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Modern Myths About Satan and Spiritual Warfare

By David Servant

Introduction

The subject of spiritual warfare has become increasingly popular in the church during the past decade. An ever-expanding number of seminars, sermons, books, and even music tapes center on this timely topic. Christians are being barraged with teachings and techniques on “pulling down strongholds over cities,” “warfare prayer,” “binding the strong man,” and so on.

Unfortunately, much of what is being taught contradicts what Scripture teaches. Consequently, many Christians are practicing a kind of spiritual warfare that the Bible never prescribes.

As I’ve read some of the popular literature on the subject of spiritual warfare, I’m often utterly amazed at how far some teachers have deviated from the Bible. Much of what is promoted as deeper spiritual truth is nothing but human conjecture and should be classed as false doctrine. And ironically, as false doctrines about spiritual warfare are accepted by Christians, Satan is, to some degree, accomplishing his goal to deceive believers! Some who are teaching about how to win in spiritual warfare are unwittingly helping us, through their false doctrines, to lose the very battle Satan has launched against us.

Even more alarming is the ever-increasing focus on Satan, rather than on Jesus. For some believers, practically every aspect of their Christian life centers around warfare with the devil. Their prayers begin, not with “Our Father Who art in heaven,” but “Satan, I come against you now...” Praise is not considered something offered up to a worthy God but something that serves as a weapon in spiritual battle. Church services are not opportunities to worship God and learn about Jesus, but times to do battle and pull down strongholds. In all of this, the devil is actually being glorified. Surely he loves all the attention.

Jesus referred to Satan as “the father of lies” (John 8:44). Lies are the devil’s primary weapon, his “fiery darts” of which the apostle Paul wrote (Eph. 6:16, KJV). Since he is the father of lies, it should not surprise us then that Satan even lies about himself. We are told by the apostle Paul that he disguises himself as an “angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:4). He wants us to believe about himself what isn’t true.

For example, Satan lies about his very existence. Many people don’t believe he exists, and I think that if I were the devil, I would be quite happy about that.

Satan lies about his character. He would like us to think that he is not so evil after all—an “angel of light” if we’ll accept it.

Satan lies about his operations. He wants us to believe he is much more powerful and crafty than he really is. Sadly, he has a lot of Christians fooled.

By examining the truth of Scripture, however, we can help remedy this situation. Certainly there is such a thing as *scriptural* spiritual warfare, and that is what we should be practicing. There is no reason for us to remain ignorant because the Bible tells us all we need to know about Satan and his schemes.

One of Satan's more successful schemes is to get Christians *off-balance* by their emphasizing one scripture at the neglect of another. He even attempted to use this tactic on Jesus Himself (see Matt. 4:5-7). That is why we will examine many scriptures. Much of the unscriptural teaching regarding spiritual warfare and Satan is built upon scriptures that are taken out of their immediate context or out of the context of what the whole Bible teaches.

It is certainly not my intention to attack any person's ministry, but simply to reveal the truth from God's Word. In the following pages, I have not mentioned anyone's name as someone who teaches error, because there is no doubt in my mind that most who are promoting unscriptural ideas about Satan and spiritual warfare are sincerely committed to Christ. Moreover, I know from personal experience the embarrassment of having to correct my own teaching. Some of the very myths which I expose in the following pages are myths I once believed and taught. I hope that no readers will think I am picking on them. We are all in this together! Please try your best to read objectively.

In the following pages I've addressed some of the most common misconceptions regarding Satan and spiritual warfare. I don't know of anyone who promotes all of these errors, so don't assume that just because someone teaches Myth #1 that he also teaches Myth #2 and so on. What follows is a compilation of myths that I've gathered from numerous sources. In the final chapter, I discuss the essentials of *biblical* spiritual warfare.

My prayer is that this study will help many who need a little theological adjustment, and that it will be a blessing to those who need vital biblical information to overcome Satan's schemes in their own lives.

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