

The Nature of our Battle

Spiritual Warfare is not the figment of our imagination. We truly face invisible adversaries.

By Ken Raggio

Few things in life can match the intrigue of spiritual warfare. I refer to the conflicts that involve heaven's holy angels, Satan's princes and you and I. Specifically, spiritual warfare refers to the ongoing struggles between the creatures of both Heaven and Hell, as they war for dominion for either the Kingdom of God, or the Principalities of Satan. In its purest form, spiritual warfare is the battle for the souls of men, whether it be nations, groups of people or individuals. It is the struggle for power, either by demons attempting to ensnare and oppress men and women, or the spirits of God setting them free.

Spiritual warfare hardly resembles ground warfare. You don't even get your hands dirty. It isn't fought in bodies of flesh and blood. Sometimes, it seems that it would be luxurious to be able to actually stalk out just one of the demonic spirits that hounds my trail, tormenting me with every form of adversity known to man. It would be thrilling to get my hands around his neck and strangle him to death.

But spiritual warfare takes place in invisible places. And that fact alone keeps a lot of people from taking it seriously. If you can't see, hear or touch the enemy, most folks don't want to believe there is one. Even if they do recognize what it is, many are afraid or intimidated by spiritual discussions, and run like crazy from the whole subject rather than face it head on.

It would be convenient to dismiss the whole subject of angels and demons. It would be so simple to just deny that demons exist, or that angels have any influence in our lives. We could say that all our difficulties are either physical or mental. If that was true, then every problem could be resolved either by medical treatment or psychiatry.

If only some people's naive concepts about good and evil were true. If only defeat was really just a state of mind, and temptation was only the figment of my imagination, and disease and depression were really altogether psychosomatic. Then we could all just sit down and talk away our problems, using the latest mind-over-matter twist.

But I declare to you, that real-time battles between me - a mortal, and invisible personalities from ancient origin do regularly take place. I know this may sound unnerving to some, and downright loony to others. But give me this much: there really are more players in this game called life than the average person can see with the naked eye.

A state of denial does not make evil spirits go away. I used to say that I wasn't interested in devils or demonology, per se, because I didn't want to stir any of them up. I ignorantly supposed that if I left the devils alone, they would respectfully leave me alone. But that is a cheap cop-out. And there is folly in that notion. Like it or not, and believe it or not, hell's troops are on active duty twenty-four hours a day whether you and I give a hoot or not.

So let's face some realities. If there really are demons, and if they really do what the Bible teaches that they do, then my most lethal adversaries are right now on the job, hovering silently in the ethereal world, actively engaged in hindering me in every conceivable way.

Just what is it they intend to do? Am I an idiot, and is it beneath intellectual dignity to want to know just exactly what are the intents and plans of these beings who never stop tracking me day and night? Don't take me to a padded cell just yet!

Our Bible literally froths with supernatural occurrences, involving both the heavenly hosts, and those fallen evil ones.

Consider Jacob. Jacob sincerely wanted to be his father's principle heir, yet his legal rights were limited. His position was weak. Esau was the original heir to God's covenants with Abraham. If Esau had so desired, he would have always had Divine advantage. It could have just as easily been ESAU whom the angel renamed ISRAEL.

But Jacob unknowingly got involved in real spiritual warfare. He already knew about angels. An angel had saved his father's life when as a kid. The ministering spirit had delivered Isaac from the knife of Abraham, because their job is to minister "to them who shall be the heirs of salvation."

Don't laugh or joke about guardian angels! Guardian angels are not merely the fabric of fairy tales. Esau, eldest son, had bodyguards. They were assigned to him at birth. He was the first perpetuation of the Covenant born to Isaac. But his careless disregard for the blessing of God made way for an unclean spirit to take dominion in his life, and his guardian angel was rendered powerless to defend him.

But Jacob wanted that guardian of the Abrahamic covenant and was willing to fight for it. And Jacob knew no better than to think those covenant benefits were transferable. So he confronted Esau. "A bowl of hot beans, Esau? For your blessing!"

Evidently, Esau didn't realize that the blessing was not only in the material realm. To him, the inheritance consisted of cattle, flocks, and other tangibles. "I don't need to have an inheritance to become substantial", Esau must have reasoned. "I work for everything I get, anyway...! Give me the beans!" Jacob smirked to think it had been so easy. Esau didn't realize he was freeing his guardian to escort Jacob instead.

Classic ignorance will no doubt be revealed as the darkest curse on all mankind. We all suffer Esau's syndrome eventually. We think we can make a deal, have an understanding, or negotiate a truce with people, and we will walk away, scot free, with nothing lost. But Esau's mistake was irreversible.

Jacob hadn't yet received the blessing. Daddy must lay hands and bless him. That would be tricky. How will Isaac ever be so fooled? By the time Rebekah had cleaned the cooking utensils, Jacob was coming out of the house. He began to tear away the goat-skins that had deceived his father. He couldn't help laughing as he devoured the left-over goat meat. What an awesome victory! There wasn't even any fight to it!

Twenty years later, Jacob was weary of life. Laban, his father-in-law, had used him for personal gain, but only now was he waking up to it. "I should have more to show for my labors", Jacob complained. God saw that the time was ripe. Jacob was face to face with the reality of his own emptiness.

Suddenly, without an explanation, Jacob began to prosper from a new agreement with Laban. It was as if twenty years of fruitlessness was being redeemed. Mysteriously, only Jacob's cattle were breeding, and Laban's were growing poorer. Was God sending cattle-breeders in at night? "What invisible force could be loosed upon us, that we should prosper so?"

It was like old times. Jacob smirked again. "Man, I knew things had to break for me eventually! At last, everything is going my way..." Then God interrupted Jacob. A crew of angels dropped by. "It's time to return home, Jacob. You will be blessed when you return."

Jacob had an appointment with an angel. Then the sober facts hit him in the chest. "I've got to face Esau. I am still in bondage to him. The fight is still unfinished. This blessing is still up in the air, and Esau could destroy me yet!"

"OH, GOD! Deliver me from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, lest he come and smite me!" (see Genesis 32:11).

That night, Jacob was left alone. "And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." (Genesis 32:24).

It seemed to solve the problem. After the fight, there was no more trouble out of Esau. Esau's guardian had been subdued, and Jacob's had prevailed. **NOW, THE BIRTHRIGHT!**

Jesus revealed a connection between sickness and demons. Centuries later, Jesus Christ would stand face to face with a poor child who was deaf and dumb. There were no hearing aids to purchase, no lighted scopes for an examination, no physiological diagnosis or cure. It could have been nerve deafness, or acute infection could have destroyed the eardrums, or whatever other medical explanations there might have been.

But Jesus accurately identified the source of the problem, and addressed it. "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him!" (Mark 9:25). And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him.

A deaf SPIRIT had afflicted those ears. A dumb SPIRIT had bound his tongue. It was a matter of getting the monkey wrench out of the machinery.

"This kind goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21).

What kind? THIS kind. UNCLEAN spirits must be handled differently than problems which are not spiritually oppressive.

When the voice of Satan persuaded Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, she yielded her carnal appetite to the unclean spirit, and became a victim of that spirit. Both OPPRESSION and POSSESSION indicate the same problem: A man or a woman has come under the influence of an unclean spirit. Both saints and sinners can find themselves under the influence of an unclean spirit. And ANY such relationship is a YOKE that must be broken.

The primary point of fasting is that it offers God a temporary vindication for Eve's sin. She failed to control her carnal appetite, thereby falling under Satan's influence. In our

fasting, we mock Satan for what he did to Eve in the Garden. We mete out a form of insult to the tempting spirits, and give a place for our own guardians to fortify themselves against our adversaries. Then, in conjunction with effectual, intercessory prayer, we wrestle with the principalities until they are defeated.

The demon's counter-attack. It is characteristic of unclean spirits to rend its victims sorely in the process of suffering defeat. Satan's forces will rarely take a defeat without staging a violent counter-attack. The deaf child's physical response to deliverance seemed to be excessively harsh. At last he lay as dead on the ground. We often consider the temporary roughness of spiritual warfare to be a cause for retreat. But we must see beyond the present roughness, and realize that the child's rough experience DID IT NO HARM!

Our fears often blow the drama out of proportion, but we must subdue our fears and know that **NO SPIRIT CAN RIGHTFULLY RESIST THE POWER OF GOD!**

Nothing shall by any means harm you. Jesus charged his disciples to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. He was not placing them in jeopardy by their daring and boldness. Even though it was ordained for some of them to later lay their lives down for the Gospel, He never taught them to be afraid of what the devils would do to them. **"I GIVE YOU POWER TO TREAD ON SERPENTS!"**

In all fairness, the very Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings. But his injuries, his pain, his agony was only temporary. Ultimately, SATAN is defeated. *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"*