

Sermon Notes, November 19, 2017

This Present Darkness, Ephesians 2:1-2, 6:10-13

We've tried to establish that Christianity sees the world as a battle-ground where we have to deal with not only the world, the flesh, and human sin and evil, but also supernatural good and supernatural evil. It's a very complicated and very powerful and very explosive situation.

We said a Christian realizes and experiences a fight. Christianity is a fight. We are in a war zone. Christians see life is a fight. C. S. Lewis rightly said, "There is no neutral ground in the universe. Every square inch, every split second is claimed by God, and counterclaimed by Satan." There's this battle going on every day for your very soul.

Paul reminds us that "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood ..." This is drawn from wrestling matches. It is personal. It indicates a hand-to-hand fight (as the Spanish say, *mano a mano*). The root idea here is, swaying back and forth while locked in mortal battle. It is sweat against sweat, breath against breath, so to speak. It is a fight.

The demonic is interconnected with what is worldly and fleshly. When it comes to the way of the demonic, *the flesh* is particularly attuned to it. This is why Paul can say, "For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh & behaving *only in a human way*?" (1 Cor. 3:3). To behave "only in a human way" is to sow to our flesh, to imbibe the ways of the world, and to utilize an approach to life that Scripture names as demonic. You either are living for God, or you're falling under the influence of supernatural evil.

Paul says what you have to do is you have to realize life is complex and complicated, and we have to put on the full armor of God. We no longer can look at our problems, whether social or personal, whether we're talking about you as an individual or we're talking about the church—the body of Christ—and think the problems we're facing are merely human. The Apostle Paul's words to us are extremely important here because he reminds us that it's just not that way in the Christian life, because the context of our struggle is one that transcends human horizons. If you leave out supernatural evil, you are going to utterly be defeated. Therefore, the first two verses, vv. 10 & 11, are all about being strong in the Lord, in the power of his might, putting on the full armor of God, so you can stand.

Why? "For ..." Paul says. And then he gives us v. 12. Paul is saying here, "If you're going to engage in this battle, you're going to have to put on the full armor of God, and first you have to assess your Enemy." Mainly here in v. 12, he is giving us a description of the Enemy. Why should we spend time thinking about the Enemy? Paul says you're not going to be able to prepare for a battle unless you have an assessment of the Enemy, what the Enemy is capable of, what the strengths are of the Enemy.

Here is what we learn about him.

One is *the Devil is mighty*. Secondly, *the Devil is wily*. Thirdly, *the Devil is vulnerable*.

If you forget any one of these three things, you lose.

(We'll only look at one this morning.) So, let's look at it.

1. The Devil is mighty

Where do you get that from? There is this really interesting set of titles. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood ..." Okay, what's it against? [The ESV has the best translation at this point.] ... "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." There is a plurality of powers.

It's telling us that supernatural evil is not just an impersonal thing. It's full of persons. They are the rulers over this present darkness. The Devil is personal, and he's a ruler. When he was cast out of heaven, he came out with entire divisions & these are beings who have an angelical nature, because it says here there are spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. These are supernatural beings whose essential character is wickedness. It does mean is demons are heavenly in their nature. In other words, they're angels.

They are “spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil” (JBP). What we are to understand from Paul is that there is a great demonic enemy with great organization and a strategy.

John tells us in 1 John 5:19, “We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.” When Jesus says, “I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning!” what he means is Satan was an angel. We’re told in 2 Peter 2:4, “God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment ...”

The only other thing we know, and we don’t know a whole lot except we learn this from reading about it in the OT, Isaiah 14:12-15, (and Ezek. 28) Satan said, “I will ascend. I will be as the Most High. I want to be the top.” The sin of Satan was to be first and to want that kind of preference and that kind of power. Luther hits the nail on the head. He says, “The proper devilishness of sin is this, that it thus modifies the first words of the Ten Commandments: I am my Lord and my God.”

Satan is immensely powerful. It is unwise to underestimate him. Think about this and consider this. The might of the principalities and powers is so great that God in some places calls them, not only rulers and princes of their own demonic forces, but also, Jesus refers to Satan as “the ruler of this world.” We’re told in 2 Cor., he’s the god of this world. there are two kingdoms. There are two sets of kingdoms here, and you belong to one or the other. When you say, “I will be as the Most High,” even in your own life, you are not setting up your own kingdom, you’re giving yourself in under the influence of the other kingdom, the dark kingdom.

One of the great Greek words in this little text is it says, “... against the cosmic powers of this dark world ...” The word there is *kosmokrator*, which means ruling powers, gods of this world. Cosmocrats. Paul tells us that this world is filled with *kosmokrators*, *cosmic powers of darkness*, *spirit powers*. And you see, it’s the nature of the demonic to set up gods (idols) and try to get you to worship them.

So, the question is: What is it you really worship? We are fundamentally worshipping beings before we’re anything else. We have to worship. The nature of demonic powers in this world is such that there are demons everywhere who are trying to get you to worship gods. Idols. There is a money god. There is a sex god. There is a god of power.

The *kosmokrator*. They’re demons, and they’re doing everything they possibly can to get you into the great, dark kingdom by getting you to worship anything below God, below Jesus Christ, anything that becomes your functional master, anything that really holds the title deed to your heart. What you really trust has enlisted you in this dark hierarchy of principalities & powers. That’s the reason we get so stuck.

Behind the curtain of your life, however bland it might be, or however stressful it might be, is a great drama. And behind that curtain in that drama, there stands a victorious King, who loves you, who died for you, who wants what is good for you. And there is also behind that curtain a liar, a deceiver, a divider, a destroyer, and he hates that King.

Therefore, we should expect opposition. We are not wrestling against flesh and blood.

We need to be prepared to fight a spiritual battle with spiritual weapons.