

Our Deadly Enemy

11-08-09

Eph 6:10-13 - READ

How many here can raise their hand and state emphatically

That you have no enemies – be careful

If you are born again – if by faith you have given your life to Christ

If you are a child of God

You have an enemy – a deadly enemy

And every one of us has that same enemy

And he is either on the attack in your life or he's waiting to attack

As a Christian you can be sure that you will be involved in warfare

The faithful Christian life is a battle

It is warfare on a grand scale

Because when God begins to bless Satan begins to attack

If you are walking worthy of your calling

In humility rather than pride

In unity rather than divisiveness

In the new self rather than the old

In love rather than lust

In light rather than darkness

In wisdom rather than foolishness

In the power of the Spirit rather than the drunkenness of wine

And in mutual submission rather than self-serving independence

Then you can be certain you will have opposition and conflict

And if you don't have opposition you are already losing the battle

Jesus began His ministry with a confrontation from Satan

And as His ministry was about to reach its climax Satan came after Him again

In between those two times

In more subtle ways

He battled with Satan and his forces over and over again

Sometimes with illness or possession

Sometimes from the crowds that gathered around Him

Sometimes from His closest followers

That is the Christian life

You see when you came into the Christian life you joined an army

Satan's fiercest attack on Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane

Where he encouraged Jesus to forego the cross

He wanted Jesus to avoid doing the very thing God sent Him to do

In that same way

Satan will intensify his attack on you as you come to crucial decisions in your life

Particularly when those decisions are about God's will

Are you in the midst of deciding to obey God or not

If so count on it – you will undergo spiritual attack

And as God gives you victory over certain sinful habits

Satan will attack you from another direction

You are in the army – you are in the battle

The sooner you realize it – the better your chances of success in it

A Christian who has no struggle against the world the flesh and the devil

Is a Christian who has fallen into sin or fallen into complacency

He has already lost the battle

A Christian without conflict is a Christian who is no longer on the front lines of service

When Paul went to Ephesus

He began to present the Good News of Jesus Christ

Luke writes – **This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks**

Paul led a revival

Doesn't that sound like all was well

Paul was preaching the Gospel and God was blessing the work

But it was not that easy for Paul

While doing the Lord's will and spreading the Gospel

He was run out of the synagogue – mimicked by Jewish exorcists

He was arrested and threatened by idol makers

That is because where there is the greatest spiritual opportunity

There is also likely to be the greatest opposition

Satan doesn't give up what he owns easily or quietly

Paul wrote the church in Corinth that he intended to stay in Ephesus

For a wide door for effective service has been opened for me, and there are many adversaries

Sometimes an easy ministry is a weak ministry

For where the Lord's work is being done

There will always be opposition

As children of God we are in a battle

As I mentioned before

As God's children we are not only His servants we are His soldiers

And a soldier's job is to fight the enemy

When he wrote to the church in Thessalonica Paul mentioned this battle

He wrote - For we wanted to come to you, and yet Satan thwarted us

Believers are under attack both personally and corporately

Paul warned the elders of Ephesus

They could expect attacks from outside the church

And even more significantly

They could expect attacks from within their own number

After my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock and from your own flock men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them

Satan is always on the prowl

He comes at us ferociously like a roaring lion

And those who do not appropriate the power they have in Christ are his victims

He comes to us tenderly like an angel of light

And the undiscerning and the easily deceived are his victims

Let me give you just one aspect of the Christian life

That may be the most important in overcoming Satan

In the Book of Revelation Jesus speaks to the church at Ephesus

They are zealous for good works

They opposed false teaching and they endured hardship

All for the sake of Jesus

They had right doctrine and they led moral lives

They had nevertheless lost their single minded devoted love for the Lord

The thrill of knowing Jesus was gone

Enthusiasm for serving the Lord

Had turned into orthodox habit and tradition

Now listen this is important

Orthodox evangelical believers are inclined to believe they love God

Because they have a high regard for and obedience to His Word

Peter was shocked and offended when the Lord questioned his love for Him

You see – although Peter’s theology and morality were sound

Jesus knew that his heart was not yet fully devoted to God

As important as sound doctrine and right living are – and they are important

The true sign of a committed Christian is love

Love is not just indicative of your affections

It is essential for your spiritual protection

For loveless-ness not only grieves the Lord

It gives Satan a foothold in your life

John Macarthur - When a believer or group of believers loses its deep sense of love for the Lord, that believer or that church is on the threshold of spiritual disaster

That is because the loss of love for Jesus is always accompanied by sin

Ongoing sin causes apathy – and apathy will cause ongoing sin

And ongoing sin causes us to be easy targets for satanic attack

Some 40 years after Paul’s letter to Ephesus

Jesus gave this same church the remedy for their problem

Return to your first love and do the works of service you used to do

And here Paul gives the Ephesus church both encouragement and warning

Many Christians would judge the teaching of these verses unimportant

They would encourage us to think positively and live peacefully

Ignore this – this is not for modern times

They don't see Christianity as an entrance into warfare but an exit from it

Some disregard the heavenlies altogether

They live as though only things on this earth are real

This is the age of science

All that matters is what we can touch see smell taste and hear

Others believe that because of our position in Christ

We should have no struggles at all

We came to Christ to get out of the struggle

Christ is victor – we are His – that settles it

I really wish it was that simple

John Stott puts it this way: Is God's plan to create a new society? Then spiritual forces will do their utmost to destroy it. Has God, through Jesus Christ, broken down the walls that divide human beings by race and nationality? Then the devil through his emissaries will try to rebuild them. Does God intend reconciled people to live together in harmony and purity? Then the powers of hell will scatter among them the seeds of discord and sin.

It's not by accident

That following his description

Of how the Spirit filled life affects the home and workplace

Paul immediately begins to talk about spiritual warfare

Want to live a submissive God honoring life

Then you will face spiritual opposition

The victories of the Christian life are achieved through spiritual struggle

And that means you must achieve them through prayer

Is a sin controlling you – commit to overcome and get on your knees

You have family troubles – live for Christ and get on your knees

Work is a nightmare – live for Christ and get on your knees

If you want victory in any area – commit to live for Christ and get on your knees

You are in a battle that must be fought by prayer – it's spiritual

And in today's passage Paul tells us how to win

Our passage breaks down this way

Our preparation

God's provision

Our ancient foe

Our means of success

First let's look at our preparation

Vs 6 – Finally be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might

That is not Paul's suggestion – it is a command

Our preparation is being strong in the Lord and in His power

The Christian who lives his life by his own wisdom in his own strength

May not know it but he is a defeated Christian – headed for a fall

The strength of the Christian life is our dependence upon God

Any other strength proves to be impotent

The main truth of the Book of Ephesians is this

As believers we are in Christ and one with Him

His life is our life – His truth our truth

His way is our way and as Paul mentions here – His power is our power

That means you have a lot of power – if you avail yourself of it

The Lord's strength is always more than sufficient for your battle

Our own strength is never enough to oppose Satan

Martin Luther wrote – Did we in our own strength abide, our fighting would be losing – every time

But when you are in Jesus His strength becomes your strength

Just like Paul

You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you

You see it is not the amount of strength you have – it is the source

In the ultimate sense the churches battles are already won

In His crucifixion death and resurrection

Christ destroyed Satan and the power of sin and death

We know the end of the story – our side wins – it’s right here in the Book

We don’t fight for victory, we fight from a position of victory

To the extent that we are strong in the Lord

Our victory over the worst Satan has to offer is certain

We are in a war – a fierce war about men’s souls and God’s plans

And when our strength comes from the Lord we do not have to be afraid

We appropriate God’s strength through prayer,

Knowledge of and obedience to His Word

And faith in God’s promises – and one more thing

Paul wrote his beloved disciple Timothy

And he told him – **be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus**

We appropriate God’s strength by God’s grace

That means we don’t work for it and we don’t deserve it

God just gives it to us

We have our preparation – be strong in the Lord and

We have God’s provision

Vs 11- Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm

To be able to take advantage of God’s strength

For victory over sin temptation and the schemes of the devil

We must put on the spiritual armor that God supplies

The word “put on” carries the idea of permanence

In other words - Put it on and never take it off

This is our daily clothing

We don’t put it on to go into battle and when the battle is over we take it off

For the battle is never over

And when Satan sees you at your weakest

When he sees you without that armor on - he will attack

The armor of God is to be your lifelong choice of clothing

For it provides you with divine power

If you don’t have it on you don’t have the power

But with it God provides believers with power and protection from on high

Power to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy

That kind of power – that kind of protection

Without it you are an easy target for the enemy

Who prowls around like a roaring lion

Seeking someone - without their armor on - to devour

Now to “stand firm”

Carries the idea of holding a critical position while under attack

You are to hold the line when the counterattack begins

Russell Carter wrote this – Standing on the promises that cannot fail; when the howling storms of doubt and fear assail; by the living Word of God I shall prevail; standing on the promises of God

It is living the obedient Scripture dominated promise believing

Spirit-filled life that enables us to stand firm

We have our preparation we have God’s provision

And we have our ancient foe

The enemy who causes us to need God’s strength and armor is the devil

Because he is God’s enemy he is your enemy

When God became your friend Satan became your enemy

He hates God with all his heart and soul and mind and strength

Now he hates you the same way - he is not neutral about you

And the only way Satan can attack God is through us

He schemes against God and he schemes against you

Because scheming against you is attacking God

The word “schemes” carries with it the idea of a lion or leopard

Carefully stalking and then pouncing on its prey

Satan’s evil schemes are built around stealth and deception

In today’s world a unique condition exists

On the one hand there is almost total disbelief in the devil

And on the other there is a rise in demonic or occultic involvement
Both of which play right into the devil's hands
Many in the body of Christ don't really believe in the devil
Many in the body of Christ are consumed by thoughts about the devil
He is happy with either
We are going into this in more depth next week but for now
Remember – Satan is real but in Christ you have power over him

We have our preparation we have God's provision and we have our foe
Let's finish with our means of success

Truth is often bested – evil does seem to win
Ps 73 asks the question – why do evil men prosper

And let's not kid each other – they often do

Unless Christians stand firm

Error and evil will carry the world into a new dark age

The description of planet earth in the Book of Revelation

Tells us what the world will be like

Without the church and the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit

And it isn't pretty

But let me give you the good news right off - we win

We can beat all of the forces of evil in the heavenly places

But not in our own strength

For victory we need the strength that God supplies through His son

Martin Luther put it best

Did we in our own strength abide, our striving would be losing

Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing

Dost ask who that might be, Christ Jesus it is He

Lord Sabaoth His name, from age to age the same

And He must win the battle

Everything we need for spiritual victory is given to us by Christ

Do we need truth – Christ is Truth

Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life

Do we need righteousness – Christ is Righteousness

Christ has become for us wisdom from God, righteousness holiness and redemption

Do we need power – Jesus your name is Power

Do we need the Gospel – it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Is it faith – it is faith in Jesus

Is it salvation – Christ is our salvation

No one on earth

Can stand against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places

Not even for a moment

They are incredibly powerful

More powerful than we will ever know

But when we are in Jesus Christ we will always have the victory

Are you spreading the Good News of Jesus or are you afraid

Are you experiencing victory over sin and temptation

Or are you falling victim to your own lustful desires

If so you are also falling victim to your powerful enemy

He knows your weakness

And as long as he is successful

There is no reason for him to change his attack

The passage we are currently studying is a key to victory

It isn't whether you are going to join the battle or not

When you became a child of God you entered the battle

The question is whether you will win or lose

And if you don't realize you are in it – you are already losing