

Lesson

11

THE DARK SIDE

Understanding Spiritual Reality

Life is full of conflict and confusion. Wherever we turn, we see men and women in conflict with one another. Whether individually, as a community, or as a nation, it seems that conflict and violence are a very real part of life as we know it. What is more, it has always been this way and, according to the Bible, will remain so until the end of time.

We cannot avoid conflict, but by learning what God says about it, and the forces that are behind much of what we perceive as being bad in the world, we gain a fresh understanding of why the world seems so hell-bent on destroying itself, and why mankind, with all its wisdom and technology, is powerless to stop it.

As Christians our battle is spiritual and conflict, at its source, is spiritual also. Without being overly conscious of evil and its deceptions, it is necessary to understand that there is a world of spiritual power which will affect you whether you are aware of it or not. These powers are both good and evil, and are opposite to, and oppose one another.

Ultimate Authority and Counterfeit Authority

The ultimate authority in the spiritual realm is God, who represents everything that is good, righteous and holy (Lev 11:44-45). He is perfection (Psalm 50:2), and with Him nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37). He is the creator of heaven and earth, and there has never been any challenge to His authority, or His power, in the ultimate sense.

The opposing force of the universe is the person of Satan, his demons, and those who choose to follow after his ways. He is evil personified, and seeks to destroy anything that represents God, His goodness, and His kingdom authority.

Satan is a terrorist working covertly, in the dark, and rarely manifesting his true colours. He is a very real and very powerful being who hates mankind because we represent God's heart. In his perversion Satan believes that by hurting or destroying man, God's creation, he can hurt God - in the same way that an enemy, by hurting or destroying your children, can seek to destroy you.

War in Heaven

Sometime before the creation of the world, there was a war in heaven. To some degree, this war continues to this day. Just as in many areas of the world today, where an enemy is defeated, guerrilla tactics and terrorist activities sometimes continue for many years. So it is with the conflict in the heavenlies. Eventually however, the enemy is completely vanquished and peace is restored.

Where an enemy chooses to be difficult hostilities can drag on for a very long time, usually until such time as a victorious government has the will, and is prepared to expend the resources, to completely wipe the enemy from the face of the earth.

Well, God has a **plan**, and the **will** and **resources** to complete it. However, it is part of His divine strategy to allow the conflict to continue for a while yet. Bible prophecy gives us some very positive clues as to what the ultimate end will be, for the saint in heaven and the devil in hell, but not the exact timing of the final battle. Only The Father has this information (Matt 24:36).

So, we have been born into a pre-existing war (Rev 12:7-11) that began before we came along, and will most likely outlive us, unless Jesus comes back first.

It is not our job to pine or sue for peace, or wish for another reality. We are born into a spiritual war and expected to make war, in the Spirit, to fulfil the purposes of God whenever necessary. We are recruited as soldiers into the army of the Lord. We are warriors and fighters, and have the power of the Holy Spirit on our side. The end of the book tells us we are already victorious through Christ our Lord, and that we have nothing to fear (2 Tim 1:7), because we overcome by the blood of the lamb, and the word of our testimony (Rev 12:11).

Lucifer the Lightbearer becomes Satan the Accuser

Before the earth was formed and Man was created in God's image (Genesis 1:26), God created the heavens (Genesis 1:1). It would appear that there are several orders of created angelic beings, some of whom we read about in the Bible, such as Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer.

In the beginning the angel, Lucifer, whose name means "Lightbearer" was a powerful and very influential cherub, in charge of as much as one third of the angelic host:

"You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you" (Ezek 28:13-15)

Apparently, Lucifer became proud of his beauty, gifts and talents, and sought to be equal with God. This was a fatal error on his part. At some stage he lost sight of who was the creator, and who was the created, something we should all bear in mind on occasions.

Lucifer's rebellion probably occurred over a very long period of time. I'm sure God would have tried to do whatever was possible to avoid the conflict that arose, and to bring Lucifer to his senses. During this period of time it appears Lucifer sowed his poisonous seeds of rebellion in others who served under him, because eventually he had an army of angels willing to take on the other two thirds of heaven, in a war which would make our best Special FX movies pale into insignificance by comparison.

“By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendour. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you. By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade, you profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; it has consumed you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you. All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have become terrified, and you will be no more” (Ezek 28:16-19)

Lucifer was determined to set himself above the throne of God, and for reasons which we may never quite understand fully, he actually thought he could accomplish it.

Satan is Defeated

Jesus made an interesting comment when the seventy disciples had returned from ministering deliverance to people in the surrounding districts, revealing His true eternal nature in the process:

“And the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’ And He said to them, ‘I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven” (Luke 10:17-20)

In the book of Revelation, we get another insight into this war that happened in heaven before time, with Lucifer referred to as “the dragon”:

“And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him” (Rev 12:7-9)

In this passage, we see the emergence of a new name for Lucifer. He is no longer referred to by his glorious, angelic name of Lucifer (the “Lightbearer”) but rather is referred to as the “devil”, and “Satan”, his name having been changed from “Lightbearer” to “Accuser”.

“And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night” (Rev 12:10)

Finally, in the book of Isaiah we get a picture of how far Satan has actually fallen, and his present condition according to prophecy.

We see his pride and arrogance as he makes five statements, about his intentions, beginning with “*I will ...*”. We then see the results of his futile exercise, and gain an insight into his real condition when Isaiah said, “***Is this the man who made the earth to tremble ...***”:

“How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit. Those who see you will gaze at you, They will ponder over you, saying, ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, Who made the world like a wilderness and overthrew its cities, who did not allow his prisoners to go home?’” (Isaiah 14:12-17)

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, and replace them with the abundant blessings and provision God has reserved for His children. We are now joint heirs with Christ, according to his unchangeable promises:

Galatians 3:29; Ephesians 3:6; Titus 3:7; Hebrews 6:17

God has promised we shall be victorious, and we have everything we need pertaining to life and godliness (1 Peter 1:2-4), available to us. The cross of Calvary defeated the power and authority of Satan forever but in His wisdom God chose to defeat Satan’s works before taking him completely out of the picture. The Church Age sees the believer with the necessary tools for victory at their disposal, and nothing is impossible if we believe and have faith in God (Mark 11:22-24).

TWO MAIN ADVERSARIES

As Christians we have two main adversaries. We must learn what we can about them so that at all times we are prepared and able to deal with them effectively, to the glory of God. One is the flesh, which does not refer to our physical bodies but to our old, carnal, sinful nature that should no longer be playing an active role in our lives (Heb 3:12; 1 Pet 2:11,12). The other is the enemy of our souls, Satan, and his horde of demons and evil spirits (John 10:10; Eph 6:10-18).

Our Old Nature The Flesh

Our old nature is dealt with by a process of mind renewal:

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:2)

We are told in the Scriptures that the eye is the lamp of the body. If the eye is good the whole body is full of light (Matt 6:22-23). What we allow in through our physical senses, such as our eyes and ears, will ultimately have an effect on our whole being, and especially our spiritual lives.

It is our responsibility to make sure that what our mind dwells on is acceptable to God (Phil 4:8-9). Remember also, that bad company corrupts good character (1 Cor 15:33), so do not be deceived.

You should not be misled into thinking you can continue as before after you have been born again. On becoming a Christian, we must also become selective as to what we allow into our life, from that time forth, and change the things that are in our power to change. There are things which we may not, or should not, expect to change necessarily, such as our career path (assuming what you do is not illegal or immoral) or our family. In this case we should shine as a light where we are planted and be a testimony to God's saving power by our good deeds (Heb 10:24). The kind of books we read, the music we listen to and the media we watch are, however, completely under our control and must remain so if we are to be successful in our spiritual journey.

Satan, enemy of our Souls

The Bible tells us everything we need to know about Satan (also known as the Devil, Lucifer, Beelzebub, Lord of the Flies, Prince of the Power of the Air, God of this World, Angel of Light, etc.), and his place in the scheme of things. We know from Scripture where he comes from, what his evil purpose is on the earth, and what his eventual end will be.

Satan is very powerful. Jesus said to the people of His day that they were of their father, the devil (John 8:42-47). One of the first things to realise is that the devil is real, that he hates God and everything God stands for, including man. He also knows of his ultimate fate, and is feverishly trying to avoid it, or postpone it, by confounding God's purposes and trying to confuse God's people.

As already mentioned, Satan was once a powerful archangel; one of three named in the Bible. The others are Michael and Gabriel. Satan had much responsibility and was very close to Jesus. He got so caught up with his own beauty and authority that he forgot it all came from God in the first place (Isaiah 14:12-17). He decided to try to take control, and in the process one third of the angels in heaven followed suit. Their pride and their folly became manifest, and they lost their place in God's kingdom forever (Rev 12:7-12; Luke 10:18).

The Nature of Evil

We often misunderstand the nature of evil, thinking of the devil as being an amusing and quaint comic-book-character, dressed in a red suit with horns, pitchfork and tail. This is as real an image of Satan as Father Christmas is of God, or the Easter Bunny is of Jesus. Satan is evil personified. He is a liar, murderer, deceiver and thief. There is nothing "nice", or "quaint", about Satan whatsoever.

We get a brief glimpse of Satan's manipulation and hatred when we look at Job, the oldest book in the Bible (Job 1:1-12; 2:1-10). Satan asked God for permission to deal with Job in a way that he thought would bring Job undone before God. God was confident, knowing Job's faithfulness and righteousness, and He gave Satan conditional permission. God had good reason for allowing Job's testing, which also suited His purposes.

Satan, in his lust for blood, missed the plot completely and became a tool in the unfolding of God's plan for Job's life. The Bible records the events that took place.

Let's take a look at one of the bleakest days of Job's life, and note the horrible things Satan unleashed on him. It should also be noted, that Job was actually expecting something evil to befall him (Job 3:25), which is never a good state of mind to be in to begin with:

1. His oxen and donkeys were taken in a Serbian raid, and all but one of the servants were killed (Job 1:14,15).
2. His sheep and herdsmen were burned, consumed by fire (Job 1:16).
3. His camels were stolen, and all but one of the servants killed with the sword in a Chaldean raid (Job 1:17).
4. His sons and daughters perished in a mighty wind (Job 1:18,19).
5. Later, as if this wasn't enough, Satan requested, and was conditionally granted, further permission to torment Job - this time physically. He was then struck down by sickness and terrible boils (Job 2:7-8).

It is obvious from this and other Bible passages, as well as from our own life experiences, that Satan comes to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). In total contrast to Satan's nefarious schemes, Jesus came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly.

Satan is Cast Down

Satan has been defeated, cast out of heaven (Isaiah 14:12-17) and his end is assured in the lake of fire (Rev 19:20; 20:10). However, in the meantime, we still need to remember some very important points concerning Satan and his present authority:

- ♦ Satan, though powerful, is subject to godly authority (Phil 2:10,11)
- ♦ All authority in heaven and earth rests with the Son (Matt 28:18-20)

See also: Dan 7:13,14; Eph 1:18-23; Phil 2:5-11; Col 2:8-15; 1 Pet 3:22

The Bible tells us we overcome by the blood of the Lamb (Jesus); the word of our testimony (Rev 12:11); and by loving not our lives even unto death.

All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus (Matt 28:18-20), and this is now effectively passed on to us through the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Satan is only as strong as the ground he is given to walk on.

Do not be afraid when opportunities to overcome present themselves to you. These are challenges to our faith which the Lord wants us to welcome, not avoid. They build strength of character, and develop godly qualities within our lives (Luke 10:19,20).

Remember: Satan is defeated. He is already finished because the work of the cross is complete (Col 2:13-17). The only power he has over our lives, is that which we forfeit to him, through our disobedience and sin.

This doesn't mean we will be free from persecution. Satan will try to make our lives as difficult as he can (John 15:18-21). It does mean, however, that we do not have to be affected by what happens around us, or to us, if we are in right-standing before God. He will work all things together for good (Rom 8:28), if our lives are run according to His purposes.

Choose whom you will Serve

Josh 24:14-15

We can either submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit, and experience His power in our lives through salvation and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or we can choose to ignore his Word, disobey his commands, and become (intentionally or otherwise) a tool of the enemy.

To choose Jesus is to choose sides, and to enter into a pre-existing spiritual war which has always been there and which, for the most part, we were not responsible for. However, spiritual warfare is part and parcel of the salvation package. We previously walked in spiritual darkness, but now have Jesus and walk in the light. Even when all around us seems confusing we must remember that Jesus, and the early Christians, had their wilderness experiences too (Matt 4:1; 27:46), and still loved not their lives, even unto death (Rev 12:11). We are commanded to take up our cross and follow Him daily (Luke 14:26,27).

Sometimes we can be saved and baptised in the Holy Spirit but fail to walk in the Spirit, thus fulfilling the desires of the flesh and falling under Satan's dominion and condemnation. Even if this experience is only for a season it is still a matter of personal choice.

In our Western culture we are sometimes so sophisticated, or think we are, that we are unaware of this side of spiritual reality. This is not so in Third World countries, where evil spirits and demons are very real to their inhabitants. Is Satan, therefore, not at work in our culture? Or is it that we are simply not aware of it in quite the same way?

There are powerful forces that hate us with a vengeance loose in this world. They will try to undo God's plan for our lives, but we are not to be afraid for absolutely nothing can separate us from God, His love, or His power at work in us (Rom 8:38-39; 2 Tim 1:12).

Some Practical Steps

Here, then, are some practical steps, which we can all take, to help us to enjoy the victory, which is ours in Christ, and to avoid the pitfall of falling into any trap set for us by the enemy:

1. It is imperative that we be born again by the Spirit of God, and filled with the Holy Spirit and power, as soon as possible after we are saved. We are now engaged in spiritual warfare, and must overcome the works of the enemy within our own life, and in the lives of those around us.
2. We must maintain a clean heart at all times. When we have problems, or make mistakes, then we must quickly repent, forgive those who wrong us, and go on from there with sin behind us, not before us. God is faithful to forgive us, but we must remain open and teachable (1 John 1:8-10), and not easily given to offence.
3. Do not be afraid when opportunities to overcome present themselves. These are challenges to our faith, which the Lord wants us to welcome, not avoid. They build strength of character, and develop godly qualities within our lives, and they are a useful form of training, especially when we do overcome (Luke 10:19,20).

4. Understand that the source of all things is God. Jesus Christ is the source of our eternal salvation, and it is through obedience to him, that we overcome the world (Hebrews 5:7-10; 1 John 5:4,5). Jesus is the high priest of our confession, and the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 3:1; 12:1,2). The world is the Lord's (Psalm 50:10-12), and all it contains.
5. Satan is defeated. He is already finished because the work of the cross is complete (Colossians 2:13-17). The only power he has over our lives, is what we allow him by our disobedience and sin. This doesn't mean that we will be free from persecution, for the devil will try to make our lives as difficult as he can (John 15:18-21). It does mean, however, that we do not have to be affected by what happens around us, or to us, if we are in right-standing before God. He will work all things together for good (Rom 8:28), if we live our lives according to His expectations of us.
6. We have been given weapons to use when the battle is engaged. These weapons are the Blood of the Lamb, The Word of God, and the Name of Jesus. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God to the pulling down of strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).
7. Above all, understand that the battle is not ours, but the Lord's. Although we engage the enemy on His behalf, we are only a small part of the overall picture - which is much bigger than we can usually see at any given time. Seeing God's purposes, in this way, stops us from thinking only of our particular circumstances and personal problems, and allows us to see things from the only perspective that counts for anything - God's (See Samuel 17:43-47; Joshua 5:13,14).

Some additional Scriptures worth reading are:

Deuteronomy 7 & 8	John 16:33	Romans 8:35,37
Revelation 3:19-21	Revelation 12:11	1 John 5:4,5
Romans 12:17-21	Romans 16:17-20	2 Cor 11:13-15

Strongholds

- ♦ **Strongholds speak of authority** (2 Cor 10:3-5), particularly Satanic authority. Satan maintains his kingdom by fear, intimidation, bribery, lies, deception and through ignorance.
- ♦ **He who controls the strongholds has the authority.** Strongholds are high places, fortified positions which are hard to assail and hard to overcome. They are chosen carefully for their strategic value.
- ♦ **Satan, though powerful, is subject to Godly authority.** This Godly authority is given to the church, and the individuals that make up the body of Christ.

**Know your
Position
in Christ**

God could wipe Satan out tomorrow if He so chose, but He didn't. Now we have the task of taking possession of the land by force of arms.

Strongholds are held in place by a sort of squatter-mentality on the part of Satan. He knows He must leave when challenged, that the weight of the law of God is against him and that he cannot resist for long when confronted openly; but he will try to hold out as long as possible. He will not leave without a fight.

What Satan fears most, is a Holy Ghost-filled church. He is not as intimidated by us as individuals as he is by us as a body. When we work as a team, and start to move in the anointing and power of God, nothing can stand against us.

We must have a clear and precise strategy, if we are to overcome in the land of Promise, and ultimately possess the land.

We must congregate as a people against Satanic strongholds that have taken control of the city or region where we live. God may not give you the nations individually, but he has given them to Christ (Psalm 2:7-12), who is head over all things to the Church (Eph 1:22-23) which is His Body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. A praying church, united and in full knowledge of their position in Christ, is a powerful spiritual voice. In the heavenlies.

We must pray and challenge the enemy daily until he releases his hold and moves on. There is a way to live, a way to reign with Christ, that will cause you never to be defeated. The Bible shows that there is a very clear way in which victory can be achieved and maintained. God has promised that through Christ we can 'reign in life' (Rom 5:17). What a promise!

It is vitally important that all believers come to an understanding of our legal position in Christ. Jesus won a "legal" victory on the cross, and has appointed the church to enforce it. If we neglect to claim our victory and walk in it we will have failed in our experience, but the legal victory is ours if we believe what the Word of God declares, and walk in it.

We cannot experience actual victory over our circumstances, over our flesh, or over the enemy, unless we first understand the principle of legal victory. This principle is simply a matter of identifying with Christ on the cross, with His death, burial, and resurrection. Through our union with Christ, by faith, God has raised us up, and enthroned us, with Christ in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:2-8). It is from this position that we can all reign in life.

