

The Christian Counselor and the Bodily, Psychological, Moral, & Financial Threats Disguised by Current Health Narratives

Ernesto Vasquez, MD

HANDOUT #2

1. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT EVIL

- The problem of evil in the world is a spiritual or moral problem, not a scientific or psychological one.
- Power, will—the ability to choose—and relationships are central to the problem of evil.
- The nature of the forces operative in the world govern what may affect us for good or ill—what may go right or wrong and under what circumstances.
- By its very nature, power has a spiritual dimension.
When we deal in the realms of power or powerlessness, consciously or unconsciously, we deal either with God or the Devil.
- The notion of power implies some sort of energy.
- It also implies some sort of movement or change, whether physical or psychological.
- The source of evil is *personal* not impersonal as in the natural world.
Satan and demons are personal, willful beings.
- In their basic nature, activity, and ability to produce effects in the world, the Devil and his minions can be characterized as *raw* power, as in 'might makes right'.
- When considering the problem of evil, 3 categories of power are of interest:
 - the capacity to exert physical force or energy,
 - the capacity or ability to act, perform, or produce, and
 - the ability to control or influence others.
- What we call *will* is our capacity or ability to choose, our sense of volition or motivation system that involves our whole being.
It requires *something beyond* the basic organizing of subjective emotional experience known as psychological functioning.
- Willing or choosing requires organizing experience according to a sense of purpose or meaning.
Our willing or choosing draws energy from the spiritual dimension, a source that can be virtuous or not.
That is where our *values* come from.
Our values anchor our choices.

- God established a natural, a moral law, a sociopolitical, and a spiritual order, and we are to honor them.
- The spiritual order is the only absolute one, for not to choose God is to choose death.
- We may be free to choose, but *we remain free only if we choose God*.
In the New Testament, the term God's *will* refers to *creation* and *salvation*.
By contrast, Satan's will aims to *destroy*.
- To do the will of God is the essential *goal, condition, and content* of the human life.
- Human willing is marked by its impotence and failure, it is arbitrary and falsely autonomous.
Yet, the spiritual dimension, representing the *human spirit*, expresses itself *through* this fallible human will.
- Both the divine and the demonic wills take hold of one's inner being, engaging one in such a way that *our responsibility remains*.

EVIL CAN BE DEFINED

- as a personal, organized, active will external to our wills and wanting to snare and destroy us (Shuster), or
- as that force, residing either inside or outside human beings, that opposes the life force,
 - that seeks to kill life or liveliness,
 - to kill the spirit,
 - to kill the essential attributes of life: sentience, mobility, awareness, growth, autonomy, motivation (Peck).

PEOPLE OF THE LIE

- Evil human beings are quiet common and appear ordinary to the casual observer.
- There is little that is dramatic about them.
- They wear the MASK OF NORMALITY, a seemingly sincere, intelligent, even charming external presentation.

2. HUMAN EVIL ACTION IN THE WORLD IS INTERSUBJECTIVELY CONSTITUTED

MALIGNANT SATAN	+	IMPERFECT HUMAN	= ENDLESS CALAMITIES
<p>OLD TESTAMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Old testament pays attention only to Yahweh's spiritual being who is surrounded by a host through which he rules indirectly, including angels of wrath that do his will. Satan apparently is one of this host. • Other potential spiritual threats are animal-form demons, and proscribed magic practices. The implication is that there is more spiritual power available than we are permitted to explore. <p>NEW TESTAMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the time of the New Testament, Satan or the Devil is depicted as being in absolute antithesis to God, having broad and organized influence over the world as a whole, and working toward <i>the destruction of humankind</i>. • The synoptic Gospels show unequivocally the unity of the kingdom of evil under a single head (Mark 3:22-27 and parallels). • Because of "the wiles of the devil," we must contend "against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:11-12). In my opinion, this passage names the sponsors of the Covid-19 situation. • Paul speaks as if the universe itself has always been pervaded not just invaded by spiritual forces, as if its most fundamental constituents are at least as much spiritual as material. • Originally, these spiritual powers seem <i>not</i> to be intrinsically evil. Something has gone wrong. Created to have a spiritual, wilfull dimension, the whole universe, not just humankind, has decided to go its own way. • In this regard, Romans 8:38-39 is particularly striking. It speaks of angels, pricipalities, and powers linked with life itself as forces with potential for separating us 	<p>from God: <i>even life, if set up as an end in itself, has "demonic" potential.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likewise suggestive is the phrase "the elements of the cosmos" or the elemental spirits of the universe" mentioned in Galatians 4:3, 9 and Colossians 2:8, 20. • It could refer to the material or physicalist components of the universe, or to heathen religious practice, or to stellar spirits. • Any of these usages involves a concept of <i>something less than God</i> to which humankind may come into bondage. Again, the Covid-19 situation comes to mind. • The important po nt is that whether the forces at work are flesh, law, sin, idols, demons, the cosmos, time, space, life or death, politics or philosophy, public opinion or Jewish law, pious traditions or the course of the stars, they are seen somehow as <i>more than themselves</i>. There is a unifying theme of <i>spiritual power</i> behind them. • Paul's words stand against our tendency to allow the powers <i>to remain concealed</i> in the structures and persons through which they work. • Nothing in the human struggle, the functioning of temporal orders, or the appearances of nature is spiritually indifferent. • Underlying the earthy drama of birth, life, and death, there is a cosmic battle, a spiritual warfare, taking place. • The cosmos, in captivity to powers that have gone atray, is out of joint, and <i>we must not</i> align ourselves with the rebellious powers. • But if we fight using our own power, we will surely fail. (cont.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrogant Entitled Baffling Amoral Grandiose Superior Power seeking Ruthless Willful Mendacious Controlling Aggressive Cruel Suspicious Hypersensitive Manipulative Cunning Disruptive Exploitive Confusing Rigidly dualistic Destructive Extremist Hypocritical Parasitic Stealthy Subtle Covert Greedy 	

- The thrust of the biblical message is that *we must actively depend upon God* if we are to cope successfully with the enemy, whether the enemy is Satan himself or the demons, principalities, and powers that are subject to him.
 - The universe is permeated, not by neutral, indifferent choices, but by spiritual alternatives.
 - The spiritual forces of wickedness work through and not just upon our own will.
 - When we speak of Satan “having” or “gaining” power, we lose something of the mystery and dynamic of his functioning.
 - We all too easily assimilate him to whatever else we think of as powerful whether kings, or freight trains, or oceans.
 - The principalities differ in a fundamental way from all these: *they are invisible*. They do not just *have* power. THEY ARE POWER.
 - The key point is that Satan and his hordes *conceal themselves* in the structures of the world and human life, making the world and humankind instruments and bearers of their powers.
 - In that sense, the cosmos is indeed possessed, so that energy and structures meant for God, meant to serve God, are turned against him and his purposes.
 - But it is still *God's creation* that is perverted. God can will what is other than himself. Thus he makes a universe and human beings in their own sphere of freedom.
 - On the other hand, because he can only will himself, *the Devil has and is nothing*.
 - By denying God, the Devil lost the single Necessity and is therefore insatiable, destroying anything he gets because he no longer is.
 - Thus, in 1 Peter 5:8, the Devil is pictured as a Devourer. Think here of extractive capitalism, as in fracking for oil, or of predicted endless pandemics that will require endless vaccinations.
 - The Devil, then, is a purely PARASITIC POWER.
 - Whatever shape he takes, his designs are all ANTI— antihumankind and antiGod, antcreation and antiredemption, no matter how much he may *appear* FOR culture, human religions, earth, and the development of life.
- BEWARE THEREFORE OF whatever the current narratives claim is good.

Who might we be obeying if we follow their commands without question and careful reflection?

