

"Know Your Enemy"

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[0 : 0 0] perfection and of his pride that led to his condemnation. As we continue our study through second Corinthians, I was once again reminded of something out in the world as I was considering the passage that we are going to be studying. You see, in ancient China, during a time called the Warring States Period, where there was no emperor, the Chinese people were splintered into a number of different states that often fought against each other in many wars. In this time period, there is believed to have been a general who was an expert in warfare. This general was named Sun Zhu. He wrote a book of military philosophy and principles for warfare, where he explains the fundamental ideas for how to be successful in warfare, not just in the warfare of that time, but in the warfare of all ages. His book is called The Art of War. You may have heard of it.

He has quotes from the book like this, The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting, or treat your men as you would your own beloved sons, and they will follow you into the deepest valley. But one of his most famous lines is, know your enemy and know yourself, and in a thousand battles you will not be defeated.

The point he's making there is that if you lose, it is because you either did not understand yourself well enough, your own abilities, or you did not understand your enemy well enough, and therefore you were defeated. I'm using that as inspiration to title today's sermon, Know Your Enemy, because the passage we are touching on in Corinthians talks about our enemy and about the importance of knowing him and his devices. Read with me in 2 Corinthians chapter 2. As we continue our study, you'll find it on page 1 776 in the Pew Bibles. We've been working through bit by bit. We've been talking about forgiveness and discipline. And now we come to a passage where Paul gives further instructions and adds in the importance of being on guard against the enemy's devices. So 2 Corinthians chapter 2 verses 10 and 11.

Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ.

Lest Satan should take advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices. This is the word of the Lord.

[3 : 2 0] Thanks be to God. So let us today learn about our enemy, so we may not be ignorant of his devices, and so that he may not have advantage over us. For if you know your enemy and know yourself, you will not be defeated.

Today we're going to work through four truths and use those truths to prepare ourselves to be victorious in the battles we are fighting.

Truth number one. This is war. The sermon is titled, Know Your Enemy, which comes from a quote about how to win a war.

Well, that's irrelevant to us. It doesn't matter if we don't realize that we are in a war in the first place. If we are going to understand why we must know our enemy, we must first understand that we are in a war.

The Bible teaches that Christian life is warfare. That we live on a battlefield. And you cannot live on a battlefield like you would live in a normal time.

[4 : 39] You must live a very different way. Listen to these verses that help capture this idea of the warfare of the Christian life.

2 Corinthians chapter 4, 6 verses 3 through 5. I forgot the reference in there. For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.

For the weapons of our warfare are not the flesh, but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

Paul calls it a warfare. Or Ephesians 6 verses 10 and 11. It is not the civilian who needs armor, but the soldier who is fighting a war.

If Paul is giving us instruction to put on the armor of God, it must be because we don't live in a time of peace. We live in a time of war.

[6 : 10] Or 2 Timothy chapter 2 verses 3 and 4. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Believers, you are at war.

You are standing in a battlefield. Do not forget it. Can you think of how crazy it would be to try to live a regular life in the middle of a battlefield?

You don't take your children for a walk down the streets when there are bombs falling. You don't go down to the park because that's where the tanks are.

You don't go out of your house without a weapon or without armor. And you certainly don't let your guard down when you're living in a battlefield.

Soldiers must live a different life. And we are soldiers. Sun Tzu says, Knowledge of warfare is vital to the Christian.

[7 : 41] Because we live in a world of warfare. And in that world, mistakes could cost you your life. So if you are a Christian, you must live a different life.

Because your soul is at stake. And so are the souls of others. We need to stop pretending that we're not on a battlefield.

See, America has been nice for Christians for a very long time. And this has deceived us into thinking that this is a safe place for us.

And that we don't need to train like soldiers. And we don't need to be on guard. This is not our home. We're currently on the battlefield fighting to one day get to our home.

Don't get cozy. But train yourself. Paul says to Timothy, Train yourself for godliness. For while bodily training is of some value, Godliness is of value in every way.

[8 : 49] Because it holds promise for this life and for the life to come. For to this end we toil and strive, Having our hopes set on the living God.

How long have you been a Christian? And in that time, Have you trained yourself in the word?

Have you prepared yourself for warfare? Do you know what this is that we're doing? This is training for war.

This is the briefing room where the map is laid out and the plan of attack is prepared. This is the weapons stockpile that you go to to arm up.

You need to be here often so that you can be prepared for life on a battlefield. For fighting against the enemies that oppose us.

[9 : 51] Because in a spiritual battlefield, we're fighting for souls. Do you take a weapon with you wherever you go? One verse says, Take up the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.

Do you have that worked down deep into your heart? So that you're ready to fight enemies? Know your Bible. When people curse you, be ready to answer with scripture.

When sin comes to tempt you, raise the word to be your defense. And pray.

Pray down attacks against the enemy. Like big cannons of war that fire shells into the enemy line. Labor in prayer.

That we might have victory. That the enemy wouldn't gain any ground. But we would win souls for our savior. There's a proverb that says, He that winneth souls is wise.

[11 : 05] We're fighting an important battle. A battle for our souls. Also, look out for each other. On a battlefield, the soldiers must watch out, not just for themselves, but for those around them.

Because if one person falls, everyone suffers. There's no isolated lone wolf soldiers on the Christian battlefield. But we work together.

So talk to each other. Get to know one another so that you can help each other. And keep each other from falling. These are your brothers and sisters in the trench fighting with you towards glory.

Get to know them. Truth one, this is war. Truth two, you have an enemy.

You have an enemy. Do not be deceived. Do not be lazy. Do not think that you have no need to be watchful.

[12 : 15] Do not believe the lie that there is no enemy. Satan is very real. And he lives to oppose God.

And if you are a Christian, you have sided with God against him. And he will do whatever he can to take you down to harm the cause of God.

You have a very real enemy. The word Satan literally means adversary or one who opposes, one who is against you.

You have an enemy of your soul. He rebelled against God. He hates God. And he will do anything to steal glory from God.

And if God in Christ has worked in you, he's working to bring himself glory through you. So Satan wants to destroy you so that he can destroy that avenue for God to get glory.

[13 : 16] We see Satan first in the garden. God declares that his creation is very good after he completes it.

He says, this thing is glorious. And because I made it, it shows my glory. So Satan seeks to destroy it.

Let's turn to Genesis 3 so we can see how the wiles, the craftiness of Satan works out. You'll find Genesis 3 at the very start of your Bibles.

And here is the story of Satan's first plot against God that is recorded in the Bible. Here, he tries to take the crown of God's creation, mankind, and defile it with sin to harm God.

Let's look at verse 1. Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.

[14 : 29] He was more cunning. He was crafty. He's mischievous. If you barricade the front door, Satan is going to try to go around the back.

If you watch the windows, he'll break through the walls. If you are winning the fight against sin, he's going to try to get you by making you prideful.

And if you are confident in the Bible, he's going to try to twist it to make you use it against people you should love.

He is crafty. So be on guard. Or look at verse 2. Oh, sorry. The end of verse 1, he says to the woman, Has God indeed said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

He questions God. Did God actually say that? Like a child trying to get their siblings to break the rule.

[15 : 37] Mom didn't really say this or didn't really mean that. He questions God, not because he doesn't understand what God has actually said, but because he wants to make us doubt the truth.

That if we doubt God and the things he said, he has an opportunity to take advantage over us and lead us into sin. So the answer when Satan comes and raises the question to you, Did God really say?

Is to know the Bible so well that you can say with confidence, Yes, God did say. He did say I'm redeemed. He did say you must walk in purity.

So your lies will do nothing to me. So we must fight to strengthen our faith because there is an opposer who is here to deceive us.

You cannot coast in the Christian life. A lazy soldier is a dead soldier. Think about this.

[16 : 49] If you're driving uphill and you stop and you put your car in neutral and you let off the brakes, the car doesn't stay there. It rolls back downhill.

If you coast in the Christian life, you don't stay where you were. You fall backwards. And if you fall backwards, a crash is coming.

So there is no coasting because we have an enemy who is fighting against us. We'll look at verse four at more of this craftiness.

The serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

Satan knows that man's heart is tempted to make himself God. That every sinner wants the world to revolve around them.

[18 : 03] They want life to be convenient to them and to be ordered by their will, not by anyone else's. We are all tempted to do this.

So Satan seizes that as an opportunity and he says to the woman, You won't die, but what will happen is you'll become like a God yourself.

Think about how this works out in our lives. When we get frustrated about traffic, that's Satan making us care more about our plans than God's plans.

If God is sovereign over anything, everything, the challenges that come up in your life are part of his good plans to bring about good things.

So when you get frustrated at them because it doesn't go according to your plan, you're saying, I care more about my plans than I care about God's because I want to be the God of my life.

[19 : 12] Or how about if someone does something against you and then you feel justified in making them feel your wrath. I'm going to go give that person a piece of my mind because they offended me.

As if you were a God to have vengeance against anyone who would sin against you. not as if you are a mere man who is sinful yourself.

So we must always turn from our wills to God's will praying, your will be done so that we might always remember that he is God and we are not.

He is in control. And when things don't go according to our plan, we can rejoice because God is greater than us and they are going according to his plan.

So if I crash on the way home here, as much as that would be difficult, I can say, the God who does everything well has ordained that this will happen.

[20 : 19] And so I can rejoice even if my plans are being overturned because God is greater than me. There are many other tricks of Satan that we could study and look into.

The Puritan Thomas Brooks writes this wonderful book called Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices. It's a great read about all the different ways that Satan tries to get believers.

And we don't have time to get into all of them, but know that there's answers to them that we can find in the Bible. But I hope that looking at this has made you a bit more aware of the ways that Satan is going to try to manipulate and with cunning take advantage of you.

Truth number two, you have an enemy. Truth number three, you must keep watch. What happens when a soldier falls asleep on watch?

The enemy may sneak in. The enemy may sneak in. This is why one of the harshest punishments that you can get is for falling asleep on watch.

[21 : 35] Because the camp is resting. People are vulnerable while they're resting. And so if you fail to keep watch, you let someone attack while they're vulnerable.

We all need rest. Even soldiers need rest. But resting in a battlefield is dangerous. There will be times where as believers, we are tired.

We are worn out. We are broken under burdens. And we need rest. But we need to remember that that's also the time where the enemy is going to strike because we're vulnerable.

So we need to keep watch. So often, we fall into sin because we've been made vulnerable by a burden.

When you are tired, you're more likely to be lazy and slack off, which is sin. Do you let your hunger make it okay to be impatient with people?

[22 : 46] We talk about sometimes this new word being hangry. I'm hungry and angry. I'm hangry. And we can feel justified in it. Oh, I haven't had anything to eat.

That's why I'm being so mean to people. No, that is Satan taking a weakness in your body to take advantage of you and lead you into sin.

And so when you rest, when your body needs rest, when your mind needs rest, when you're exhausted emotionally or physically, you need to realize that you're on a battlefield.

And so you still need to keep watch for your soul. Because when you're resting is when you're most vulnerable. Sun Tzu says, So in war, the way is to avoid what is strong and strike at what is weak.

The enemy knows that he must strike us where we are weak. So we must keep watch, especially over those areas. Turn back to 2 Corinthians 2.

[23 : 51] Paul wants to encourage the Corinthians to keep watch. He wants them to be ready when the enemy comes so that they will not fall.

So his encouragement to them is to obey the commands of Christ, especially the command to forgive. Obeying God is the way in which we keep watch against the enemy of our souls.

Look at verses 11, 10 and 11 again. Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us.

He's saying that if we do not forgive, if Paul does not forgive, then it would be bad for us because it would create an opportunity for Satan.

So one of the ways we keep on watch is by forgiving one another. Why is this an advantage to Satan? Why, when we don't forgive, does that give Satan an opportunity?

[25 : 09] It's because bitterness is so often the path to sin. When there is not forgiveness in your heart for others, there is bitterness that will build up.

And that bitterness will poison you against love and against care and compassion. When we cannot forgive, we will see our relationships dwindle, be burdened, and fall away.

Satan wants you to be bitter. He wants you to be unforgiving so that you're bitter against God and bitter against man. He wants you to hold on to pain and grudges, to keep a list of every way someone has wronged you so that you're ready to fire off whenever they step out of line.

Look at all the things you've done. When you hold on to pain and grudges, it will keep you from Christ. The same thing within us that has capacity to forgive others is the same thing in us that has the capacity to receive forgiveness.

So, if you don't forgive others, your heart isn't capable of receiving Christ's forgiveness. These things go hand in hand.

[26 : 42] The same humble heart that is capable of looking at someone else's sins and saying, I forgive you, is the same humble heart that is willing to come to Christ and say, Lord, I need your forgiveness.

So, do not fall prey to Satan's plans. You should know better. What bitterness or grudge are you holding on to?

Do you think that holding on to it will make you happy? Do you remember the things that God has forgiven you for? Pry those fingers open and let it go.

This is how you keep the enemy from stealing your soul and stealing your joy. If Christ died for your sins and died to bring you joy unspeakable, do not let other people's sins keep you from enjoying the fullness of Christ's gift.

Don't let it matter more in your life what others have done against you than what Christ has done for you. The song teaches us turn your eyes upon Jesus.

[28 : 06] Look full in his wonderful face and modifying it slightly and the pains of this world will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

Keep watch against the enemy for he is coming for your soul. The souls of your brothers and coming to steal the glory of God.

Keep obeying, keep casting aside all bitterness and unforgiveness. Truth three you must keep watch. Before we get into truth four I have one last quote from Sun Tzu for you.

He writes victorious warriors win first then go to war while defeated warriors go to war first then seek to win.

this means that if you want to be sure that you will win you must know the start know the end before you even start.

[29 : 14] You must have the plan of victory laid out before you ever step foot on the battlefield. Many religions work the other way.

You have to fight for a chance at winning. If we can be good enough if we can fight hard enough we can make it till the end is what so many religions say.

If you can be righteous enough you will get to heaven. If you fight like that I'm telling you now you're going to lose. If you fight to get to glory by your own goodness you have started the war already losing.

but believers we fight battles in a war that has already been won. Truth number four we are victorious.

Not just we will be but we are. The war is already won. Jesus won it on the cross.

[30 : 27] he battled for our souls. On that cross he won our victory when he paid for every last sin.

And then when he rose from the grave he declared his triumph over death and sin and Satan. He declared that he could not be defeated by them.

That it was impossible for them to conquer him. That he conquered all the enemies. This is why we need the resurrection.

Paul says if Jesus is not risen we are of all people to be pitied. If he isn't risen there is no victory but he is risen.

He is risen indeed. The grave is empty and death and sin have no power over you because they have already been defeated by Christ.

[31 : 35] When Satan brings your sin against you trying to get you to despair at your own guilt tell him my savior has paid for every last one of those.

I've already won and you can do nothing against me. Romans 8 1 there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus whom the son sets free is free indeed.

Oh death where is your sting? Oh hell where is your victory? When you fight remember that you fight an enemy who has already lost and when you do that the war is won fight hard but fight with peace knowing that the end is already decided it's like after a battle the enemy retreats and we are just cleaning up what is left you saw that in world war two after the Nazis had already surrendered there were still pockets of battles going on for a number of months afterwards that's what we're doing the war has already been won there's no chance of it being undone we're just the cleanup crew working out the bits of it we will be victorious because

God will keep you to the very end there is no chance of this battle of this war ultimately being lost because Philippians 1 6 says I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ this is an iron clad guarantee that if you have truly trusted in Christ he will keep your soul all the way to the end he doesn't do this by an unknown way he does it by giving you the strength to obey all the way till the very end so that you never fall away from him he began the work and he will complete it no one overturns the purposes for God and if he has started that work he will complete it and we already know the end of the battle it has been written revelations 20 verses 7 through 10 read this and when the thousand years are ended

Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth Gog and Magog to gather them for battle their number is like the sand of the sea and they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city but this mighty host but fire came down from heaven and consumed them gone this this army encamped against us that is greater than the sand of the sea gone and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever this is the end the last chapter of the books already written we're fighting a war and we know how it ends there are two sides in this war one side has already won and the other side has already lost and will suffer in hell for eternity if you are trusting in christ you are on the winning team though you were once rebels though you were once on the losing team by his blood he made a way for you to turn and be on his side you deserve that lake of sulfur and fire but you trusted in christ and if today you are still a rebel i want you to know that you can turn and trust in christ change sides before it's too late so that we might all stand with the one who declared his victory on the cross it is finished the enemy is defeated rejoice and fight well let's close in prayer lord we thank you that the debt is paid and the victory is won and that you are our salvation that no weapon formed against us shall prosper we ask that you would teach us to live as soldiers longing for the day when the final victory will be won and we will get to rejoice with you in glory taking off the military garments the preparation for war and putting on the full peace that comes from standing in your presence forever at peace in

[37 : 40] Jesus name we pray amen