

Daniel 10 assorted verses

12-14 12 Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. 13 The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, 14 and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come.”

18-21 18 Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me. 19 And he said, “O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage.” And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.” 20 Then he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come. 21 But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince

Daniel 10 brought up a topic I would like to revisit. I promised in a prior sermon to talk about the spiritual things happening around us that we cannot see. And how we should think about them.

Remember in our last Daniel sermon we read that an angel (I think Gabriel) told Daniel about a struggle that both **he** and **Michael** were involved in. It was a great enough struggle that the angel needed help.

What are we to make of this? How should we approach life knowing this kind of thing exists. What are we to make of the devil’s continuous activity on planet earth?

Let’s go way back.

What is evil?

How do we know if something **is** evil? Well, we take what God says about **good** and anything that is **against good** is evil. **Evil** cannot exist without the existence of **good**.

Evil is anti good.

Ok, scripture tells us that **God** is **good**. God is the **embodiment** of goodness.

There is no **good-er** being than God. He is **perfect goodness**.

By God's very **existence**, by God's very **goodness** arises the **capacity** for an opposite. All it takes is for evil to exist is for something to oppose God. Any opposition to God is evil. So the fact that God exists, and God is good, logically allows for something that opposes God.

Now, God created inferior beings to Himself. He first created Angels. Then He created humans.

At this point God could have eliminated the possibility of evil. He could have made these beings with **no capacity** to decide **anti-God** choices. He could have easily done that.

But wait? Couldn't there be another way to **be good** and to eliminate the **possibility** of evil?

Is there any other way to eliminate the possibility of evil? Could God have made a goodness, without, by its very creation, having **an inborn logically necessary capacity** for anti goodness? We certainly do not have the capacity to imagine such a thing and still maintain a semblance of sanity, of logic. In our world of sanity, if there is a good, any choice against good is evil. Maybe God could have such a capacity to create such a thing, but no human could accuse Him of not taking up an option that we have zero knowledge of. We cannot even conceive of how that could happen.

So anyway, there appears to **only be one way** to eliminate the possibility of evil in humans and angels. They could be made like the rest of the animals in creation who have no ability to choose to obey God or to choose not to obey God. They would not have a capacity for moral choices.

God did not choose that. He gave angels and humans the capacity to decide for God or not for God.

When God created free moral agents, God created the capacity for evil to be embodied. Up until that point evil was only a **philosophical possibility**. Evil could not exist **in** God. God could not be both good and evil. That is impossible. If God were the only being to exist, evil would only be a theory. But upon creation of free moral agents, evil became a real possibility, an actual option.

You might wonder why I am going off on this topic. Well sometimes we speak about evil as being some kind of force out there. We see it kind of like **the force** in Star Wars. There is the force and then there is the dark side. This force exists in and of itself. Well, evil is not like that. The **capacity** for evil exists all on its own. The **possibility** for evil exists all on its own. But for evil to **actually exist** as more than just a possibility it requires an anti God decision by a free moral agent, a creature that God created with the capacity to choose **for** God or **against** God.

The angels were the first created beings with a free moral agent choice. The devil, Satan, led a rebellion against God. He chose an **anti-God** stance. That made him the driving force behind the **anti-God** motivation. His stance is extreme rebellion against God. If the devil could kill God and take over, he would. The devil and his demons are the embodiment of evil. There is evil on planet earth first because of the devil.

But then man was created. When the devil had the opportunity, he used his influence to posture **anti God** options to Adam and Eve. When they chose to sin, they fell under the devil's domain. Every child after that has been born in a state of **sin**, a state of **condemnation**, dead to God and alive to their father the devil. That is not a pretty picture but that is how the Bible presents it.

So there is no evil **impersonal** force out there. Evil is a very **personal** force. It does not exist outside the embodiment of God's creatures. There are evil beings who are strategically driving evil in our world, and there are evil people who are victims of the fall and then willing participants in certain forms of evil. There are no longer humans that are free moral agents. While a man is now born with the freedom to decide any option under the devil's domain, he is no longer free, in and of himself, to choose God. He is inclined by nature against God. He is born God's enemy. He is born into an **anti-God state** and he is no longer free of his own power, like Adam was, to choose for or against God. He only has the capacity, by birth, to choose against God.

OK, so Chapter 10 of Daniel lifted the curtain a little for us to see some things happening in the angelic/demonic world. The big question is, what should we make of it. What can we learn from scripture about how to deal with it?

First off people have a tendency to make one of two mistakes. We tend in one of two extremes. The devil likes it this way. He may even develop his strategies accordingly.

The first mistake is to make **too much** of the devil's power. The second is to make **too little** of it. We must stand against the devil's schemes, so it is important that we have the proper understanding of his activities.

Making too much:

1 Pet 5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

The devil is like a roaring lion. From what I understand a lion sometimes roars when looking for game in order to flush out game. The prey becomes afraid of the roar and that exposes them to his attack. In our case, the devil pretends to have great power. But as we have seen in other passages, he is God's dog on a short leash. He can only do what our Father allows him to do. He is far more powerful than any of us. But he is nothing compared to God.

Often in third world countries the devil tries to display himself as **all powerful** so that the tribal people believe he **controls everything**. He wants their fear because when he gets them to fear him he can control them, he can gain their worship. So often ministers to primitive tribes, like David Sitton was, need to show the tribal people that **God** is the powerful one. Then the tribal people will often go against the devil and respond to God's call on their lives.

But even for us, we are sometimes snookered. Have you ever thought that a temptation was **so strong** that you could not **resist it**. Have you ever thought that the devil **made you do** something? Have you ever thought that you simply cannot be faithful at some point because it is just **too hard**? What is the point of trying? I always fail. All of these ideas are like a toothless lion roaring to flush out game. Any time we believe the power and resources that God provides in our lives are **not enough** to stand against the schemes of the devil, we are mistaken. Oh, we cannot stand up to him **in our own strength**. But God gives us His word and His people and His presence and His power and His armor. As we live by faith in Him, there is no temptation that has taken us that we cannot, by God's power, resist. Another interesting example of thinking too much of the devil is when we begin ascribing **everything bad that happens** to the devil.

James 1: 2 says- Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James does not say, when you meet various trials, blame the devil. He is not even mentioned.

In fact, later on in the passage James gives us even more insight when he tells us where many of our temptations come from.

14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Often the demons need to do nothing. Our own desires can do much of his work for him. If the devil and his demons were locked up tomorrow, we would still battle with our fleshly desires.

Even Jesus said that a tower falling upon a bunch of men was not a punishment of God. He did not mention the devil in that passage either. Bad stuff happens on planet earth. It never happens outside of God's control. And God protects us from bad things happening to us that would undo us spiritually. But we have little reason to believe that most misfortunes are due to the devil and his demons singling us out for harm. Sometimes he does, but most times that is not the source of our trouble. While I may want to ascribe demonic characteristics to my cars, most of the time they stop working because they are old, not because they are demonic.

I used this illustration previously about an evangelistic event I was part of once. When young people did not attend the event, the leadership of the event began casting demons out of the seats. That ended my involvement. That is an example of making too much of the devil. And because of it they responded in an ineffective way.

I have read books and heard sermons that what we really need to do, if we are really spiritual, is to identify the oppressing demon and then cast it out. We should pray against that demon. That is the secret to bringing down the enemy's strongholds.

They say if you have an issue in your life, an addiction, a sinful inclination, you should identify the demon, pray against it, and cast out that demon in Jesus's name. It is interesting that we don't see an example in Paul's writing of anything like that.

It is interesting, too, that Gabriel must not have known about that. He didn't ask Daniel to do any of that. This was Gabriel's advice to Daniel-

Daniel 10:19 (ESV)

19 And he said, "O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage."

You would have thought that if there was a **secret** about doing battle with demonic powers that **we need to know about**, that the angel would have told us. He was strangely silent on the topic, even though he was actively engaged in that battle.

Now we know from scripture and from our own histories that demons exist. Many of us here have stories of seeing demonic beings or feeling demonic oppression. It is common for people ministering in India to report this kind of oppression in Hindu temples. You can actually feel the evil. I felt it 50 years ago when I visited Haiti. The devil often uses this kind of ruse to scare us into being

faithlessness and fear. But the promises in scripture are so wonderful in this regard.

Scripture tells us **1 John 4:4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.**

James 4:7 says **Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**

Let's look at the advice that Paul gives for doing spiritual battle. We do well to look at the passages that **specifically address the topic** rather than speculating from passages that do not. We will go through this very briefly. I added a link in Slack to hear Mike's sermon about it also. It is a very good use of an hour.

Eph 6:

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

It is interesting that Paul does not say, depend upon your good intentions and your strong desire to win this battle. No it is the Lord **we run to** when we need to do spiritual battle. Be strong in the Lord. This is like running to your dad when a classmate picks on you in kindergarten. No evil force can stand up to the resources available to us, if we will use them.

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Notice that we are offered this wonderful armor to be successful against the attacks of our enemy. And they are effective if we put on the whole armor. OK so what is this armor? How do we do this?

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

This is a very helpful verse to use when we tend to make too little of the devil. It is just like Gabriel revealed. We can rest assured that the headlines in news articles do not trace back to spiritual roots in their articles. But we can also rest assured that when we see evil strategies being carried out to do harm to God's people and strategies to bring the world together under one umbrella that the greatest problem is not the **people** involved. The problem is the **devil** and demons involved. When evil is structured, the devil is behind the design. When you see evil being strategized and mobilized, we may not know what humans are behind it. But we know that behind the **humans** are **demons**.

Behind the evil politicians and bankers and brokers and educators are demons. Behind seductive theologies are demons. That is what we are battling against. People are the pawns. We do well to remember that it is our job to rescue the

people with the gospel if possible. They are not the power behind the plan. They are pawns.

Also demons attack us individually. They are capable of suggestion, of lies. They are not given much leeway to do us direct harm. Although the devil did great harm to Job. Most of the time they attack with suggestion, with lies, with those fiery darts. They may arrange our situations to put us in tempting circumstances, specifically designed to harm us. Remember that the devil wanted to sift Peter like wheat. They may use other humans to persecute us.

We need to know what we are up against. Note too that the demons want to wrestle. They want to get up close and personal. There is nothing arms length about wrestling. But our goal is not so much to **wrestle** as it is to **stand**.

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

The word stand is used three times in these two verses. We will need this armor to stand. Ok so what is this armor? And how do we put it on?

14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth,

How do we fasten the belt of truth?

We grow in a love for truth. We grow in an appreciation of it. We welcome truth. A little later we will see the sword of the Lord which is the word of God mentioned. I think verse 14 is more comprehensive than that. It certainly **includes** truth that God revealed to us in His word. But it is **more** than that. It is truth about our motives. It is truth about our behavior. It is truth about our intentions. It is truth about our histories. It is truth about our thoughts. It is truth about our temptations.

Lies are the devil's territory. Lies are effective in **detering the help** we need to change. Lies will stop true ministry and conviction and encouragement from reaching the points of our need. Deception blocks out people's ministry to the **real us**. It is interesting that in Colossians, after telling us a list of things to put off we are specifically told **not to lie to one another**. All through scripture we are warned to **avoid deception**. We cannot use as armor what the devil uses as a weapon. When we use lies to protect ourselves we are not doing ourselves any kindnesses.

We might think- hey, no problem there. I love truth. Well, put it to the test. When you argue with your spouse, will you stop and consider what the truth really is, even when you know that you could win the argument with a lie? When you don't want the **truth exposed** will you **cheat** and divert the conversation to

other topics? Do you love truth enough that you won't violate it even when it costs you? Even when it costs you losing the argument?

Will you tell the truth when you know it is impossible to **prove** that you did something wrong but you know **you did** something wrong? Kids? Will you tell the truth even when the truth gets you disciplined.

Do you want to stand against the devil? It starts here. Take the time to know what the truth is. If a person never pauses in an argument we can usually be sure what we are getting is not the pure truth. Watch Trump respond to criticism and you will see **how not** to do it. It takes time to know what the truth really is. We don't find it by giving ourselves the benefit of the doubt, by instantly defending ourselves because everyone should know we would never do such a thing. We get it by pausing to ask the question, **what really is true**. What is true about what God tells us about life from His word? What is true about my own thoughts and deeds and motives? That is where our standing against the devil starts. The belt is what the rest of the armor hangs on. We can have everything else, but it will be ineffective if we will not commit to truth. **Standing starts with truth.**

and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

The devil is the accuser. Revelations tells us he accuses us night and day. And if all we had was truth we would be in bad spot. Because the truth accuses us too. We need protection against the condemning truth of our lives.

God has given us the glorious **breastplate of righteousness**. Imagine, if you will, Christ sitting at the right hand of God. And Christ has a name tag. On the back of that name tag are our names, each one of us who is in Christ. The devil accuses us and Christ flips over the name tag to display our names. It looks like you are out of luck devil. Jon is hidden in me. I am now his life. Jon has raised with me. Since you cannot bring an accusation against me, you cannot bring an accusation against Jon.

That is what we are putting on. We are putting on our only response to every accusation. This breastplate protects our core of who we really are. What a wonderful piece of armor.

15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

For shoes we put on something that the gospel gives us. It is a readiness. What are you ready for when you think about the gospel? Well, the gospel is the message that removes the enmity between us and God. Now we are ready to live. We can face life because the biggest battle, the battle we could never win, is already won. And it is won in the gospel.

1 Cor 15:56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Because we have the victory of the gospel, we are ready for everything else.

16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

I always thought this was very interesting. The shield of faith. What happens when we believe even the smallest of the devil's lies. Like the lie- "it is ok to be bitter about what this person did to me. Look how bad it was. And this is only a little thing in my life?" That is the kind of little flaming dart that spreads until it divides a church. Faith says that I must trust what God says. I must trust who God is. If He says a thought or action is off limits, it is off limits. If scripture says something about me and I perceive myself differently, this shield of faith will protect me from believing the wrong thing. If scripture says I am an overcomer and I feel like a loser, I can by faith believe what God says. And I can keep that little idea from ruining my life. There are a million examples we could use. But faith will stop the spread of destruction from the lies we are tempted to believe. Faith will protect us. Faith is our trust in the character of God to the point that we believe what He says and do what He commands. Faith believes what God says when it contradicts what our hearts say. Faith keeps the sinful suggestions the devil offers from growing to destroy us.

17 and take the helmet of salvation,

When we understand our salvation, our minds are protected from those attacks that will be hurled at us. The devil will tempt us to think we can **earn** our salvation and then he can **undo** us in our pride. He can tempt us to think that our efforts will never be good enough to be saved. He will work on us to think less of others that we think do not **perform as well** as we think we do. But when we understand our salvation, we maintain a humble appreciation of the grace and mercy of God. Our minds are protected.

and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

Have you ever noticed that this armor we have doesn't seem overly dramatic. We don't have a Holy Spirit bomb that will take out the devil's headquarters. We don't have the congregation flash bang that will instantly zap our congregation with super spirituality. No, we have words. Plain old words written in a book. That is the only weapon given that is both offensive and defensive. While the

other stuff protects us, this is what we fight with. Words. True thoughts. That is where the battle is won or lost for our standing.

It is truth that we need to free ourselves from our wrong perspectives and perceptions.

Are we faced with a temptation? What is the truth from God's word?

Are we faced with a trial? What is the truth from God's word?

Are we faced with a situation where we need wisdom? What is the truth from God's word?

Are we being attacked spiritually? What is the truth from God's word?

We use the word of God all the time in defending our souls from the devil's attacks. We replace the lies we are tempted to believe, the fiery darts, with the words of God's truth.

18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

Basically I think this describes just being in continual conversation with God, so everything in our lives is lived in His conscious presence. We allow no separation to happen between us and God. We take no time outs where we can pursue something out of bounds in our relationship with Christ. It is kind of like keeping contact with the command center by radio when you are in battle. We need to keep getting our orders and we need to report our status. If we break off communication we make ourselves vulnerable to attacks that we are not prepared for and that we cannot get the resources we need to stand up to them.

To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Part of this resistance of the devil's attack will mean staying awake and keeping in mind that we are not in a vacation center. We are in a battle ground. Our hearts are not safe in this enemy territory. We must constantly be watching for danger for ourselves and all those we are in fellowship with and responsible for. There is no armor for our backs. We need others to watch our backs.

Those are Paul's instructions for what we need to do in light of the spiritual battle that is going on around us. We do not need the names of demons. We do not need some kind of spiritual spying on our enemy. We know all we need to know of the enemy. What we need to access to have victory are **the resources** that **Christ provided to us** through His work on the cross and His revelation of Himself in the Word and through the church that He has placed us in.

Ok we have dealt with making too much of the devil's activities.

Now what about **making too little of the devil**:

Satan, for a long time, essentially kept a very low profile in our country. It is rare that he has wanted to draw attention to himself through open exhibitions of witchcraft and Satanic worship. That is apparently changing. Now worship of the devil seems to be getting cool. It is becoming main stream in the entertainment industry.

But often Satan wants us to be sophisticated and laugh about the idea that there is a real Satan. That has been the popular stance for years.

2 Cor 11: 14 says- **And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.**

It is very interesting to hear Satanists talk about their agenda. They sound like a wonderful benevolent organization setting people free from oppressive rules and ideas. No surprise there.

Also listen to a lot of the usual arguments regarding things like **pro abortion** or **limiting population** or **animal rights** or **gender identity**. The focus is usually on being sympathetic to human beings, wanting to rescue the lives of pregnant girls, wanting to save the planet and the people and animals on it, wanting to be kind to those whose desires are misplaced. etc etc. It consists of rescuing people from all of their bad choices. And the whole pursuit stems from a humanistic mindset that makes man god and makes God into nothing.

We can expect this kind of thing. No human is likely to say, I am doing evil. No human is likely to say I am only doing this because I hate the very idea of God. Most people are not even aware of those things. They do their master's bidding knowingly or unknowingly.

If the devil cannot scare you out of your cover, he will try to seduce you from it by his pretended virtue. If scaring you with his malevolence won't work, he will try to seduce you with his benevolence. He doesn't care which. He is a liar. He doesn't **have** a belt of truth. Nor does he **want** one. Nor does he want **us** to have one.

He is tricky. And he is powerful in his sphere. But our weapons are sure to work if we will only use them.

I would like to close with a quote:

The answer to this strategy is to see the reality of what Daniel saw in chapter 10: "Be convinced of the reality of the devil and his very real power. Be aware of the heavenly dimension of the struggle. But remember too that you don't struggle alone." Michael and the other heavenly figure had been engaged in this

conflict together on behalf of God's people since the first year of Darius (538 B.C.), the time when the decree to allow the Jews to return to their homeland had been issued and several years before Daniel's prayer. Day by day and year after year, there are powerful heavenly forces engaged on our side of the struggle as well as that of the enemy.

Iain M. Duguid, Daniel, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Iain M. Duguid, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 186–188.

And at the end of the day, our victory over the devil is certain if we are in Christ.