

The World, the Flesh, and the Devil

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[0 : 00] The moment we step out of the womb, we enter into a war zone.

! The minute we step out of the womb, and we're attacked on three fronts, you could say. You could say there's three major fronts, three enemies if you like. The world, the flesh, and the devil. That's what we're going to look at tonight. The world, the flesh, and the devil. And just to start off, 1 John 2 says, Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

Temptations abound all around about us. And it's as if we're at a crossroads where we're seeing these battlefronts that we face. The world, the flesh, and the devil. Let's look at each one in turn.

The world, the world. The Bible shows us how to overcome the world.

What is the world? The world has been defined as the system of the world that rejects God. An organised system in rebellion and opposition against God. Not talking about the planet Earth, as we use this term, the world. But it's about that kind of system that is engineered against Christ and Christianity. And in 1 John 5, 4, it tells us the answer, how can we overcome the world? For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Even our faith. We overcome the world by faith. By our faith in our Saviour and Lord. And the world is contrary to that faith. It's against that faith. The world is alike to Egypt. As you see in the pages of Scripture, we see Egypt as a kind of picture of the world and the system that is contrary to God. It's against God. And it attracts and entices people away from God. We see even the children of Israel, when times got tough, they harked back to the places that they knew in Egypt. Even the kind of food that they ate in

[2 : 56] Egypt. And they thought they were having such a tough time. Even though there were so many miracles and wonders and providence of God. They kept harking back to the enticement of Egypt, which kind of represents to us the world. It entices people away from God. And it is against this that we are to contend. As we spoke of earlier, in the day, we are to contend, to be opposed to the world and the things of the world. And yet some people, it seems like they are in the grip of worldliness. It's a sad fact to see many are in the grip of worldliness. And it tends to get a hold of people. One person described it like this. Worldliness. Worldliness is a spirit, a temperament, an attitude of the soul. It is a life without high callings.

Life devoid of lofty ideals. It is a gaze always horizontal and never vertical. Now we can get so minded as the world is and like our worldly neighbours are that we scarcely think to think of things above. And yet our minds are quite often caught up with the things that are on the earth.

We are just like the world. And that is worldliness, if you like, where we just dwell on the horizontal plane, just on what we can see here, without thinking of our duty and relationship with God.

Romans 12.2, that familiar one, and be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Be not conformed to this world. It's as if it's a shaping as a potter would shape a claim. That conformity, that conformity, that shaping, that moulding, that squeezing into a mould. That is the kind of sense of it.

[4 : 49] And worldliness, another preacher put it like this, worldliness is not a matter of engaging in these practices that some question. It's unthinkingly adopting the perspective, values and attitudes of our culture.

Without bringing them under the judgment of God's word. It's when the culture and the mindset, the perspectives of the world around us, start to shape our own judgment.

Instead of the judgment of God's word, shaping what we choose to do. Excuse me. Another preacher said this, It's when those things that capture our attention and our energy and our time and effort such that it takes away from the eternal.

It may be quite harmless things. I know as a young man, I had a particular interest in something that consumed my life. And it wasn't particularly a harmful thing. It was an interest in aviation.

And I had a big library of books about aviation and aircraft. And was looking at some lessons to be a pilot that someone gave to me and things like that.

[6 : 22] But for me, it became a preoccupation. It wasn't necessarily a sinful thing. But it became a preoccupation that took me away from that which really mattered. The things of God. And I just let it go.

I just took it down to an op shop and dumped it all. Because I didn't want to have a preoccupation that was contrary. In my mind, it was like an idol for me.

And I had to let it go. And that could be for you. God might speak to you about particular things in your life that become a preoccupation. And worldliness is any preoccupation or interest in the temporal system of life that places anything perishable above that which is eternal.

So we're meant to be strangers and pilgrims. We're meant to have that attitude. This world is not my home. I'm passing through. And we know, friends, that one day Satan will have deceived the whole world.

In Revelation 12 verse 9, it tells of a time coming when his deception will be so widespread that it will be such that the whole world will be in his sway, will be in his power.

[7 : 30] He will deceive the whole world. And, friends, we're called to have a different worldview. A different worldview. Away from compromise. Away from backsliding. Many in these days are nominal Christians.

They're nominal. Their Christianity is a Sunday Christianity. It's a kind of in name only. Nominal means like in name only. They just claim to be a Christian.

They go through the motions on a Sunday, but yet it's very weak and shallow. And we can make that mistake, brothers and sisters. Excuse me.

There was a time in my life I was a bit like that. Where, you know, while I was at school, while I was at school I professed to be a Christian. And yet while I was at school there was a different person there.

And I wasn't being real. I wasn't being, you know, I wasn't particularly bad. But I was bad enough. I was bad enough that I wasn't fair dinkum.

[8 : 33] My Christianity wasn't 24-7. And that's what God wants for us, doesn't it? Young people, older people. He wants us to be having that mindset. This world is not my home.

And we're not to be a nominal Christian, but a real fair dinkum Christian. And this world's culture is contrary to God. There's a clash of cultures.

And we cannot join up with this spirit of the world. In Genesis 4 verse 4 it says, In other words, hatred towards God.

And he goes on, So we've got to think about these things. Are we getting too cosy and comfortable with the world?

And maybe picking up that attitude of tolerance and just acceptance so that we don't challenge things. And then we start to excuse our sin.

[9 : 36] And excuse our worldliness. We see, sadly, many, I've seen many in my lifetime that have seen to have a claim of Christ. Yet the worldliness is just so capturing them.

It's so got them in a bind. That they just can't seem to fully trust Christ. They can't seem to fully commit to Christ.

Here's another preacher. He says this, When we become a friend of the world, we take our stand in defiance of God. And God views it as an act of an enemy.

An act of espionage against him. It's as if we were conducting guerrilla warfare against the Lord. We're aiding and abetting the enemy. The same sin committed by Judas.

It's treacherous to the name of Christ. To serve the camp of the enemy. And friends here tonight, we've got to consider these things. Whose camp are we in?

[10 : 37] You know, I'm not wanting to preach condemnation on anyone here today. But it's just purely that consideration.

We don't want to aid and abet the enemy. You know, in times of warfare, we don't want to aid the enemy in any fashion at all. And worldliness can be such an influence.

It can be like a magnet that seems to draw people away from following after God. When people get a liking for the world's music, a liking for the world's mentality, a liking for the world's movies, and such things.

We've all got to make our own decision of conscience on such matters. Now, your decision of conscience is maybe in a different place from mine. You might be stricter than me.

We've all got to answer to God, don't we? For those things, those questions of conscience. And let's not allow that magnet of the world to draw us away from God, from following after Him.

[11 : 43] Let's rather draw the line closer to a strict line, if you like, than to be sloppy and slack with where we draw the line.

And we start to toy with the world. It's like I heard a story of, I think it was someone learning to drive, and they thought they were a good driver because they could go right near the edge on those sharp curves.

And, you know, they thought that was really cool that when they drove their sports car around those curvy roads, they could go right to the edge. And, you know, sometimes, you know, some Christians can drive right to the edge.

And they'd say, well, you know, my conscience allows me to go and watch such and such a movie. It doesn't matter that there's nudity and fornication and curse words right through it. Some Christians think they've got the conscience, they think they can glorify God, and they can do it all to the glory of God to go and watch a film like that.

I put it to you that they're driving close to the edge. They're driving close to the edge, and it's dangerous. It's dangerous for us to do that. Don't toy with the world.

[12 : 51] Don't toy with it. Don't play with it because it will cause you to stumble. Here's a preacher. Tozer said this. Tozer said, for centuries, the church stood solidly against every form of worldly entertainment, recognising it for what it was, a device for wasting time, a refuge from the disturbing voice of conscience, a scheme to divert attention from moral accountability.

For this, she got herself abused roundly by the sons of this world. But of late, she has become tired of the abuse and has given over the struggle. She appears to have decided that if she cannot conquer, the great God of entertainment, she may as well join forces with him and make whatever use she can of his powers.

The great God of entertainment. We see where the world and the things of the world get so endemic in the professing people of God that the church of God seems to have lost its save altogether.

It's lost its saltiness. And we should become, friends, we should become so occupied with Christ that the things of this world haven't got the same appeal.

They haven't got the same, we haven't got the same appetite anymore. That the things of the world are stale and tasteless to us. Because the world is not something that has that same pull, that same magnetic drawing power.

[14 : 19] But to overcome the world we need what? The victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. We need faith today. Friends, we need faith to overcome the world.

Secondly, we see the flesh. We see the world. Secondly, the flesh. Another battlefield, if you like, in the spiritual battle that we're engaged in. The flesh.

It speaks to us of the fallen, sinful, human nature. In Romans 6, verse 11, Paul says, Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul says, reckon yourselves. In other words, make that deliberate decision, that deliberate accounting, that determination that I am dead to the sin, dead to sin and alive to God.

You know, I think it takes a lot of practice to get to that point. And it takes a bit of dying and dying and dying again and crucifying and crucifying and crucifying again.

[15 : 25] Dying daily. Crucifying the flesh to be dead unto sin. I don't know that I've met anyone who's quite dead enough yet to sin, you know, including me, most particularly.

But we should strive for it, shouldn't we? We should seek for it in God's helping that we'll find that place of being dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God. And so, friends, the flesh, we're all subject to it.

We're subject to it. We're in the midst of it constantly and we should steer away from temptation. temptation. The flesh is inclined to do wrong.

You know, as Paul said, the good that I should, I don't, and the wrong that I shouldn't, I do. Don't place yourself in that situation of temptation.

Friends, the flesh is a constant battleground and we should sink in God's help not to place ourselves into that place of danger. It's like someone said, as it were, as you're rowing in these stormy waters, call upon God for help but row away from the rocks.

[16:36] You know, we need to call, we need to pray, we need to seek God's face. God help me to get out of this situation of temptation but we've got to put some action and effort into steering ourselves away from it, to shun it, to flee it.

It's like one mother was in the kitchen and she could hear Billy in the fridge and she said, what are you doing in the fridge, Billy? Fighting temptation, mother.

We can all be like that, can't we? Well, don't go near the fridge then. If you've got a problem with temptation, don't go near the fridge. That's something I'm sure we can all consider.

Consider that in spiritual terms now. And Romans 7, it says, Paul says, but I see another law in my members in his body saw this kind of law, this kind of principle at work, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity, into imprisonment, to the law of sin which is in my members.

The law of sin is in this flesh and it's warring against the mind that will, that desire to serve God. There's that constant tug of war, that constant battle, that constant struggle, that boxing match within.

[17:50] I urge you today and I've said this before, it's a common term the world use. You know, when someone gets these butterflies for someone they fall in love with or whatever it might be, don't follow your heart.

Don't follow your heart. Your feelings can fool you and that can be in spiritual terms too, can't it?

Now, the Mormons say, oh, you get this warm glowing, this tingly, fuzzy, fuzzy feeling inside and that will tell you that the Book of Mormon is right.

Wrong. That is the wrong answer. No, don't follow your feelings. Follow God. There is a war going on in the soul.

In 1 Peter 2 it says, Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. I've got to make that determination to abstain.

To abstain means to say no. Abstain from fleshly lusts because they war against the soul. The flesh and the spirit are in constant hostility and constant conflict within and the flesh will draw you away.

[19:02] Young people, older people, the flesh is in us. It's in us from the beginning. You even see it in little babies, don't you? The flesh rears up as they have their tantrums and it's with us still as old people like men.

We still have these constant struggles. The flesh, we've got to fight it. Ha! It will draw you away if you let it loose and it will carry you away and entice you.

James 1 it says, But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. And then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.

What's the order? Drawn away of lust enticed it brings forth sin it brings forth death.

How does it start with that enticement? And how good the world is it at enticing us isn't it? And we see that worldly marketers are so good at enticing us to buy the latest product.

[20:15] You know the one that you bought last year is not good enough anymore. You've got to buy something newer and greater and more improved. And it's like a lure on a fishing line and dangles and shines and draws the fish and before they know it they're caught.

And the word tells us to make no provision for the flesh. In Romans 13 it says but put beyond the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to feed to fulfil the lust thereof.

So don't feed your flesh feed your faith feed your faith. You know some men feed the flesh with booze. It's so commonly the case.

I've been speaking to some people lately where there was some conflict and the man says oh I didn't get drunk I just had a bit you know.

Don't feed the flesh. Friends don't feed it. Some men feed the flesh with booze and before they know it they're drawn away and enticed and the flesh is weak.

[21 : 28] We need to be alert to that. In Mark 14 as well as in Matthew it tells how the Lord Jesus said watch and pray that you answer not into temptation. The spirit truly is ready but the flesh is weak.

So there's a sense where our spirit we've got that you know as a safe person we've got a spirit that wants to love God and follow him but the flesh is weak all the time even as a wonderful Christian that your flesh is still weak.

For all of us it is. So we need to recognise that weakness of our flesh and as Jesus says watch and pray watch and pray and find a way of escape. In 1 Corinthians 10 the Lord says there hath no temptation overtaken 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 you may be able to bear it.

The way to escape look for the way to escape you know the fire alarm goes off where do you hit the exit door. Friends when sin and enticement and temptation faces you look for the exit sign look for the way to escape and God will provide it.

Some ways to escape is having a strong Bible knowledge know your Bible trust your Bible the enemy sows down he sows tears he snatches away the word he doesn't want you to get it.

[23 : 01] We need the word we need the mighty weapon that the word of God is but we need to hear God's voice and it needs to be louder than the voice that tempts us. You know it's the voice that is loudest that we listen to.

Is it the voice of God's spirit? Is it the voice of the flesh? Is it the voice of God's word or is it the voice of the world? We need to listen carefully and whose voice will you follow?

Will you follow the voice of God in his word or will you follow the voice of the flesh? There's many voices of the flesh right out there. So believe God and use the shield of faith.

Thirdly we see the devil. We see the world. Secondly the flesh. Thirdly the devil. And the Bible speaks much of the devil. It tells us of the snare of the devil. He's like the snare of the fowler.

You know in the Bible days there was these people who caught birds. Fowls. And they were called fowlers. So they would catch these fowls and they had these snares.

[24 : 04] And the snare of the fowler was this kind of little trap that they would set with some rope or some kind of stick and pull it and the bird would be caught in the trap.

And the devil is such that he is likewise someone who snares people. It looks quite harmless and attractive. There might be some food there and the bird is drawn into the fowler's trap.

And likewise too the devil is sneaky. He's a trickster. Someone has said the devil has a master's degree in trichometry. That was a joke.

The devil's got a master's degree in trichometry. He's a trickster. Someone said Satan puts some truth in every lie to make the lie more believable.

He has this manifold work of opposition. He's our adversary. Of imitation. He's like the magicians of Egypt. And accusation as the accuser of the brethren.

[25 : 05] He does these things in manifold ways. And the word tells us be sober, be vigilant. In other words, be alert and be watchful, be vigilant, be on the lookout because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.

He's like a roaring lion. But like someone said, he's got no team. Jesus has dealt with his team. But who resist steadfast in the faith knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

This roaring lion is still on the war path. Don't give the devil a foothold is another important truth. In Ephesians 4.27 it says, neither give place to the devil.

In other words, don't give him an inch of your life. Don't give him an inch. Don't budge. Don't give him a foothold. Now how can we give him a foothold?

You can answer that for yourself. It could be those things that seem relatively harmless. But you're giving place to the devil. Better to be cautious.

[26 : 21] Friends, I urge you to neither give place to the devil. There was a story told about one of the devil's most successful methodologies.

Discouragement. Discouragement. This is tongue in cheek of course. The devil was having this kind of garage sale if you like and selling some of his tools of trade and one day they were out there on the garage sale table and there was all of these various tools that the devil uses.

Malice, hatred, envy, jealousy, sensuality, deceit, all kinds of evil were there. And then there was this harmless looking tool, much worn and priced higher than the others. And someone asked the devil at this garage sale, what is that? That is discouragement, he said. Why have you priced it so high? Because, answered the devil, it's more useful to me than any of the others.

When I cannot get inside a man's mind with any of the other tools, I can pry open and inside his conscience with this one, I can get inside his mind with discouragement.

[27 : 28] And I can use this tool in whatever way suits me best. The reason it's so worn is because nearly everybody falls for it. And a few people, only a few people know it belongs to me.

Discouragement. We can all get discouraged. It's a tool of the devil. Recognise it for what it is. Brother, sister, if you're feeling discouraged, it's a tool that the enemy will pull you down and make you flat and make you miserable.

Discouragement. It's the work of the devil. Recognise it for what it is. So we see that the devil uses so many tactics that I'm conscious of time. There's many fronts that he opens.

Sensualism, sensuality, secularism, apostasy. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, they're not a fleshly sort, but they are mighty through God.

So they're pulling down strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

[28 : 39] There's that thinking about our thought life again, discouragement. The thought life. The devil wants to get your mind filled with discouragement.

He wants your thought life filled with thoughts that are contrary to God and hateful to God. They're spiritual strongholds that he wants to build around your mind.

Strongholds of depression and despair, of doubt, of defeat. He wants to cause you to have bitterness against people, pride, anger.

But God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and a sound mind. No, sound, sound mind. Sound doctrine, sound mind.

What does this word sound mean? It means healthy. Sound means healthy. You can have healthy doctrine, sound doctrine and not so healthy. You can have sound mind and a not so sound mind.

[29 : 41] The devil wants to attack your mind. But what does God say? Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtue, praise, think on these things.

The mind is a battlefield. Determine to think on these things. Philippians 4 verses 8 to 9. Look that up and write that down. On these things. Think on these things.

Your mind is a battlefield. So cast your mind on the Lord and fill your mind with godly thoughts. And don't forget that you're in a war. You know, we use these expressions and sometimes it almost seems a bit hollow and shallow and a bit kind of, oh, here he goes on his soapbox again that we're in a warfare.

And it's a bit like what's expressed in World War 2 that in World War 2 it came to this point I'm told in the war where there was this subtle and dangerous nuisance that became prevalent in England. And they called it the optimist nuisance. Because the world, the people in England got the false impression as England started to triumph over the enemy over land and sea and air, they got this impression that the war was already won.

[31 : 05] And they got a bit kind of blasé about it and a bit kind of careless about it. So that they kind of gave up the fight, if you like.

They thought that they already had victory. And we can get that like that as Christians, can't we? Especially in this Western world where what kind of battle have we got to fight? There's no one stringing us up or burning us or not yet.

And we can get a little bit like England got there where they thought, wow, the war's already won. It's not won yet. We're still in it. We're still in it. And there's no ceasefire yet.

So we should be ever watchful, ever wakeful. How do we overcome the devil? How do we overcome?

Ye are of God little children and have overcome them because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. 1 John 4 verse 4, that's a promise isn't it? Praise God. So thinking of the devil just a little bit further, we can make the mistake on the one hand of overestimating his power.

[32 : 16] Now sometimes we give the devil too much credit. The devil made me do it. It's a good cop-out isn't it? Whoa, that horrible scene I did back there, the devil made me do that one.

He gets too much credit. And then we can make the mistake of underestimating his power, where we become unconcerned and complacent.

So we have got a guide against both aspects, being overestimating his power, blaming him for everything or underestimating where we just seem to be careless about things.

So, friends, Satan's power is limited as we see in the book of Job. The devil had to ask permission of God. And sometimes we've got to take the blame.

Don't blame the devil. How do we overcome the power of the devil? In Ephesians 6 verse 10 it says, Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his word.

[33 : 15] Pray through, seek God's power and enablement. A preacher said, Prayer crowns God with the honour and glory due his name. And God crowns prayer with assurance and comfort.

The most praying souls are the most assured souls. You know, there's a story told of a young girl kneeling at her bedside and mother was watching.

And one night, little Mary prayed longer than usual. And when she finally finished praying, mother came to Mary and said, Why did you pray so long tonight? Mary said, Today in church we sang a song that said, Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.

I wanted to make him tremble a little longer. You know, that's what we need to do, that's what we need to do, don't we? Maybe we need to pray a little longer and a little more faithfully because we should not underestimate the power of prayer.

prayer. The power of prayer because the hand of God moves in response to the hand, the power of prayer. So, quickly to close, three quick recaps, the world.

[34 : 27] Worldliness is like a magnet. Don't become a friend of the world. We need the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Overcome the world by faith.

Secondly, the flesh. Make no provision for it. Know your Bible. Let that voice, God's voice, speak louder than the voices of temptation and avoid situations of temptation.

Flee from them, run from them and look for the way of escape, the exit sign, watch and pray to overcome the flesh. And thirdly, the devil. Be sober, be vigilant, be on the lookout, don't give him a foothold, don't give him means.

Submit yourselves to God, resist the devil and pray through. Rely on God's power, the power of the Holy Spirit. I pray you've been encouraged tonight.

Realise the war is still present tense. It's still happening. As much as it kind of seems like there's not a lot that affects us personally, let's face it, really.

[35 : 34] When the rubber hits the road, we've got a pretty easy go of things. But many of our brothers and sisters do not. But we've still got that warfare going on, on those battlefronts of the world, the flesh and the devil.

And you're in the target sights. But you've got the power of God. You've got God's power. Let me close with a scripture. Romans 15 it says, verse 13, now the God of hope, fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.