

ENEMIES OF THE CHRISTIANS

Eph. 6:12

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

"Archer"
"Queen"
some
armies
yesterday
warfare
parade

To be fore warned is to be fore armed, is a common expression. The Duke of Wellington once said "that a wise general will seek to choose the ground on which he is to fight. Unfortunately for the Christian, this is exactly what the Devil wants and what he does. He has these evil purposes.

When you made your decision to become a Christian and were born again and converted, and justified - many people have the feeling that the battle is over - what next. Is that all there is to it. Just one moment of decision and then it is all over. Do I have any more responsibilities.

I would say to you, you have just begun the Christian life. You have just entered a new way, a new spiritual world, and everything is brand new. You are like a baby. You need to be fed, you need to be protected, you need to be in the church because being a Christian is not something that is easy to live alone. You need the help of fellowship.

Possibly some of you already have found out that you have enemies. And these enemies will use any method to defeat you in your Christian life. These enemies are already at work. Either you have been tempted to commit some sin - or you have had a moment of depression and discouragement. To be sure - living the Christian life is thrilling.

I received a letter this past week from a young man who is now in Germany. He began his letter thanking me for some things that the church had meant to him in the past. But he began with a statement like this. How do you write one's pastor when you haven't attended church in years. It isn't the easiest thing to do.

He said I never realized what the South Norfolk Baptist Church meant to me and to our town. And I never realized how much faith in God, I really had, and how much it would help. Let me just say that my faith has kept me going and I feel in debt.

He said my grooping for words must be rather funny to you. Because this isn't an easy letter to write. I just had to let you know that I appreciate your prayers. And I have a quite different attitude or viewpoint at this point in my life. I am just sorry that I can't find the right words - I have so much to say - but no words with which to express myself.

The young man finally requested that I give his personal regards to a man that had taught him as a Junior boy in Sunday School.

Now this is an up-to-date illustration of our subject. The Bible teaches that you have three enemies and they are waring against you as long as you live.

✓ I. (The Devil)

The Devil is a mighty person who opposes God and tempts God's people. He was beaten down at the cross by Christ but he still has power to influence men

for evil. The Bible calls him the wicked one. The Devil. The murderer, the liar, and the father of lies, and adversary who seeks to devour, that old serpent, an accuser of our brethren.

Now the moment you made a decision for Christ - Satan suffered a tremendous defeat. He is mad about that. And from (now on), he is going to tempt you and try to lead you into sin. You need not be alarmed - he cannot rub out your salvation. He will do anything and everything in his power to sow seeds of doubt in your mind as to whether you have really been converted or not. You cannot argue with him - he is the greatest debator of all time.

Now the moment of your test is in temptation. Remember to refuse any reliance upon your feelings. They will change like the weather.

His next approach will probably be for you to feel proud and important. To make you confident of your own power, your own ambitions, your own aims.

On another occasion, he will put (hatred in your heart). He will tempt you to (say unkind) ungenerous things about others.

He will put envy, discontent, malice in your heart.

Then on another occasion, he will (tempt you to lie) and you will easily find yourself being a hypocrite. Lying is one of the worst of all sins. And can be committed by thoughts, words, or deeds. And anything that is intended to deceive a person is lying and the Devil will do his best to make a liar out of you.

He will try to get you to work for him - and lead other Christian friends astray. He will actually try to employ you - he is powerful, slick, craftie,

settled. He is called the god of this world. The prince of this world. The prince and power of the air.

The question - how can I overcome him. What can I do. Is there any way of escape.

I Cor. 10:13 - There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Now God says in this verse - he has made a way of escape. Now remember this is temptation, by the Devil. Now this is not a sign that your life is not right with God. It is actually a sign that you are right with God.

Temptation is not sin. Remember, God never tempts his own children. He never causes his children to doubt.

All of the doubts and the temptations comes from the Devil. Remember Satan is the one who can tempt but he can never compel you to yield to his temptation. Satan has already been conquered by Christ.

James 4:7 - Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. But before that, God said, submit yourselves to God. If you have fully submitted 100% - yielded and surrendered yourself to Christ - then you can resist the Devil. And the *Bible promises that he will fade from you.*

We might illustrate this by the man who was a miser. He was a wealthy farmer in New York State - he was very much a covetous man. But he was converted. Soon after his conversion to Christ, a poor man who had been burned out and had no provisions, came to him for help. The farmer thought he would be liberal and give the man a ham from his smokehouse. On his way to get it, the temptor whispered to him, give him the smallest one you have. He had a struggle whether he would give a large ham or a small ham - but finally he took down the largest ham that he could find. You are a fool, the Devil said to his conscience. The farmer finally said, if you don't keep still, I will give him every ham that I have in the smokehouse. Now that is really resisting the Devil. But it first comes from a submission.

One of the happiest man that every lived in Dundee, Scotland, he had fallen and broken his back when he was a boy of 15. He had lain in bed for about 40 years - he could not move without a great deal of pain. Probably not a day passed during these years without suffering. But day after day the grace of God had been granted to him and he was as near Heaven as he could get, on this earth. The temptor came to him. And somebody asked him one day if Satan ever tempted him to doubt God.

Oh yes, he said, he does try to tempt me. I lie here and see my old school mates drive along in their carriages and Satan says if God is so good - why does he keep you here all these years. You might have been a rich man riding in your own carriage.

Then I see a man who was young when I was walk by in perfect health. And Satan whispers - if God loved you, couldn't he have kept you from breaking your back.

His friend asked him, well what do you do when Satan tempts you in this way.

And then the man said, I just take him to Calvary and I show him Christ. And I point out those wounds in his hands, feet, and sides, and say - doesn't he love me. And the fact is, Satan cannot stand this. He leaves me every time. The bed-ridden saint had not much trouble with his doubts and with Satan. He was too full of the grace of God.

II. The World

The world means cosmos - this world system--which is made of sin, evil companions, pleasure, fashions, opinions, and aims of the world.

You will find that when you have become a Christian that your pleasures have been lifted into a brand new realm. Many non-Christians accuse the Christian as following a set of rules, vetoes, prohibition.

This is another lie of the Devil. It is not a series of don'ts - but a series of do's. You become so busy in the work of Christ and so completely satisfied in him, that you do not have time for the things of the world.

Suppose somebody should offer you a plate of crumbs after you have eaten a T-bone steak. You say, no thank you, I am already satisfied.

But the Christian knows that that is the secret. You are so filled with the things of Christ and the things of God that you do no have time for the sinful pleasures of the world.

Worldliness is vastly misunderstood by thousands of Christians.

Dr. Griffith Thomas has said there are certain elements of the daily life that are not sinful in themselves. But which have a tendency to lead to sin if they are abused. "

Abuse literally means extreme use. And in many instances over use of things lawfully become sin.

Pleasure is lawful in use. But unlawful in its over use.

Ambition is essentially a part of our character. But get it out of proportion, then it is abuse.

Our daily occupation, reading, dress, friendships are legitimate and necessary. Life is absolutely essential. But it can easily generate into anxiety.

Christ reminds us that in the parable - in the cares of this life choke the spiritual seed in the heart.

Making of money is necessary for daily living. But it may generate into money loving. The deceitfulness of riches.

Worldliness is not confined to any rank, or walk, or circumstances in life. One thing is spiritual - another thing is unspiritual. And worldliness is the atmosphere in which you allow the whole of life, as in society, to fill the needs in your life.

I John 2:15 - The Bible says love not the world, neither the things that are in

the world.

I John 2:17 - The Bible says that the lust thereof shall pass away. But he that doeth the will of the father shall abide forever. Rom. 14:23.

To be sure the problems of our modern day living are perplexing. Many young people come and they ask, is this right, is that wrong. Is that sinful.

One simple question earnestly and prayerfully asked will settle about 90% of the problems along the way. Just ask this question to yourself this time - what would Christ have me to do.?

Another question you can ask is - Can I ask His blessing upon this particular thing for me. What would Christ think about my recreation, books, companions, T. V. programs.

We cannot compromise or bargain at this point. There must be an out and out stand for Christ.

Now this does not mean that we are going to be spiritually proud - thus we will be worse off than the world. But so many professing Christians are walking hand in hand with the world. That you cannot tell the difference between the Christian and the sinner. This should never be the case.

The Christian should stand apart and sparkle like a beautiful diamond.

The Bible says, whosoever is not of faith is of sin. So it is perfectly clear, if you have a doubt about something that bothers you - whether it is worldly or not, the best policy is to don't do it.

✓ III. The Flesh

Lust of the flesh. The flesh is an evil tendency to your inward self.

After a person is converted, sometimes the old sinful craving will return. The Bible teaches us that there is a traitor that lives within. That wretched bent toward sin is every present to drag you down. War has been declared - you have now two natures in conflict. Each one is striving for the victory.

The Bible teaches the flesh lusts against the spirit. And the spirit against the flesh. It is the battle of the self life and the Christ life.

This old nature cannot please God. It cannot be converted or even patched up. Therefore we thank God that when Jesus died he took you with him. And the old nature can be made inoperative.

Dr. Thomas says that the original meaning of the word lust is strong desire and not necessarily a sinful desire. Since there are certain desires of our physical nature - hunger, thirst, etc.

It is only the abuse that is evil. Hunger is a natural lust. *Distinction - see text -*

Thirst is a natural lust. Intemperance is a sinful lust.

Marriage is a natural lust - but adultery is the opposite of God's will to all that is pure in mind and heart. Other lusts of the flesh are essentially the same way.

Such as the lust to gratify our hatred with revenge. Between the lust which is

simply a strong desire - and the same lust which is a sinful desire. The sins of the flesh are most terrible because they represent the nature to do evil.

Now neither the Devil nor the world, or even our own evil heart can compel us - it must be by our consent and will. And this is the point of our evil nature - the awful power and the possibility.

Rom. 13:14 - Paul said he had no confidence in the flesh. On another occasion he said, I make no provision for the flesh. I keep my body under. I Cor. 9:27.

The Christian has three enemies - the devil, the world, the flesh.

✓ IV. Now what should our attitude be, toward these, as a Christian.

One word sums it up. Renounce. There can be no bargaining, no compromise - no hesitation.

The Devil, we resist him only as we submit our lives to God. The world, the Bible says, this is the victory. That overcometh the world - even our faith.

The flesh, the Bible says, Gal. 5:16 - Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. You are not asked to fight the battle alone. The Bible says in Romans 8:13 - that you by the Spirit shall put to death the deeds of the body. Jesus promises that he will never leave nor forsake us. He sent another comforter, he sent the Holy Spirit to come and be along side us. And the Holy Spirit is the most powerful being.

The Bible says the moment that you accept Christ, as Saviour, the Holy Spirit

took up residence in your heart. Your body is now the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you. I Cor. 6:19. Paul even warned if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.

You may say that I don't feel anything in my heart - I don't feel the Spirit of God in me. (Disregard) your feelings - you are not saved by feelings. You have to accept this by faith. He lives within you right now - helping you to live the Christian life.

The Bible commands, be filled with the Spirit. Eph. 5:18. If you are filled with the Spirit - then you are going to produce the fruit of the Spirit. Love, peace, joy, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

How do you know that you are filled - is it some emotional experience through which you pass. No. You are fully cleansed of every known sin and when you completely yield and surrender your life to Christ, when you accept by faith that you are filled with the spirit of God - that means he can have all of you. There is nothing else in your heart, except him. Consecration is in surrender. It is absolute. As Paul said, I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your body as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God. Which is your reasonable service.

You wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities. Against powers and against the rulers of darkness. My friend, this makes up your warfare.

A little child playing one day with a very valuable vase put his hand into it and could not withdraw it. His father tried his best, but all in vain. They were thinking of breaking the vase - when the father suggested, now my son, make one more try - open your hand and hold your fingers out straight, as you see me

doing. And then pull your hand. To their astonishment, the little fellow said, oh no, father, I couldn't put my fingers out like that because if I did - I would drop my penny.

We smile. But thousands of people are like that little boy. So busy holding on to the world's worthless penny that they cannot accept liberation. I would beg you today to drop this and surrender. To let Go and let God have his way in your life.

Now after you have given your life completely to Christ in consecration - remember, this is the point that you exercise faith. And this is the point where he is going to give you courage and boldness to produce the fruit of the spirit. This is the point where ye will love one another. And this is the point where envy and strife and all these things will cease - and there will be joy. A true Christian will be ready and radiant - though there is trouble on every hand. Yet he will not be distressed. Though he is perplexed, he will not be in despair. Though he is persecuted - he will not be forsaken. Though he is cast down - he will not be destroyed. 2 Cor. 4:8-9.

The victory is yours.

Yes, the Christian does have enemies. But this past week a hospital room was transformed into a little chapel. We had had a time of just common ordinary talk and conversation. Then we came to a moment of prayer and following the prayer this gentlemen said to me, I want to make this a time of rededication of my life to the Lord Jesus Christ. So many times, he said, I could have been at church but I wasn't. So many times I passed by opportunities, to serve Christ, and I have done so little. I feel like a tree - just budding. And never coming

and really blooming. And there in those moments, of confession, that man won
the victory. He said he knew what it was to struggle against Satan. Have you
won the victory. Let me urge you today to do so.