

Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare 1

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Introduction:

Spiritual warfare does not need to cause anxiety. Instead it is a doctrine of comfort.

The devil is a creature like humans, who is dependent upon the living God for his very existence.

Overview: 3 Key Questions

1. How does the holy Creator and Sustainer of the universe relate to evil creatures?
2. How does the Redeemer deliver wicked people?
3. What does spiritual warfare look like?

The view of a three story universe:

1. God
2. Spirit beings
3. Man

One of the effects of enlightenment thinking of the last 250 years is that the spirit beings became the excluded middle. The Bible defines the top story – theology proper. We often get our view of human beings from the social sciences/medicine/culture. The excluded middle is informed by the occult. We get our view of the Devil from the Devil.

Question 1: How does the Creator God relate to evil creatures? (13:41 min)

In the Old Testament, God chose to reveal himself in the midst of a demonic culture. There is actually very little in the Old Testament about the devil. There is enough so you know who he is, and you understand his relationship to God clearly. There is also a very strong prohibition regarding him. The Bible demythologizes the occult cultures. The worldview of the Bible is that there is one God, and there is the created world.

Genesis 3

- Notice how forcefully the devil is portrayed as a creature.

Job 1-2

- God is the one who begins the conversation with Satan.
- Satan wants to destroy the creation, but he is restrained by God.
- The Devil is used for purposes which bring glory to God.
- There are things about God that we only see because of the darkness: his holiness and his love. God has chosen to arrange the world for his own glory in such a way that the darkness plays a role in it.

1 Sam 16

- Saul is tormented by an evil spirit.
- He has been a wicked man and rebelled against God.
- An evil spirit from the Lord terrorized him (16:14).

- Some say that if you sin enough you could acquire an evil spirit who would control why you do evil.
Saul is responsible for doing the evil and the evil spirit is the judgment as suffering/torment. It is not a computer virus overriding the hard-disk of his soul.
- The evil spirit is the agent of judgment.

1 Kings 22

- God has the intention of judging Ahab.
- (22:19ff) A spirit will entice Ahab to destroy him.
- The evil spirits are agents of judgment and wrath upon someone whom God has chosen to destroy.

1 Sam 28

- The witch of Endor is surprised because the Lord hijacked the occult for his pronouncement of judgment upon Saul.

The OT gives a consistent portrayal as the Lord as the one God and all creatures, whether evil or good, are ultimately under his control. This informs our understanding as we come to the New Testament.

- Mark 1 - Who is this that even the unclean spirits obey him? This is the Lord God.
- Mark 4 – Who is this that the wind and the waves obey him? It is the living God whom the storms obey.

How does God use evil and evil agents for his purposes?

1. He uses evil agents to invoke sufferings that are the immediate consequence of specific sin (Saul, Ahab, Judges 8).
2. Evil agents are agents of God's glory in sanctifying the saints and demonstrating that those who are God's will shine (Job).
3. Evil agents protect the saints from sin (2 Cor 12:7). Presuming that it is a physical ailment with a demonic causation, the agent of affliction is given to prevent him from sinning. It is the same way that a natural ailment/suffering helps us know our weakness and need for God.
4. Evil agents can show God's glory because good can be done to those who are suffering at their hands. In the NT there are ailments that are demonically induced or naturalistically induced. There is never an etiology for people given over to demonically induced suffering. The cause is most clearly given in John 9 – for God's glory, but no reason given.
5. The demons are portrayed as agents of final judgment. They are a picture of the destruction, pain, and agony of eternal judgment (Rev 18:2).

The same themes play out with evil human beings and spiritual beings. In Gen 50:20, Joseph's brothers intended their actions for evil. Judas intended actions for evil (Acts 4:27ff). These actions were used for God's good purposes.

Question 2: How does the Redeemer deal with evil people? (41:25 min)

What does the Scripture show about how people who have been in the occult are dealt with? In the NT, the vast majority of the converts who are written to were demon-worshipping idolaters.

- The way people who have been involved in the occult are dealt with is through the truth, repentance and faith.
- Exorcism is always part of a mercy ministry to sufferers, not a way to deal with moral problems.
- Spiritual warfare is something that deliverance ministry has nothing to deal with.

Manasseh (2 Kings 21; 2 Chron 33)

- Manasseh was one of the most wicked men in the Bible.
- Manasseh was presented with the truth, he repented and he was restored.

Simon the Magician (Acts 8)

- The apostles are doing deliverance ministry (from suffering). Simon is an occult power-worker. When he heard Philip preaching he believed.
- He began to “relive the dark side.”
- Peter never spoke to a demon in Simon, he dealt with Simon directly as a morally responsible person. He called him to repentance.

2 Tim 2:26

- These are people under the moral lordship of darkness – the devil holds them in his grip.
- The way of ministry to them is very simple – the normal Christian life: truth, repentance, faith.

Question 3: What does spiritual warfare look like? (56:55 min)

Spiritual warfare has nothing to do with demon deliverance – it is about the moral lordship of the devil and people being evil. At the heart of the gospel is deliverance from the power of darkness (Acts 26:18; Col 1:13). From that foundation, we fight remaining sin.

Ephesians 6

- In Frank Peretti’s book, *This Present Darkness*, the “indwelling demons” view of spiritual warfare is presented.
- The entire book of Ephesians is really about the invasion of the light into a dark world, and we who are now light must learn how to live in the midst of darkness. It is a life of faith in the power of God.

- The armor of God
 1. The armor is largely offensive, “invasionary” armor. You are standing and the enemy is defeated at your feet.
 2. The allusions are not so much to Roman soldiers; they are from Isaiah and Psalms. Each piece of the armor is what God wears.
 - a. God invades the darkness with this armor
 - b. Paul invades with this armor
 - c. We now invade the darkness with this armor.
 3. Spiritual warfare at its heart is the participation in the invasion of darkness with light.

Conclusion