All authority has been given to King Jesus in heaven and on earth, and His kingdom will prevail! Look with me at—

- 1 John 5:18-19 <sup>18</sup>We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but He (should be a capital H = Jesus) who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. <sup>19</sup>We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

Notice what John says here about Christians and the devil—If you are a Christian, you are “born of God”—you belong to Him. You were transferred out of Satan's Kingdom and into God's Kingdom—You've switched Kingdoms, and switched Kings! Now Jesus Christ, *protects you* so that the evil one, the devil, cannot touch you. That's what it says. We'll see what that means, but what a precious promise from God: *Satan cannot touch you!*

- But notice what John says about the rest of the world, those who don't know Christ: “*the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*” They are captives in his kingdom. Languishing in helpless passivity under his influence. 2Tim 2:26 says that every unbeliever is in “*the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.*” That's staggering! Think about this: The world can be divided into those under the power of Satan, and those under the power of God.

So Satan has his turf. Jesus called him in Jn.12:31, “*the ruler of this world.*” Paul called him in 2 Cor.4:4, “*the god of this world.*” He has been given by God, for a limited time, a limited dominion, over unsaved mankind and his alien angels.

You used to be a part of it! Ephesians 2:2: [you were dead in your sins] “in which *you* once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience”–

Satan’s influence over you was as pervasive as the air around you. He was constantly whispering in your ear, stirring up evil desires in you, and providing the opportunities to carry them out. You were his faithful son or daughter - until Christ broke those chains and set you free!.

- This really needs to be part of your worldview—the way you think about and interpret what’s going on around you. You and I are living in a world that is under powerful satanic influence and delusion. We’re living in the middle of a clash between two spiritual kingdoms - the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. This war makes conflict with N. Korea look like a fist fight. Satan is dragging millions of people into hell, all over the world. And they don’t even know it.

And think about this: if Satan controls so many unbelievers who control the financial world, business, politics and governments, entertainment and the media, education - to that extent, Satan is powerfully influencing all of those institutions. ***There is an evil, satanic global influence with which we must reckon.*** So–

## II. Who are they, and where did they come from?

Let me give you a crash course in demonology: Long ago, even before God had created this physical universe, He spoke all the angels into existence, at once, with a word–

- Psalm 148:2 <sup>2</sup>Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts (OT term for angels).
- Psalm 148:5,9 <sup>5</sup>Let them praise the name of the LORD! For he *commanded* and they were created. <sup>9</sup>For he *spoke*, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

God said “*Angels!*” and Boom, there were angels, all of them. And it was a set number, forever. They don’t have little baby angels. And all of them were holy and good. There were no demons, and no Satan as we know him now. We know this because Gen.1:31 says that “*God saw everything that He made, and behold, it was very good.*”

- But something happened. Because in Gen.3 we find Satan - now a fallen angel, in the form of a serpent, tempting Eve to sin. So in between Gen.1:31 and Gen.3 there was a rebellion in the heavens.

Augustine said that when Lucifer - the highest ranking angel - saw Adam and Eve created to bear the image of God, He was furious and rebelled against God. Could be, but there are two OT passages that seem to speak of Satan’s Fall. Turn with me to–

- Ezekiel 28:12-17 [Now this is speaking of the King of Tyre, but it goes beyond him to the power behind him which was Satan] <sup>12</sup>“Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD: “You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. <sup>13</sup>You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared.
- <sup>14</sup>You were an anointed guardian cherub [the highest of the angels]. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. <sup>15</sup>You

were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you. <sup>16</sup>In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. <sup>17</sup>Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you.

Wow. And one more, over in Isaiah. Isaiah is speaking in hyperbolic language about the King of Babylon, but it's speaking of Satan's fall—

- Isaiah 14:12-15 <sup>12</sup>“How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, (Lucifer) son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! [Notice what precipitated his fall--] <sup>13</sup>You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; <sup>14</sup>I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ <sup>15</sup>But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.

So this this holy, glorious, angelic being wasn't satisfied. He wanted God's place. And isn't that at the heart of every temptation he dangles before us - to put our will ahead of God's? To take the place of God? When Satan tempted Eve, didn't He say, “*You will be like God!*” Misery loves company, huh?

So when this holy angel fell, it transformed his whole being. He became the epitome of evil. In the OT, he is called *Satan* - the Heb. word means adversary, because he opposes God and everything good. In the NT he is called the devil - *diabolos*, which means “*the accuser.*” The devil only deals in guilt and shame and accusations. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil and bring forgiveness of sins. The devil whispers in our ears: “Oh no! God saw what you did! He won't forgive you for that.” Have you heard him?

Jesus said that he was “*a murderer from the beginning, a liar and the father of lies*” (Jn.8).

And apparently, when he fell, he took a bunch of other angels with him who became demons under his authority. When Jesus described hell, he called it “*eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt. 25:41). Rev.12:4 says that he “*swept away a third of the stars of heaven.*” How many is that? Well Rev.5:11 describes the number of holy angels as “*myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands,*”—“*myriad*” in Gk. stands for 10,000, and was the largest number they had a word for, so the number of Satan's demons could be in the millions. But at least for every demon, there are two holy angels!

- Augustine also speculated that God got even with Satan and the demons by decreeing that the same number of fallen angels would be replaced by the number of the elect human beings! Maybe plus one!

These fallen angels are the “*rulers, powers, world forces of this darkness, spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places,*” in v.12. They are called “*unclean spirits,*” and “*evil spirits.*” And they are all around us - but so are God's holy angels.

We need to keep in mind that they are powerful, evil, spiritual creatures who violently oppose God and His people. They are finite creatures - they aren't omnipresent - but they are very fast! They are limited by bodies - maybe they can travel at the speed of light. And they aren't omniscient, but they are *extremely* intelligent, and they have accumulated knowledge over the 1000's of years they have been around to watch everything going on.

\*And that explains how they can impersonate the dead, and give people accurate information through mediums and psychics. No one contacts the dead - but demons can sure make gullible people think they have.

\*\*Another question people ask: Can demons predict the future? No. Only God knows the future - read Isaiah chs.40-48 and God says it over and over: only He knows the future. But demons are so intelligent, that they can make some pretty good guesses, and they can also affect circumstances to make it look like the future was foreknown. Don't be deceived!

\*\*\*Can they read your thoughts? Nothing in Scripture says that they can know your thoughts. But they can hear your words, and see your actions - they know your search history! So they have a lot of info on you. Scary, huh? And they *can* put thoughts into your mind . . . I'll get to that.

### III. What are the powers of darkness up to?

*In relation to unbelievers, they seek to--*

#### ***A. Keep the lost, lost.***

Misery loves company, and Satan and his demons want to drag as many human beings into the lake of fire as they can. And his strategy began in the Garden, didn't it? Since then, every person is born into this world spiritually dead, on their way to hell. Satan doesn't have to fight to *get* people lost, just to *keep* them lost. How does he keep unbelievers in spiritual chains and spiritual blindness? By—

#### ***1. By snatching away God's Word.***

In the parable of the sower and the seed, some of the Gospel seed that goes out is taken away before it can even penetrate the soil—

- LUK 8:12 "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved.

Faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ. Take it away, and people can't be saved, so that what the forces of hell do. We see it when Bibles are confiscated and burned in other countries; when preaching is outlawed. When missionaries are persecuted and thrown out of countries. But we also see it when preachers preach philosophy and psychology *instead* of God's Word.

Satan pulls out the stops to keep people from hearing God's Word: We see it in churches on Sunday mornings: Babies cry. Sound systems crackle. Bibles drop. Doors open. Cellphones ring. I'm not saying all of that is demonic! But Satan certainly *uses* these distractions to "*take away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved!*" No Word = no salvation!

\*And beloved, Satan also works fulltime to keep believers from reading and hearing God's Word: he uses distractions, interruptions, busyness—bad attitudes and unreconciled relationships . . . social media . . . Anytime the living Word of God goes forth, spiritual warfare is on. It's going on right now, as I speak, the enemy is doing everything he can to snatch away the Word I am trying to sow!

- And then he throws everything at us to keep us from thinking and meditating on God's Word. Oh, the devil loves noise, and he hates quiet.

This is why prayer is so important in fighting back against the devil—

- 2Thess 3:1 Finally, brethren, *pray* for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you.

Pray before you open your Bible! Pray before you leave for church that you and your family will hear the Word. Please, please, pray for me as I study and prepare to preach. And we sing it—

*Will you pray with all your power, while we try to preach the Word?  
All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down.*

We are at war with the devil and his demons every Sunday, every Bible study. But he has an even more evil, deadly tactic to keep the Word away from people—

## **2. By twisting God's Word.**

This was his very first attack, on Eve, in the Garden--

- Genesis 3:1<sup>1</sup>Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'"

Well no, actually God said, in Genesis 2:16: "You may surely eat of *every* tree of the garden" - then He gave the prohibition. But do you see how Satan twisted God's words to sound *negative*?

- Genesis 3:2-3<sup>2</sup>And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup>but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' "

Well no, God didn't say "Don't even touch it." Eve isn't absolutely clear on what God *did* say. That's the beginning of problems for all of us. Then the serpent goes for the kill—

- Gen 3:4 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!"

He calls God's Word a *lie*. And he is doing that today, even from church pulpits, on so-called Christian radio and television. He mixes just enough error into the truth to make it poison. I believe that spreading false doctrine is job #1 for Satan and his host—

- 1 Timothy 4:1<sup>1</sup>Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,
- 2 Corinthians 11:13-15<sup>13</sup>For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup>And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup>So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness - preachers and teachers, authors and bloggers. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

Angels of light! Remember, Jesus said that the false teachers get in by looking like sheep, not like wolves! When the Antichrist shows up on the scene, he will deceive unbelievers by pretending to be a man of God—

- 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 <sup>9</sup>The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, <sup>10</sup>and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, *because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.*

And let me give you another way Satan works to send people to hell—

### ***3. By creating confusion between the wheat and the tares.***

- MAT 13:39 [remember the parable of the wheat and the tares that looked alike?] and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. . .

This shows how intelligent and devious Satan is: in this spiritual battle we are engaged in, Satan has his troops wearing our uniforms! Then he sends them undercover into churches like wolves in sheep's clothing, to wreak havoc. By the time you realize they are deceivers, the damage is done. Ever seen that happen?

So get this: We know that Satan can appear as an angel of light, and he actually has some of his children *appear* as moral, upright, religious people - Bible carrying Christians! And the watching world gets totally confused as to who's who in the zoo, right? Who is saved and who isn't? What is the Gospel, anyway? And don't many people you know just throw up their hands and say, "What is truth?"

\*Janice and I watched a kinda, supposedly Christian movie the other night ago called "*The Heart of Man.*" It was a take-off on the parable of the prodigal son, with different people sharing their own stories of being slaves to sexual sin. I'm sure some of these folks were genuine Christians - even though Christ wasn't mentioned and no Scripture was quoted in the entire film. But the main speaker was Paul Young, the author of the huge best-selling book, "*The Shack.*" And he shared his story, in tears, like the others, and went on and on about our loving, forgiving Father God. So touching and heartwarming. Except that Paul Young is a false-teaching heretic. He wrote this in another book where he tells what he really believes—

- "So what is the Good News? What is the Gospel? The Good News is not that Jesus has opened up the possibility of salvation and have been invited to receive Jesus into your life. The Gospel is that Jesus has already included you into His life, into His relationship with God the Father, and into His anointing in the Holy Spirit. The Good News is that Jesus did this without your vote, and whether you believe it or not won't make it any less or more true. . . Are you suggesting that everyone is saved? That you believe in universal salvation? That is exactly what I am saying."

What did Satan tell Eve? "*You will not surely die!*" God loves us all, just the way we are. There's no judgment or hell! That is first lie of Satan. But unbelievers love this lie. And Oprah loves "*The Shack!*" and Paul Young - that should tell you all you need to know! So Satan mixes up his weeds with God's wheat, and even Christians get confused.

*We fight against Satan when our lives are distinct and when our message is clear.*

So if he can't take away a Christian's salvation, does he leave us alone? Oh no! What he wants to do to God's children is—

## ***B. Neutralizing Christians.***

He wants your salt to lose its savor. Jesus said, (MAT 5:16) "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Satan wants to dim your light through sin and complacency, or get you to hide it through fear and intimidation.

He wants to put you on the sidelines! He doesn't want you out there shining in on his darkness, and bringing truth into his kingdom of lies! He will discourage you, distract you, get you tangled up in some sin—and then *ground you* with the guilt of that sin--so that you are defeated, out of commission. Any testimonies to that?

- Or he gets Christians busy—so caught up in keeping up with the world; then with more stuff comes more anxiety over our stuff; until there is not much difference between you and unbelievers. Jesus told us this could happen—
- Matthew 13:22 the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

Or one of his most popular tactics is to get Christians to make an idol out of the Christian life; huddled up with other Christians, just enjoying the fellowship - or to make an idol of their own families, so that stay isolated from the world—and doing nothing for the kingdom. He's doing a pretty good job with this tactic.

Let me give you just three ways he will come at you to cripple your witness and your walk—

### ***1. He tempts us to pride and self-sufficiency.***

- 1 Chronicles 21:1 <sup>1</sup>Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel.

The temptation here was for David to take pride in the number of fighting men that he had. Even his general Joab told David this was wrong. We might not think that's a very big deal, but it's a big deal to God when we trust in our own strength rather than His. It steals His glory. Satan knew this, *put the thought in David's mind* and God punished David severely over this sin.

And that's scary! Somehow, Satan introduced this idea into David's mind. I said that Satan can't read your thoughts, but like he did with David, he's able to put thoughts into our minds—haven't you had the most wicked, ungodly thoughts come into your mind, and there seems to be no earthly explanation? It could be that it's not earthly, it's demonic. That's why we are told to watch over our hearts with all diligence, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ!

### ***2. He tempts us to lose faith in God.***

God wants us to trust Him, Satan wants us to doubt God. So he plants doubts in our minds. He pulls us into living by feelings instead of faith, and he brings circumstances into our lives to destroy our faith.

- Luke 22:31 <sup>31</sup>"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat." - Satan wanted Peter's faith to fail—which it did when he denied Jesus three times. But Jesus restored him.



Mark it: God is always seeking to grow our faith, but Satan is always seeking to destroy it.

### ***3. He tempts us to doubt God's love and forgiveness.***

- Zechariah 3:1-2 <sup>1</sup>Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, [v.3 says he is in filthy garments, symbolic of the sins of the people] and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. <sup>2</sup>And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?"

Satan accused this godly priest, but God defended him. And in Rev.12:10 Satan is called "*the accuser of the brethren.*" Remember that: Satan hates God's grace and forgiveness, and his one-two punch is to tempt you into some sin, and once you do it, he will shame you and accuse you and tell you that you can't be forgiven. Dirty stuff. But when you confess your sins, and claim God's forgiveness, Satan can't get a hold on you. All Satan has to throw at you are lies.

When you preach the Gospel to yourself you are striking a blow against Satan and His kingdom!

Well we just scratched the surface this morning. We have a lot more to say, but I want you to leave here this morning with two thoughts planted in your mind and heart—

1.) Satan and his demons are evil, powerful, and they are after you. Take these creatures seriously!

2.) (And I only say this to Christians) God's love for you is greater than their hatred for you, and His power toward you is infinitely greater than theirs. If you are in Jesus Christ, *God* is for you - who can be against you?

I want you to know that, and stand on that. Some of you have been on the receiving end of Satan's attacks, and you need to know that the victory is yours in Christ, and the evil one cannot touch you.

- Ephesians 6:10 <sup>10</sup>Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.