



Title: Enemies Exposed
Theme: Assessing the Problem
Series: Grasping Our Authority in Christ

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves His child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out His commands. This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.” (1 John 5:1-5)

God's desire is for the children of God to live in the abundant life promised in Christ Jesus. Jesus said, “The thief comes to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10 NAS)

I recently read of a reporter who was interviewing an old man on his 100th birthday. The reporter asked, “What are you most proud of?” The old man replied with, “Well, I do not have an enemy in the world.” The reporter said, “What a beautiful thought! How inspirational!” “Yep,” added the centenarian, “I outlived every last one of them.” (10,000 Sermon Illustrations)

I would propose to you Christians are not born again to be surrendered back over to the sins and lifestyle that kept them from having a healthy relationship with God, Christ and walking in step with the Holy Spirit. Christians do not have to wait until they get to heaven to enjoy the authority they have in Christ. They can choose to live victoriously in this sin torn world now. In Christ you can literally outlive your enemies for eternity.

Who is our enemy? How does he take people captive? To whom should Christians be in bondage?

Recognize the evidence of the struggle

A key step to living and enjoying the life of victory promised in Christ is to recognize the evidence of the struggle. Jesus said, “If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.” (Matthew 15:13)

When Jesus said this, He had just offended the Pharisees (Matthew 15:12) by saying “...Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: `These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’ ” (Matthew 15:7-9)

After His disciples informed Him of the offense that was taken by the Pharisees the Lord said, "...Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up

by the roots.” (Matthew 15:13) “Plant” (*phuteia*) figuratively means to establish, authorize teachers or their teachings. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary; Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament) Every religious system which has not been planted by God will be rooted up. (Thru the Bible) Any religious system not set up by the Lord will be used to keep mankind in spiritual darkness, thus keeping them bound in sin no matter how religious they may appear to be. Thus the blind will lead the blind.

Pastor Adrian Rogers pointed out that if you never saw a train in your entire life and came upon a train wreck with twisted railroad cars all piled upon one another, you would never know how the train is supposed to look by observing the wreck. Mankind cannot get a clear picture of what God’s universe was meant to be like by looking at the distorted wreck that Satan has made of our world system today. Before the person who has never seen a train before can put a wrecked train back in working order, that person must get some directions from the person who knows how the train should look. In order for sinners to put their lives back in order, they must get directions from the God who created them and sustains their every breath of life. (Job 12:10)

The person who has never seen a train can just sense that train cars that are smoldering, piled up on one another and twisted every direction are not in proper order. They must grasp the truth that there is someone who can give them proper instructions on how to put a wrecked train back on the track.

Natural revelation is sufficient for making mankind responsible and enabling him to understand that something is not right in this world and in his life. Romans 1:20 says, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities--His eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

Even before I was saved I knew in my heart that this world was not in proper working order and that the train of life wasn’t on the tracks. God’s plan was that mankind would live eternally, but Satan’s deviation brought physical death and spiritual separation from God.

God’s plan was that animals were to be peaceful and coexist, but Satan’s deviation has brought animosity between creatures. If you do not believe that, just throw a cat in a bird cage. God’s plan was that mankind would have fellowship with Him, but Satan’s deviation keeps unrepentant sinners from truly trusting in God, knowing the Savior Jesus Christ and the joy of being led and empowered of the Holy Spirit of Christ.

When mankind looks at life as being only flesh and blood he sees the government, at times even his spouse, his children and his boss as the enemy. Mankind who has not grasped the fact that they must look to God for instructions on how to put this world back on the tracks convinces himself that his enemy is

the pornographer, liquor baron, or drug dealer. Satan knows he loses in the end and his goal is only to hinder and blind people. He keeps people battling in the wrong places in order to keep them from understanding the real struggle and getting real victory. Ephesians says, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then..." (Ephesians 6:12-13)

Expose the enemies, the first being Satan

Once you fully grasp the truth that there is a real struggle for the souls of mankind upon this earth you must then expose the enemies, the first being Satan. Christ clearly speaks of this enemy (Luke 10:18) and the Apostle Peter warns of this raging lion who has only one purpose. Peter writes, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

The "devil" (*diabolos*) or "Satan" (*Satanas*) is present in the world and tempts both believers and unbelievers. (Matthew 16:23; Mark 8:33; Luke 22:3; Acts 5:3; 1 Kings 11:14, 23, 25) He is also called "the dragon," "the old serpent" (Revelation 12:9; 20:2) "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30) "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2) "the god of this world." (2 Corinthians 4:4)

The distinct personality of Satan and his activity among men are thus obviously recognized. He is "the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). He tempted our Lord in the wilderness. (Matthew 4:1-11) He is "Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." (Matthew 12:24) He is "the constant enemy of God, of Christ, of the divine kingdom, of the followers of Christ, and of all truth; full of falsehood and all malice, and exciting and seducing to evil in every possible way." (Easton's Bible Dictionary; Harper's Bible Dictionary; New Bible Dictionary) His power is very great in the world. He is a "roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8) Men are said to be "taken captive by him." (2 Timothy 2:26) Christians are warned against his "devices," (2 Corinthians 2:11) and called on to "resist" him. (James 4:7)

I have a great concern that people do not take Satan and his abilities serious enough. 2 Timothy 2:26 tells us that Satan takes unrepentant mankind and takes them captive to do his will. Satan's strategy is not to convince mankind that he does not exist, for he knows that everyone understands that there is good and evil in this world. His chief work after accusing the brethren is to cause people to have a wrong concept of his true nature. The Apostle Paul says that "...Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."

Paul even teaches that the servants of Satan masquerade as servants of righteousness, pretending to be workers for the Lord, introducing false teaching associated with teachings about Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:13,14)

Satan is not a comic character who is dressed in red with horns on his head and a tail dangling behind him. This is the symbol of a character we all know to run from. Barnes Notes give us these thoughts, "The phrase 'Angel of light' means a pure and holy angel, an emblem of purity and holiness.

We learn here, Satan can assume such an aspect as he pleases, he is a prince of duplicity as well as of wickedness. He is long in the practice of deceitful arts and well practiced in the art of delusion."

I would like to add, Satan is a master of presenting false teachers as being sincere as well as making evil be desirable. This is why the Apostle Peter warns us to be on our guard. We should not listen to any suggestion that appears religious or good, but only that which is birthed from the whole council of God's Word, taught by those who are mature in the faith of Jesus Christ.

Twice in the Book of Revelation, Satan is referred to as the "ancient serpent." (Revelation 12:9, 20:2) Many believe that the comparison to snakes is an appropriate prototype of Satan. A rattlesnake only two-minutes-old can strike effectively. Snakes can engulf prey on the ground, through water, or hidden in perfect camouflage so that their presence is not detected. Night-foraging snakes have eye pupils that are vertical like a cat's, enabling them to see in the dark. (Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustration) Snakes that are hungry to devour their victims give no warning and neither will Satan.

There was a story told of a lady who made it a practice in life to say something good about everyone she had come to know. She was challenged to say something good about the devil. She thought and then said, "He is at least persistent."

The devil - the Bible tells us his resources, one being the world

The Word of God exposes our most persistent enemy, the devil and the Bible tells us his resources as well, one being the world.

1 John 2:15-17 says, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever."

The "world" (*kosmos*) here is the present world system or order of things that by human nature oppose the kingdom of Christ. This world order moves the lifestyle

of man toward evil both physically and morally. It is the temptation found in this world system Satan uses to keep unrepentant man from a vibrant relationship with the Lord and draws Christians away from the perfect will of God. As a matter of fact this world system is hostile toward God, is embarrassed to give God the praise He deserves and literally those of this world system despise true worship to God and Christ Jesus.

Pastor Allen Skiles was working in his home town, Baltimore, Maine, handing out free the "Jesus" film door to door. People literally slammed the door in his face while cursing him. A few years ago I was talking with a mother of a young man who was a great athlete. I asked her to share with me all her son was doing. She excitedly told me about his accomplishments. I simply closed our conversations by saying, "I thank the Lord for gifting your son and for the open doors offered to him." She got so mad that she turned red in the face and walked off.

John teaches us about three truths found in this present world system that keep mankind from receiving Christ and can keep the children of God from giving proper praise to God.

The first truth is, "the cravings of sinful man." This phrase describes the principle of worldliness producing focus on self which pursues its own ends in self-sufficient independence apart from the Lord. (The Expositors Bible Commentary) The lady to whom the Lord gave an athlete wanted recognition for the producing her son and to hear the Lord get the praise set her anger toward God ablaze.

The second truth is, "lust of his eyes." This is that tendency to be captivated by outward, visible splendor and show. It breeds a desire for the things aroused by sight. (The Expositors Bible Commentary) This is the channel that feeds mankind's acquisitive nature and covetousness. (The Bible Knowledge Commentary)

I thank God for those He has given tremendous ability in athletics, especially for Christian coaches and athletes. I thank God for all that is available to enable every athlete to achieve his best. We are blessed to have wonderful sports facilities of which we can enjoy all that comes with the huge business of athletics. I thank God for the privilege to be a part of the wonderful horse world and everything that can be enjoyed in that business. However, like everything else that has been influenced by this world's system, there is much visible splendor that arouses covetousness which robs God the glory and worship due to Him.

It was this "lust of the eye" that kept the lady I spoke to from taking her focus off the splendor of the sports world which can only be enjoyed down here for a short while.

The third truth is, "the boasting of what he has and does" (*he alazoneia tou biou*) or "the pride of life." It is that attitude that is lived out that says, "my reputation, my

public image matters more than the glory of God being revealed in and through my life.” (The Bible Knowledge Commentary)

It was this “pride of life” that caused the lady I spoke to about her athletic son that caused her to want recognition given to her son for kicking his own doors open, rather than hear praise given to God for opportunities given.

Charles Swindoll wrote, “The world system is committed to at least four major objectives, which I can summarize in four words: fortune, fame, power, pleasure. First and foremost: Fortune, money. The world system is driven by money; it feeds on materialism. Second: Fame. That is another word for popularity. Fame is the longing to be known, to be somebody in someone else’s eyes. Third: Power. This is having influence, maintaining control over individuals or groups or companies or whatever. It is the desire to manipulate and maneuver others to do something for one’s own benefit. Fourth: Pleasure. At its basic level, pleasure has to do with fulfilling one’s sensual desires. It’s the same mindset that’s behind the slogan: ‘If it feels good, do it.’”

(Charles Swindoll, *Living Above the Level of Mediocrity*, p. 219)

Satan is so skilled in using this world’s system to keep mankind from recognizing and enjoying God’s sovereignty in life. Satan even has used this world’s view to rob the Lord of praise that should come from His blood purchased church producing professing believers who do not put absolute trust in the Lord.

D. L. Moody once wrote: “The church is full of people who want one eye for the world and the other for the kingdom of God. Therefore, everything is blurred; one eye is long and the other is short; all is confusion... When the Spirit of God is on us, the world looks very empty; the world has a very small hold on us, and we begin to let go our hold of it and lay hold of things eternal. This is the church’s need today.”

Satan also knows our weakest link, our flesh

Satan uses the world to overcome mankind and even to draw Christians away from God’s will. Satan also knows our weakest link, our flesh. Galatians 5:19-21 says, “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” The New American Standard Bible says, “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident...”

The “flesh” (*sarx*) is that fallen nature of mankind that is sensual toward acts of sin and opposes the Holy Spirit’s work towards drawing sinners to Christ and has an ongoing act against the perfect will of God. This flesh has carnal appetites and desires sinful passions and affections affecting the physical and moral welfare of mankind. If left unchecked by the Holy Spirit of Christ it takes control of a person and causes him to do what he would not like to do and keeps him from doing what he ought to be doing. (Baker’s Greek New Testament; The Complete Word Study Dictionary; Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament; The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible; Theological Dictionary of the New Testament; Romans 7)

If this enemy is left unchecked he can cause mankind to fall into any one or all of these lifestyles, sensual passions, unlawful dealings in spiritual things, violations to one’s own neighbor and excessive addictions. Mankind and even Christians make the huge error by convincing themselves that they can keep themselves from falling into those obvious sins mentioned by Paul in Galatians 5.

Sexual sin never begins with inflamed lust, but with flirtations and gentle lures. Unlawful spiritual practices do not begin with outright open disobedience to God’s Word, but with questioning the authority of the written Word.

Direct sin against our family members, friends and co-workers does not happen with a plan started in a group meeting, but with nursing and rehearsing of bad thoughts in the mind. Addiction to alcohol, drugs or to anything else does not usually start with excessive indulgence, but by experimenting, taking little doses and convincing ourselves, “Now that didn’t hurt anything.”

The sinful nature is often fed by little bits of feeding and then grows to a full grown feeding frenzy. Feeding the sinful nature is like working in a chocolate chip factory. Everyone knows if you work in a chocolate chip factory long enough, you are going to reach out and take just a little chip. Yes, you get by with it and the next time it is two chocolate chips, then a handful. Then every time you get a chance you feed that flesh. Unchecked it will sooner or later get you into trouble.

J.O. Sanders writes in regard to The Devil’s Tinder, “What is meant by ‘the flesh?’ Dr. W.G. Scroggie detected ten shades of meaning used in the Bible. In nine of the ten, there is no ethical or theological content. But the tenth, which is the one Paul mainly employs, does have such significance. The flesh may be defined as ‘man’s fallen nature as under the power of sin.’ It is the evil principle in man’s nature, the traitor within who is in league with the attackers without. The flesh provides the tinder on which the devil’s temptations can kindle.” (10,000 Sermon Illustration)

Satan uses denial of the sinful nature to deceive many, even spiritual leaders. The sinful nature is seldom addressed and the word sin has been replaced with softer sounding words.

The late Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman writes of a Methodist preacher who often spoke on the subject of sin. "He minced no words, but defined sin as 'that abominable thing that God hates.' A leader in his congregation came to him on one occasion and urged him to cease using the ugly word, 'sin.' Said he: 'Dr. Blank, we wish you would not speak so plainly about sin. Our young people, hearing you, will be more likely to indulge in sin. Call it something else, as 'inhibition,' or 'error' or a 'mistake,' or even 'a twist in our nature.'

'I understand what you mean,' the preacher remarked and going to his desk brought out a little bottle. 'This bottle,' he said, 'contains strychnine. You will see that the red label here reads, **Poison**. Would you suggest that I change the label, and paste one on that says, **Wintergreen?** The more harmless the name the more dangerous the dose will be.'"

When people who live in this world's system and even Christians mislabel sin and do not take the flesh seriously, the more dangerous Satan's snares become.

Remember Christ!

The whole council of God's Word gives a clear warning. There are enemies that are constantly attacking us. If we walk around blindly and are led by the blind we will fall into an endless pit of eternal punishment. We have to live self-controlled and be alert. There is a devil who uses the world and the weakness of the flesh, that sinful nature to keep mankind from coming to Christ and even to keep the children of God from enjoying God's perfect will for them.

The great news is we have a redeemer who conquered the devil and all his works. The writer of Hebrews gives this exhortation about Jesus Christ, "Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels He helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted." (Hebrews 2:14-18)

With our enemies being Biblically exposed we can agree with God and find strength to overcome our persistent adversary, the devil, as he throws the world at us and tempts our flesh. Through Christ who redeemed us we can live a victorious life and outlive our enemies in eternity.