

SPIRITUAL FORCES: FLESH + SPIRIT

November 6, 2017 | Pastor Randy Remington

This will be the final installment of our Sunday morning series on “Spiritual Forces”.

We have come to realize that there is another world, an unseen world that we might not even be aware of. Also whether we want it or not, there is a spiritual battle raging around us, with a relentless enemy that will never accept a truce. Jesus is redeeming everything back and is inviting us to join him as he does this; so you can either put on the armor and join, or become a captive.

We also learned that our battle isn't with people around us, but with spiritual wickedness. Last week Pastor addressed the first question that arose out of the feedback on this series on angels. So we looked into the work of angels around us, bringing us comfort knowing that there are more with us than aligned against us.

The second question, that we will address in this lesson is about recognition. How do we know what is the enemy and what is just the broken world we live in? We will consider three influences that can keep us captive; our flesh, the world and the Devil.

Listen to Ephesians 2:1-5:

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.”

FLESH: The inner propensity or inclination to do evil.

Our physical bodies are not bad or evil. When Jesus returns, our bodies will be changed and will be like Jesus glorified body. Our spirits are being made strong and growing as his Spirit renews and changes us. But as true as this is, we all know our physical bodies are fading.

Our “flesh” battles against Godliness; it wants what is against God. It wants to be independent, separate from Jesus lordship and touch in our lives.

WORLD: The unhealthy social environment in which we live.

There is an evil world system that we are called not to conform to or align our lives with. If we allow, there are many things around us that will shape our thinking and lives. The enemy works in harmony with the world systems.

DEVIL: Opponent, accuser and destroyer.

He is our opponent, the accuser and the Destroyer. This is how he works, he tempts and baits us to sin. When we stumble, he becomes our accuser. He will try to plant seeds of doubt regarding how God views us; accusing us of all kinds of things. Make no mistake, the end game for him is destruction, the destruction of you, your relationships, everything!

So we wonder, as we journey in our lives, as we face battles and oppression, what is the Devil, the world and our flesh.

Mark 7:1-5, 14-23 “The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles).”

So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?"

Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them."

After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. "Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

He went on: "What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person."

1. THE SOURCE OF SIN: "FROM WITHIN"

The Pharisees and Teachers of the Law believed that things from the outside defiled a person. It was almost like there were "spiritual germs" out there that will defile you before God, so they came up many ceremonial washings. But Jesus is turning things upside down. He pointed out that things from the outside, including what you put into your body, don't defile you; they go right through a person's body. He went on to say, that the source of sin comes out of our own hearts.

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We have a marriage ministry at B4 called "Reunion". We are told that if the couple can make it past the first 5 weeks, they will finish the entire 17-week course. The reason for this fact, is that the first 5 weeks, each person must "look in a mirror" and look at their own hearts.

Proverbs 4:23 "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."

2. THE ESSENCE OF SIN: SELF-CENTEREDNESS

"Anthropos" (:7, 9, 11, 13, 18, 21, 23)

This is like turning my face from God and turning it towards myself.

Anthropocentric: Regarding humankind as the central or most important element of existence, especially as opposed to God or animals.

3. THE OFFENSE OF SIN: A HOLY (ALTOGETHER RIGHTEOUS) GOD.

In reality, all sin is an offense to God. Some people wonder, why doesn't God just pardon me or another person for their sin. But he is a holy and just God. Think of the worst crime a person could commit in this world, against a child or something else that is horrid. What would you think if the judge just said, you're free to go, no consequences or punishment? I'm sure we would scream, "where is the justice?"

We should be very thankful that Jesus was the only one who could step in and take the punishment for our sins and Justice was served. Listen to Isaiah as he sees God in his holiness:

Isaiah 6:1-5 "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

Trying to screen things from our own heart doesn't work. He wants to give us a new heart, we can begin to live out of our new heart.

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." (Ezekiel 36:26)

Here is a realistic picture of our current state without the work of Christ in our lives:

- **Stained:** I cannot get clean
- **Burdened:** I cannot bear up under the weight
- **In Debt:** I cannot repay what I owe

"It was on the cross that Jesus bore the weight of our sin, cleansed us from the stain of our sin and forgave us the debt of our sin. As a result, He reconciled sinful humanity and righteous Deity through His own sinless flesh".

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Guilt - confess

Anger - forgive

Greed - give

Jealousy - celebrate

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Okay, so we know who our true enemy is and we know there is a battle raging in an unseen world. Pastor Randy pointed out 3 influences in our lives, the Devil, the World and our Flesh. So please discuss how we discern the difference between these.
2. What did we learn about our flesh, the world and the Devil?
3. Please discuss the "Source of sin"
4. Also please discuss the true "Essence of sin"
5. And finally discuss the "Offense of sin"