Demonology 101

Never be afraid, never be naive, and give the devil no place

SPEAKER	Geno Hildebrandt
DATE	Sunday, March 1, 2020
PASSAGES	Luke 10:17-20; 1 Peter 5:6-9; Colossians 2:15; Matthew 12:28-29; John 16:8-11; Matthew 4:8-9; 1 John 4:4; James 4:7; Ephesians 4:26-27
MESSAGE	Begins at 0:00:00 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus and his followers took the demonic seriously, and so should we – without fear. The devil is a created being, his angels are fallen, and Christ defeated and disgraced them all at the cross. Our part is a mopping-up operation: humble ourselves, speak the truth, stay watchful, resist, and give the devil no place.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Never, ever be afraid of demons. The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.
- God and the devil are not equals. God alone is uncreated; the devil is a creature. Yin and yang is not a Christian idea.
- The thing to rejoice in is not spiritual authority but that your name is written in heaven.
- At the cross Jesus bound the strong man and publicly stripped the powers of their rank. The demonic kingdom is defeated, still claiming authority it no longer has.
- God allows evil so that we learn to hate it and to love the truth and the good – and then he sends us to help clean up the mess.
- The enemy's main work is often subtle: undermining faith and preventing the formation of virtue.
- Unresolved anger and long-standing sin give the devil a foothold. Repent, forgive and settle accounts quickly.

▶ 0:02:44

Geno had promised this message the week before, in a series on preparing for spiritual opposition, and held it back for a Sunday with fewer guests. He began with the last of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness.

> "Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.'"
>
> MATTHEW 4:8–9 ↗

Enemy-occupied territory

▶ 0:03:14

Did the devil really have that authority, or was the father of lies just lying? Geno said he is in the camp that thinks he had it – usurped when Adam and Eve, entrusted with dominion over creation in Genesis 1:26–28, forfeited it by disobeying God. The world has been under the serpent's sway ever since, and the Bible tells the story of God raising up an anointed King and his followers to bring in his

legitimate kingdom in enemy-occupied territory. “What we were born again into wasn’t so much a pleasure cruise as it was a battleship.”

▶ 0:05:02

The worldview of Jesus and the apostles, which Geno said should be ours, includes spiritual forces that do at least two things: blind people to God’s benevolent authority, and turn them against one another in anger and violence. But the battle is “a mopping-up operation,” carried out with good news. Those who follow Jesus are not bound in any way to the illegitimate authority of spiritual wickedness in high places.

1. Never, ever be afraid of demons

▶ 0:06:35

“Out of all the things I’m going to say this morning, that’s the main thing you should walk out of here with.” The reason not to be: “he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” And “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” – not just his minions but the great pooh-bah himself.

▶ 0:08:52

Jesus is head over all things for the church. Does “all things” exclude devils and demons? “The answer is not just no but heck no.” All of it is under his feet, and we stand in him.

2. God and the devil are not equals

▶ 0:10:02

God is the only uncreated being in reality. The devil is part of creation – the serpent was craftier than any other beast “that the LORD God had made” (Genesis 3:1). At the other end of the Bible, an angel seizes “the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan” and binds him (Revelation 20:1–2).

▶ 0:11:53

So yin and yang – equal and opposite forces of light and shadow – is classic Chinese dualism, not Christian faith, and the Force in *Star Wars* owes more to the former. “Do not get your theology from the movies.” In Scripture evil spirits are subject to Jesus’ disciples, because Jesus defeated their master.

▶ 0:13:08

> "The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!' And he said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'"
>
> LUKE 10:17–20 ↗

Geno pointed out that Satan fell like lightning not because Jesus spoke against him, but because the disciples did, in Jesus' name – and that is still true whenever we meet opposition. Yet the thing to rejoice in is salvation, not authority: do I belong to Jesus, do my friends and family?

3. Demons are fallen angels

▶ 0:15:42

In Revelation 12:9 the great dragon, the deceiver of the whole world, is thrown down to earth "and his angels were thrown down with him." Demonic spirits are simply those in the devil's company, with him at the top of the hierarchy. Throughout his ministry Jesus ran into them, "and not once did they even cause him to break a sweat." They were afraid of him. He healed the sick and cast out many demons, and would not let them speak, "because they knew him" (Mark 1:32–34).

▶ 0:17:20

Geno mentioned the man from the Gerasenes – "the Gadarene demoniac," in the King James of his youth – restored to his right mind and sent home to tell his story (Luke 8:26–39), and the seven sons of Sceva, beaten by a demon that said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" (Acts 19:13–16). It is a fine thing to have your name known in hell, he said – but in Christ, not in yourself. "You'll get your head handed to you if you just go in in the name of Geno."

4. Jesus defeated Satan on the cross

▶ 0:18:59

In the Beelzebul controversy Jesus describes the devil's kingdom as hierarchical, with a chief – a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand – and then gives an analogy:

> "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house."
>
> MATTHEW 12:28–29 ↗

▶ 0:19:56

That, Geno said, is a window onto the cross. Satan came after Jesus and killed him, and in that death Jesus defeated the one who thought he had won – because we died and were raised with Christ, and every claim the spirits had on us was cancelled. He bound the strong man.

▶ 0:22:11

In the Upper Room Jesus says the Spirit will convict the world "concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged" (John 16:8–11). And Paul says of the cross:

> "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."
>
> COLOSSIANS 2:15 ↗

▶ 0:23:49

He likened it to cashiering – a soldier dismissed in disgrace, insignia and medals torn off in front of everyone. "He is not just defeated, he is whipped." The demonic world is "a defeated kingdom, a fraudulent lying kingdom, still claiming authority."

5. God's world became infected with evil

▶ 0:24:21

Why is there evil at all? Shelves of books have tried to answer, so Geno offered only a few sentences. God did not create the world with evil, but it became infected, and he allows evil so that we learn to hate it. That is different from suffering, which God uses to grow us; Geno said he does not believe there is spiritual growth apart from suffering.

▶ 0:26:50

"Loving the truth and loving the good is a learned character trait." We often learn to love the good by seeing how fast things go sideways, and people get hurt, when we do not.

▶ 0:28:25

The second half: “He sends us out to clean up the mess.” Too big? Start like a child told to straighten the bed and clean the room, then take the living room when the Lord assigns it – while knowing the real cleanup is still to come when he returns. Jesus appointed the twelve
“so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons.” Geno deliberately told no demon stories. The work is real and helpful, he said, “but it’s not scary, and I don’t even think it’s spooky.”

6. Follow Jesus, not the culture

▶ 0:30:43

Why take any of this seriously? Because Jesus did, and the Bible does from beginning to end. C. S. Lewis named two equal and opposite errors: to disbelieve in devils, or to take an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. “They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.” We are neither, Geno said. They are real, and the name of Jesus trumps every one.

▶ 0:32:27

Hollywood believes in demonic dolls and chainsaw-wielding monsters, and it is all vapid. He quoted the Chicago columnist Irv Kupcinet, from a book of quotes compiled by his friend Dan Watkins: “What can you say about a society that says that God is dead and Elvis is alive?”

▶ 0:34:54

Lewis’s *The Screwtape Letters* sees it more clearly. When the young demon Wormwood is delirious with joy at the outbreak of war, his uncle Screwtape warns him not to let “temporary excitement” distract him from “the real business of undermining faith and preventing the formation of virtues.” Geno loved it: the enemy’s work is often subtle, a quiet temptation to greed or lust or meanness.

How to push back

▶ 0:37:05

> “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.”
>
> 1 PETER 5:6–9 ↗

The devil is not a lion, Geno said – Jesus is the lion. It is a word picture. Then five practical steps, all of them fundamentals. "You were expecting some magic, weren't you?"

▶ 0:39:32

Walk in humility and submission to God Almighty; that is where it begins. **Don't be afraid or anxious.** The moment we are, the enemy has us running. Stand and say Jesus is more powerful and you are a liar, then quote Scripture, as Jesus did. "This is the truth, this is the truth, this is the truth."

▶ 0:41:03

Be wary and watchful. The enemy is tricky, and his lies carry a kernel of truth – but Jesus has crushed every liar. **Resist** by speaking the truth to fear and to temptation – "No. I don't have to obey you" – and by seeking the help of others who face the same lies.

Give the devil no place

▶ 0:42:50

The fifth: don't allow space in your life for evil.
"Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil."
That is not a rule about arguing past midnight, Geno said. It means keep short accounts and settle difficulties quickly.

▶ 0:43:46

The Greek word for opportunity is *topos* – place, as in topographical, and as in
"I go to prepare a place for you." Stay in your anger and you open a door. In a long-standing, hate-filled relationship, he said, there is almost always a demon in it somewhere, and it needs prayer – but first you need to repent. "He was a jerk. Still repent, forgive, move on." Jesus taught it for your sake.

▶ 0:45:38

Wherever you have not done what the Lord says, or keep a door open with some long-standing sin, repent and follow Jesus – and you may never have to cast out a demon the rest of your days. Afraid you have a door open, or even a small bathroom window? Geno could not answer that, but the Holy Spirit can, and people were waiting at the front to pray.

▶ 0:46:48

He had the room shout the first rule – never be afraid – and declared he had just seen Satan fall like lightning from Hope Chapel. Then he asked everyone to name where they were being tempted, believing a lie, holding unconfessed sin, or nursing anger or disillusionment, and prayed Peter's words over them: that in humbling themselves before God they would resist the evil one. He prayed 1 John 1:9

over the church – that in God's cleansing, spiritual forces are washed out of our lives – and asked for "the grace of repentance" for Hope Chapel.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- Matthew 4:8–9
- Genesis 1:26–28
- 1 John 4:4
- James 4:7
- Ephesians 1:22
- Genesis 3:1
- Revelation 20:1–2
- Luke 10:17–20
- Revelation 12:9
- Mark 1:32–34
- Luke 8:26–39
- Acts 19:13–16
- Matthew 12:28–29
- John 16:8–11
- Colossians 2:15
- Mark 3:14–15
- 1 Peter 5:6–9
- Ephesians 4:26–27
- John 14:2
- 1 John 1:9

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Which error comes more naturally to you – disbelieving in the demonic, or being too interested in it? Where did you pick that up?
2. Jesus told the seventy-two to rejoice that their names are written in heaven rather than in their authority. Why do you think he redirected them?
3. How does the picture of the powers being cashiered at the cross change the way you face fear?
4. Screwtape wants to undermine faith and prevent virtue quietly. Where might that subtle work be happening in your life?
5. Where might anger or an old grievance be giving the devil a place in your life, and what would settling that account look like this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Geno Hildebrandt serves Hope Chapel as its senior leader. His name, he explained, comes from his father's side of the family in the Northeast, and he grew up reading the King James Version. He has prayed through Lent for several years with friends from China, and spends much of his ministry praying with people who are anxious or broken, reminding them who they belong to.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icOd0OyO9Ms&t=0s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.