

Transcript 119

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions Podcast. We're continuing our series with Jeff and Kevin discussing angels and demons. And Jeff is the managing editor of bibleref.com, and Kevin was the managing editor for Got Questions ministry.

Shea Houdmann

So this is I don't know episode five or six in our series, so if you have not listened to some of the previous episodes, I'd invite you to do so because what we're talking about today, spiritual warfare is benefited greatly by understanding what the Bible says about, especially demons and Satan, and how they attack us. So invite you to watch those episodes as well. But in spiritual warfare, I guess looking at the type of questions that we receive at GotQuestions.org. I see the two primary errors and over emphasis and under emphasis. With the under instance being that basically denying almost the existence of demons, saying not theologically, I mean Bibles very clear as they exist. But denying the reality of their impact on us. Or discounting it to the point that it doesn't really matter. I don't think that's a healthy biblical attitude. But then even more common is an overemphasis. Where every possible bad situation has happened to you. Every temptation you face, every sin you commit. All of that is either caused or greatly influenced by demons, and I think that's a unbiblical attitude as well.

Shea Houdmann

So we're going to try to help you find and help us find the right balance. The biblical balance there. Yes, demons are real. Yes, they attack us, yes they tempt us, but at the same time this is not something we need to be looking for a demon under every stone. Not every sin we commit has a demonic influence behind it. So so Kevin, why don't you start us off and just give us a little bit of a what does the Bible say about spiritual warfare?

Kevin Stone

Well, first of all, the Bible presents spiritual warfare as something that's very real. It is a reality. I mean, we were very used to the physical reality around us, but Scripture says that there's also a spiritual reality that is just as real as anything that we see in the the physical realm. And that we do have a spiritual enemy. In fact, a lot of times when we run into problems with other people, we start looking at those people as being the enemy. And in one sense, on one level, I guess they can be, but Scripture says in Ephesians chapter six that our real enemy, the enemy behind all of the the trouble that we might be facing from from others, is a spiritual enemy. Satan and his horde of demons.

Kevin Stone

And we read this in Ephesians Chapter 6 starting in verse 10. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, so there it is. Our struggle ultimately is a spiritual one. It's not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil and the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground. After you've

done everything, then to stand. And so I think it's important to know our enemy. Our enemy, as this passage explains, is a spiritual one ultimately. And I just want to point out the the words that are used to describe or to identify this spiritual enemy they are, they are called rulers, authorities, powers and spiritual forces of evil. So they have some type of a rule. They rule over something as they are called rulers. They have some type of an authority that has been granted to them, at least temporarily. They have authority and they are called powers, so they have some type of strength, some type of power and they can do certain things within their authority. Then they're called spiritual forces of evil, and so they are evil forces. This is a good descriptive word for them.

Kevin Stone

Often in scripture, when Jesus was encountering demons, depending on the translation, I think the old King James says they were unclean spirits. These are evil spirits. These spiritual forces of evil, and then we have two places that are mentioned in Ephesians 6 here that kind of delineate where they work. They are the powers of this dark world, so in this fallen world, in this sinful world they have, they are exercising their authority in this dark world, dark because it is shunning the light of God.

Kevin Stone

And then they are also at work, there are spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms, so there is a heavenly aspect of this as well. They're ruling in the in the heavenlies they are ruling in this dark world. This is our true enemy, our spiritual enemy. That we need to be aware of.

Kevin Stone

And this text also teaches us some crucial truths. One is that we can only stand strong in the Lord's power. That's how it starts off there in verse ten, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. So that's where our strength lies. And then it is God's armor that protects us. The passage goes on to list what that, what those pieces of armor are and then our fight is ultimately against these spiritual forces of wickedness in this world.

Jeff Laird

It's good to remember that there is a real enemy, but that real enemy is behind people. A parallel that's going through my mind is something like war. When we talk about major world conflicts so you know people would brought up the idea that in World War Two the the real enemy, for example on the battlefield was not literally the other soldier across from you. And in a lot of circumstances, whether that was a Russian, German, American, French, British, they they were essentially doing what they were told by their authorities, and there's all sorts of moral implications to that.

Jeff Laird

But the idea is that the real enemy is the leadership. It's the people who are driving who are pushing who are ordering these things to happen. You still have to contend with that person. You still have to contend with that thing, but you don't ever want to do that in a way where you forget that the real battle is something else.

Jeff Laird

Same thing with the people that we encounter in the world. Yeah, we're still going to have to contend with people who are immoral, unfair, unkind, sometimes violent, sometimes they persecute. But the real enemy behind that is Satan and his forces, so I think that's a helpful thing for us to remember.

Jeff Laird

One thing that I see a lot of times in in the overemphasis on on the demonic is where we we we turn it into sort of a superstitious idea. You know we should recognize that there really is spiritual influence that we can be tempted. We can be drawn. We can be pushed around in these ways, if we don't guard our hearts. We don't guard our minds. We are susceptible to those things. But sometimes we take that and we try to turn it into sort of a magical voodoo type of a thing where what we're really doing is we're sort of outsourcing the problem. We're saying it's not my fault that I do this. It's because some demon is oppressing me or I have a spirit of this that's doing this to me. And then on the same token we want to say I can fix this with a quick fix. I just need a prayer and exorcism. I need some particular preacher, Pastor, Deliverance person to get rid of this for me. And in most cases, neither one of the solutions are that simple.

Jeff Laird

We sin because we're sinners. Demons tempt us, they lead us, they push us, but even as we were discussing last time when we talked about things like actual demonic possession, that one of the phrases that people use when Jesus rescued a man from demonic possession was to say we've never seen anything like this before. That kind of of puppetry is extremely, extremely rare. Sort of going back to the analogy, I was thinking of war, at the end of the day those soldiers are doing what they're told, but they're still deciding to do what they're told, so there isn't a complete and total vaporizing of their free will and their ability here. So even if a person is being demonically oppressed, even if a person is being pushed or tempted or twisted by something spiritual, that person doesn't have the ability to say it's not me.

Jeff Laird

So sometimes we hear the phrase the devil made me do it. And we want to apply that to things like demonic warfare and spiritual warfare. To say that this is not because I'm falling to temptation. This is because of this thing that's outside of me and then the solution is also outside of me. It's not about fasting and prayer and submission to the Holy Spirit and time and discernment and all these other things. It's just something that I can snap my fingers and take care of. And that's a normal human thought process for a lot of things, but it's not helpful when it comes to spirituality.

Jeff Laird

Everything in the Bible that talks about how we're supposed to avoid temptation, and about how we are supposed to grow more Christlike always involves things like relationship and study and discipleship and discernment. It is not a wave this, say this, sprinkle that kind of a an input. And for me that's where the big danger of some of the overemphasis on these things comes into. Especially when we get to the point where we're trying to ascribe specific exact names and spirits to specific sins as if they were not just part of the normal temptation that we have as human beings.

Shea Houdmann

Oh, you're exactly right, Jeff. And just thinking in the past couple weeks as I've been studying and praying and thinking about what to say in this episode seems like we've received several questions or even complaints, feedback, so to speak, on articles about I don't know the Jezebel spirit, the Python spirit, the kundalini spirit, this spirit, that spirit from people it's like upset at us, so why are you discounting the reality of these things and a few of them even reported like I was delivered from this spirit, and I made a huge impact in my life. And like we're not denying the reality of spiritual warfare and how demonic oppression can have a severe detrimental impact on your life.

Shea Houdmann

We're not denying that what we're trying to point people to is we have to base spiritual work around what the Bible says that's outside of that, I mean, does the Bible tell us absolutely everything there is to know about spiritual warfare? Of course it doesn't, but does it tell us everything we need to know, it does and the Bible synthesis on overcoming sin overcome spiritual warfare is to use the full armor of God, to be in fellowship, to seek counsel, to dedicate yourself to Lord, to submit to God so the devil will flee from us, to recognize the devil in his Wiles but at the same time to not focus so much on that, because greater is he who is in us and who he was in the world as first John 4:4 says. So we don't want to discount the reality that there could be spirits tempting you to something something, and there's a way to be delivered from that.

Shea Houdmann

But the way a typical deliverance ministry so to speak goes about these things it's not biblical. Not to say that everything they're doing is wrong, but I think the the emphasis of the the devil made me do it like you said Jeff, that attitude is wrong and that most of the problem is since the enemy within. Our problem is ourselves, internal struggles rather than or being tempted by outside and there's enough wrong with me that I don't need to be blaming my issues, my sin, my failings on outside forces when I really know the vast majority of time it's me. I'm the one who said I'm the one who messed up.

Jeff Laird

I think one of the things we can see is in people who say that I have been delivered from such and such a spirit, when people have experiences, their real experiences, whatever they experienced really happened, but sometimes it's a question of why? What did you actually experience and what happened?

Jeff Laird

Here again, another parallel the movie Dumbo. Now full disclosure, I haven't seen the new one, so if there's something in there, don't e-mail me 'cause I'm I'm just talking about the old one and there's enough problems with that. But one of the key points of the movie Dumbo is that this little elephant can fly, but he's convinced by a friend of his that he can fly as long as he's holding his magic feather. Well the reality is the feather has nothing to do with him flying. He's capable of flying, but when he embraces the fact that he can fly 'cause he's got the feather, then he can fly.

Jeff Laird

The Bible says resist the devil and he will flee from you. If if you put somebody in a circumstance where they say, oh, I'm just, I can't do anything about this spiritual battle in my life because this demons

oppressing me and then somebody tells them well, we've done this thing. Just having the confidence to say yes, I have the strength in Christ to resist this thing that in and of itself can make a difference in somebody's life. In other words, yes, when we actually confront, resist, submit to God's word and push back against that temptation, you really can have success in those things. But that does not mean that what's happened is that somebody has magically separated you from some demonic entities.

Jeff Laird

Sometimes it's literally just you're choosing to take on the spiritual armor. The spiritual ability that God has given you, and doing that. So it's legitimate for us to say yes. Some people have these experiences. It's just a question of why? And we don't need to go all the way to Kundalini and Python and Jezebel spirits to explain that.

Kevin Stone

Those are good points Jeff. And yes, the the spiritual warfare is is real and but we do always want to go back to scripture and be informed by scripture about spiritual warfare and about our spiritual enemy. And this whole thing of the whole thing of getting into a spiritual taxonomy where we try to categorize all these different spirits and give them names, you know species, subspecies, whatever. It's that is completely outside the realm of Scripture. It's just going down a path that is based on people's imaginations really. And we want to steer clear of that and just get back to Scripture. Now we know that the enemy does some certain things. John Chapter 10 Jesus is talking about being the Good Shepherd. And he contrasts himself, in his nature, in his work, with that of the enemy. And he says that the enemy comes to do several things.

Kevin Stone

One is to lie well, he's called the father of lies elsewhere in Scripture, Satan is called the father of lies, so we know that he lies. In other words, he presents falsehood as if it were truth. And he does so very convincingly. He is a master deceiver. He is able to convince people that what is good is bad and what is bad is good, and he's the father of lies.

Kevin Stone

He also steals, Jesus says in John Chapter 10. That is, he takes what is not his, or at least he attempts to. He will attempt to steal joy. He'll attempt to steal our peace. He will attempt to steal our contentment. I think that's a big one, making us discontent with what God has given us. That's that's a that's a huge thing that he steals. In the parable that Jesus tells of the the four types of soil, Satan is pictured as the bird that steals away the seed from the ground from the hard ground, and so he's stealing the word out of hearts so that people will not believe. They will not receive the word. That's one of the things that, that our enemy does is one of his tactics is to steal.

Kevin Stone

He also destroys. He tears down things that are good and profitable. Tears down things that God has built. We see this all all over the place in society as he is working to dismantle the family unit. To redefine the family. To discount the family. To make it a less important role and families unnecessary, so dismantling the family. Also sowing discord within a church. Part of his tearing down ministry, he can

make great gains through this tactic of destroying. And then Jesus says the thief comes also to kill. Well and in John chapter 10. So Satan, our enemy works against anything that is life giving, life sustaining.

Kevin Stone

He tempts to sin and sin when it is full grown, James says, brings forth death. So how many suicides? How many drug overdoses? How many murders are the result of Satan tempting people to sin? And sin when it matures, it brings forth death. And so it's good to know who our enemy is. It's also good to know what our enemy does. We are not ignorant of his devices, Scripture says. We know his tactics.

Shea Houdmann

Absolutely Kevin, great points. Thinking back to like a recent question that really fits with what we are talking about, his essential statement was I was afflicted with a spirit of adultery and I gave into that temptation. It's like ok whether it was a spirit that tempted you or whether it was your own flesh, really beside the point. But the way he was, blame shifting, it was problematic to the point that demons being fallen angels are exceedingly powerful, and by what scripture says intelligent beings, the idea that the particular demon is only good at tempting people in one way. That kind of goes flies against Scripture, and that if like you mentioned, steal, kill, and destroy the three main ways that Satan will attacked or tempt us?

Shea Houdmann

I don't think any particular demon or spirit is limited to any one particular way of tempting us or attacking us. To say there's one spirit that does this, one spirit that does this. One spirit that does this is like no. I kind of think all of them are able to do all of the above and then that different ways of casting out or defeating certain demons like not biblically speaking seems to be proclaimed the name of Jesus. Rebuke them in the name of Jesus. That seems to be the biblical method of getting rid of any and all spirits and demonic attacks relying on Christ. So there's not as Jeff is saying some magic formula. OK, you've got this spirit. Therefore, this is how we get rid of it. That's not scriptural. Not to say that there's Jesus did say one time this type can only come out by prayer, but I think that's more of a change of focus that the disciples needed rather than saying that there's one type, you have to pray about.

Shea Houdmann

So there's some mystery to spiritual warfare, but the Bible is also very clear. It gives us the tools of here's what their schemes are. Here's how you defeat their schemes, and they all will go back to us relying on God, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, whose in us, rather than any magic formula or particular method or strategy.

Jeff Laird

We should also continue to emphasize that there there are two extremes to the issue. One is the idea of blaming everything on some external demon. The other is to sort of take the attitude that as Christians in particular, that we are immune from those sorts of influences, or those sorts of temptations. There's a lot of value in recognizing the idea that spiritual warfare in the biblical sense is a real thing, because we should recognize sometimes if some thoughts, ideas, temptations, draws come to our mind. It's a healthy thing for us to think. Is this something that's godly or is this something where I'm being I'm being

drawn, I'm being tempted, I'm being pushed in the wrong direction by this. If we just assume that we are immune to those things, or that such things cannot happen, then that makes us unaware.

Jeff Laird

Peter, even when he's talking to fellow Christian believers, talks about Satan as an adversary and wandering around, looking for somebody that he can devour. He's talking to saved, Christian believers at that point. So I do think we should recognize that it's a real thing. Spiritual warfare does exist and we do have to consider that we can be tempted, influenced, drawn in these different directions. If we ignore that, then we're not doing ourselves any favors as believers.

Kevin Stone

I'd like to say a word here about victory in the spiritual warfare, because the believer in Jesus Christ is guaranteed victory and couple passages that are very helpful with this, one is first John Chapter 5 verses four and five says this, everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world John asks? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the son of God. Those who are in Christ are overcomers and we overcome by our faith in him.

Kevin Stone

And then also, I'm not going to, I'm not going to read the whole passage here, but Psalm 91. For those of you that are in a in a spiritual warfare right now, you're in spiritual battle. And maybe it's the heat of the battle right now. Psalm 91 is so comforting in your battle, whoever. It starts this way, whoever dwells in the shelter of the most high will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust. The passage, goes on to talk about how God saves, how he delivers. He covers. His faithfulness is with us. He is our dwelling place and on and on. Psalm 91 is great for the for those who are in spiritual battle right now.

Shea Houdmann

Exactly and kind of going back to what Kevin mentioned earlier, talk about Ephesians 6:13 to 17 and the full armor of God. We'll include a link to article and that passage it's crucially important. This is the one passage in the Bible that it's very explicit. Here is the armor. The weaponry God has given you for spiritual warfare. And it's interesting to note in this passage of all all of the armor is defensive except for the sword of the spirit. The sword of spirit is the one offensive weapon if you want. And it says this is the sword of spirit which is the word of God. And if you want to look to the example of Jesus in Matthew Chapter 4 when he was tempted, each time Jesus was tempted by the Devil, he responded with Scripture. To me that is the example we are to follow whether when we're tempted, whether it's by our own flesh or by spiritual warfare, the answer is scripture. To rely on what God has already provided us. What God teaches us in Scripture, that is the the biblical method of spiritual warfare and that is the key to victory. It's more complicated than just reading Scripture or saying Scripture of course, just reading a scripture you don't believe in, I don't know that's going to have the same power. But relying on Christ, following his word, that's the biblical recipe, so to speak, for defeating our spiritual enemy.

Shea Houdmann

We kind of wanted to wrap everything up with that passage again. Ephesians 6:13 to 17 and then with the sword of spirit illustrated in Matthew chapter four with Jesus temptations. I think that's the ultimate

reminder of the the three of us want to point you to in that if spiritual warfare is real, yes. Satan and his demonic forces can attack us and that those attacks can be devastating. They can be powerful. Be given to them it can have disastrous implications on us, our spiritual lives, are our families, etc etc. So don't discount the reality of spiritual warfare. But at the same time, don't discount it to the point that you don't believe it's there and then don't give it too much power. Never feel that you don't have the tools for victory because it says in First John greater is he who is in you than he was in the world. God desires us to be victorious and he's given us everything we need for life and godliness. And that includes in spiritual warfare.

Shea Houdmann

Hope our conversation today on spiritual warfare has been encouraging and edifying to you. Obviously there's way more things we could talk about, and we'll include some links to various Got Questions articles on these topics in the show notes at podcast.gotquestions.org, and also the description on YouTube when this video, this episode goes live. So Jeff and Kevin thank you for joining me today. It's been the Got Questions podcast on spiritual warfare. Got questions? The Bible has answers and we'll help you find them.