

Good News/Bad News About Spiritual Warfare

“Oh, it’s only you.”

So said the great evangelist Smith Wigglesworth one night when he awoke to see the devil standing at the foot of his bed. Far from reacting in fear and panic, as many a Christian might do, Wigglesworth sized up the enemy and found him lacking—so badly lacking, as Albert Hibbert writes in *Smith Wigglesworth: The Secret of His Power* (Harrison House, 1982, 1993), that the evangelist immediately rolled over and went back to sleep.

The devil must have been dumbfounded. No doubt he expected a different response, a little initial terror at the least. Had he foreseen such a scathing assessment, he probably would not have bothered to appear. Foresight, however, has never been one of his strengths. He cannot foresee anything, and he is not omni-anything either. Whereas God is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent—all-knowing, all-powerful and present everywhere—the devil is simply overrated.

Reports of Satan’s power and ability are greatly exaggerated. The body of Christ needs to follow Smith Wigglesworth’s example in sizing up the enemy. We need to make an accurate assessment of who it is we face in spiritual warfare and what he can and cannot do. The list of things he *cannot* do is by far the longer list, and many of the things he *can* do require our permission first—which we need not give him under any circumstances. As the Word of God says, “Leave no [such] room or foothold for the devil [give no opportunity to him]” (Eph. 4:27, AMP).

We are to give no place to the devil—no place in our lives, anyway. But there is one place we must assign to him: a place in our theology. If we do not give the devil a place in

our theology, we can wind up in all kinds of trouble. Ignoring his existence is as dangerous as overrating him. People who completely ignore the devil often wind up blaming God for the disastrous things they experience. In reality, the source of their troubles is not God at all. Jesus made it clear in John 10:10 that the source of life's troubles is far different from the source of life's joys: "The thief [devil] comes only in order to steal, kill and destroy; I have come so that they may have life, life in its fullest measure" (CJB).

John 10:10 is often referred to as the "great divide" verse: It divides God's loving character from the enemy's vengeful one, and it divides biblically solid theology from error. Put another way, it simply states, *Good God, bad devil*. That which blesses you and makes your life full and wonderful originates from God. That which steals from, kills or destroys a part of your life originates from the devil.

It is crucial to acknowledge that this malevolent being exists and that he is your personal adversary. This evil personality has rebelled against God and hates God. On his side are a host of helpers, known as demonic spirits, who rebelled with him. Since he and his host cannot harm God, they seek to harm those closest to God's heart: the humankind God created. That includes you and me. The devil's ultimate goal is our destruction spiritually, relationally, physically and in every other way.

Bad News/Good News

The bad news, then, is that we face a bitter personal enemy who hates us because we belong to our Creator. This enemy is wholly bent on our demise. Scripture refers to Satan as "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4, NLT)—note he is god with a small g! He and his demonic hordes have made it their first order of business to engender in this world a multitude of evils we all need to be delivered from. No wonder Jesus taught us to pray, "Deliver us from evil" (Luke 11:4, KJV).

The good news is that our Creator has not by any means left us to face this enemy alone. He sent us His Son, Jesus, as our deliverer and king. Our king is not one to issue orders and stand back to see which way the battle goes—He came to fight the battle on our behalf. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

Jesus accomplished what He came to do. His death, burial, resurrection and ascension secured victory over the enemy for us—which is the very reason the enemy hates the human race so intensely. Satan abhors the fact that Jesus came *in the flesh*, in human form like us, and defeated him. Was Jesus the Son of God? Absolutely. But in order to defeat the devil, He came—in a flesh-and-blood body—as the Son of Man.

Hebrews 2:14 (NLT) tells us why God chose to send His Son in human form:

Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death.

There is no doctrine in all the Bible that the devil hates more than that one—that a flesh-and-blood Man defeated the powers of darkness. Then, of all things, Jesus empowered His followers to do likewise in His name!

The devil and his demons therefore consider all flesh contemptible. It confounds and astounds them that God so deeply loves humankind that He would send His Son to us in human form to deliver us. In Scripture you do not read of many demons expressing their point of view, but in Job 4 one demon gives his assessment of humankind. He scoffs at those made of clay and says, “They are made of dust, crushed as easily as a moth. They are alive in the morning but dead by evening, gone forever without a trace” (v. 19–20, NLT). He says, in effect,

“People are dirt! They’re nothing but dust—so fragile that their lives can be extinguished the way an insect can be squashed. People are nothing!”

That is what the devil thinks about humanity. It galls him to be conquered by such a foe. It galls him so greatly, in fact, that he and his hordes will not even *admit* their defeat—they *will not* acknowledge that Jesus came in the flesh. They adamantly refuse. That stubbornness can be used as a test to identify them. Consider 1 John 4:1–3:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God. ... By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God.

I used this test myself while my wife, Jeanie, and I were missionaries in Mexico. For two of our years there, we lived with the Otomi Indians. From our Otomi village I would make trips into the mountains to preach. Often we would drive until the road disappeared, then get on mules and ride for hours to reach our destination, the little villages way back in the mountains. These villages were primitive—no electricity, no running water, no bathrooms—so we brought along our own supplies and equipment, such as a generator, a movie projector and big speakers.

After a twelve-hour mule ride to one such village, I headed to the church to hang wires for our equipment and get the church ready. Before long, about a dozen of the village men showed up to hang around. Some of them watched and others helped me, but one particular man got on the platform and started speaking. I was busy hanging lights, and no one was paying much attention to the guy, but then I thought I heard him say, “One day Jesus just came to earth and appeared, *poof*,

in a puff of smoke." I nearly dropped a lightbulb. I decided to listen more closely, and two or three minutes later, he said it again: "One day Jesus just appeared, *poof*, in a puff of smoke."

Saying that around me is like saying, "Sic 'em!" to a Doberman pinscher! I dropped what I was doing and climbed the platform.

"I'd really like to pray with you," I said to the man.

"Oh, that's wonderful!" he beamed. "I have such great revelations when I pray."

I can imagine, I thought to myself, but out loud I asked, "Will you repeat a prayer after me?"

"Sí!" he said.

I started, "God, I love You."

"God, I love You," he repeated.

"And Your Son is wonderful," I went on.

"Oh, Jesus is wonderful," the man continued.

Then I said, "And Jesus came in the flesh."

"And Jesus came in the fl-, fl-, Jesus came in the fl-" he floundered.

This part of our prayer was not working for him. I noticed his eyes were starting to gloss over and his voice was changing.

"Jesus came in the fl-, fl-, in the *spirit*!" he spat out.

The demon influencing the man *would not* confess that Jesus came in the flesh. That would have been confessing Satan's total defeat. I took the man out and commanded the demonic spirits to leave him in Jesus' name, and he was

delivered.

Jesus came in the flesh and broke the power of the devil; then He gave us authority in His name to do the same. Above all, the devil fears that while we are still in the flesh, you and I will realize our God-given authority to break his power. This makes us dangerous to the demonic realm. The devil knows that when Jesus listed the signs that would follow those who believe, first on the list was “They will cast out demons in my name” (Mark 16:17, NLT). That is bad news for the kingdom of darkness.

Jesus wrought victory so that we would not need to live our lives in darkness, under the onslaught of the enemy. He bought us priceless blessings with His blood—salvation, healing, deliverance, peace and other blessings we will look at later. Because of Jesus’ triumph, the enemy no longer has any claim to us. Our foe has been completely and utterly defeated, with no hope of a reversal.

For us, that is good news indeed! “[God] disarmed the principalities and powers that were ranged against us and made a bold display and public example of them, in triumphing over them in Him and in it [the cross]” (Col. 2:15, AMP). It is finished, as Jesus Himself said on the cross ... and yet, for all that, something still remains for us to do. We must *demonstrate Satan’s defeat*.

Victory is ours—but only ours for the taking. We need to step in behind all Jesus has done and claim the results for ourselves. That is where our battle lies. “The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matt. 11:12, NKJV). The war has already been won, but the army of hell is wholly unwilling to admit defeat. The victory must be *enforced*, and we must stand our ground, refusing to let the devil and his demonic hordes reoccupy territory that is no longer theirs.

God has given the church authority in the name of His Son to do just that. Ephesians 3:10–11 says that “the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (NKJV). In this verse, the church is not a building but God’s people. The “principalities and powers” refer to the enemy, Satan and his demons, just as they do in Ephesians 6:12: “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

God’s people are to make known to their enemy the wisdom of God and His eternal plans and purposes accomplished through Jesus Christ. God’s plan is for the Church to demonstrate Satan’s defeat—in short, for you and me to show the devil how it is going to be.

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