

Our Enemy

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Preacher: Mike Salvati

[0:00] Do you guys smell that? I smell spiritual street fight going on. I need my biblical binoculars.

Not big enough. Bring out the big boy. My big biblical binoculars. And the thing about this baby is I can hear some stuff as well.

Okay, dial it in, check it out. All right, what do we got here? University, freshman philosophy class, we got a prof saying something to the extent of in the 21st century, can a rational human being actually believe in the God of the Bible?

Now, our war isn't against flesh and blood. But that smells like a spiritual street fight to me. We've got something else going on. We've got some distortion going on.

There is a 38-year-old man with three kids. His wife's in bed because she is duking it out every day. He is sitting in front of a computer screen clicking on porn site after porn site.

[1:15] It's a distortion of God's good gift of sexuality. Oh, Lord, he's going to get ensnared. There's a spiritual street fight going on. Three clicks out, got a church, splitting up, taking parties, two parties.

What's the fight over? Oh, look at that. It's the color of the sanctuary carpet. And yes, it is a foothold for the devil. There's a spiritual street fight going on.

Dear brothers and sisters, war is raging. We're under attack. In the early 1940s, the U.S. transformed itself from a peacetime production to wartime production, and we must transform our thinking from peacetime to wartime in 2015.

We're not at peace. God's people are not at peace. Peace with God. But we have a conflict at hand. In order to stand firm against our enemy, the devil, we must know our enemy and his schemes. We cannot ignore our enemy or be intrigued by our enemy, but we must stand against the schemes of the devil.

[2:40] In order to stand firm against him, we've got to know some things about him. We've got to do some recon on him. So let's do some biblical recon on our enemy of our souls.

First, if you would open up to your Bibles to Ephesians 6, verse 11, this is going to be our starting point. I'm going to be covering some biblical ground this morning. And so what we're going to be looking at is different things the Bible says about the devil, his demons, his network, and how he tempts us.

Ephesians 6, 11. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. There is a devil, and he is scheming, and we've got to be wise to it.

There are four things this morning that I want you to see as we do biblical recon. First, we're going to look at the devil's background. Then we're going to look at the devil's network.

He's a terror network. And then we're going to look at the devil's tactics, his methods. And then we're going to look at the devil's greatest weakness, his greatest enemy.

[4:00] The right man is on our side. So in order for us to stand against the devil, let's get to know him. Put on the sure footing that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

His background, his origin, he was created by God. In Genesis chapter 1, God created the heavens and the earth.

And we're not explicitly told when he created the angelic host, but it was in the Genesis 1 time frame. He created a myriad of angels. And they're glorious.

And they're created to serve his purposes. And so in Genesis 1.31, God saw everything that he made in heaven and on earth.

He was very good. Including all of the angels. But then he rebelled. When did this angelic rebellion happen?

[5:15] Well, there's not a specific time we're given in the Bible. But we are given a time frame. And so if we were to look at Genesis chapter 1 again, chapter 1.31, God saw that everything he made and behold, it was very good.

So there had not been an angelic rebellion up until that point. But if you turn to Genesis chapter 3, verse 1, there's a serpent that enters the garden. And so sometime between Genesis 1.31 and Genesis 3.1, there was an angelic rebellion that took place.

Now what was the cause of this rebellion? What was the cause of this fall? Why did the devil rebel against God? Well, there's a couple places we can turn, but the place I want you to go to right now is maybe a little surprising.

It's 1 Timothy chapter 3. Might ring a bell because what we're going to look at is 1 Timothy 3, verse 6, and it's right in the middle of qualifications for an elder.

And we read in 1 Timothy 3, 6, speaking of a potential elder, he must not be a recent convert, for he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.

[6:43] Why did the devil rebel? He lifted himself up against God. It was pride. He wanted something that God alone would have.

Pride. Pride was the reason he fell. That's the condemnation of the devil. And with him, he brought a host of angels that became demons.

The evil one has a variety of aliases. He goes by a variety of different names throughout the Bible. Satan. Job 1, 6. It means adversary.

In the New Testament, the most common name for the evil one is the devil. It also means adversary or accuser. Jesus called him the tempter in Matthew 4, 3.

Jesus spoke of him in Matthew 12 as Beelzebub, which means master of the house. Enemy. Evil one. Belial, which means worthless.

[7:53] The deceiver, Revelation 12. John 12, 2 Corinthians 4, the God of this world, the ruler of this world, who blinds unbelievers from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who ensnares people and holds them captive to do his will, 2 Timothy 2, 26.

He's the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, Ephesians 2, 2. He's the serpent of Genesis 3, 1 and a great dragon of Revelation 12, 3.

He is a liar and the father of lies, John 8, 44. He is a murderer, John 8, 44. And then when we get back into Revelation, we read that he is Abaddon, Apollyon, the destroyer.

And so as we peruse these names of our enemy, we get a sense of his purpose. The enemy of our soul is seeking to destroy God's plan for the fullness of time, which is to unite all things in our Lord and King Jesus.

God is seeking to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven through Christ. And so what the devil is seeking to do in his rebellion is oppose God's saving work through Christ.

[9:26] There's some background on our enemy. Now let's talk about the network he uses. You've heard of a terror network. I know you have. Organized terrorist cells that are strategically positioned and poised to destroy in order to terrorize.

We've all felt that. The devil has his own terror network. It's an evil network bent on deception and destruction.

And what we see in Ephesians 2, 1 through 3 is his coordinated network. So would you turn to Ephesians 2, 1 through 3, and we're going to see three enemies that are coordinated to do us harm. So Ephesians 2, and you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that's now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and we're by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind. The devil uses a coordinated network of himself and his demons, the world, and our flesh. The first two enemies are outside of us.

[11:00] The last enemy is inside of us. So let's just take these one by one. Again, I want to help you understand what the Bible says how Satan

coordinates his resistance to God's purposes.

So the first enemy of this network is the devil. We've already been talking about him, but what I want you to see in Ephesians 6.12 is that he has got people, things working for him.

The demonic host, the rulers, authorities, spiritual forces over this present darkness, as Colossians 1.13 calls it, the domain of darkness.

We're not told how the things work out. We're not told if there's a hierarchy. We're not told if there are, like, locative, angelic spirits or anything like that.

But there seems to be a dispersion of evil. As an aside, one of the things you cannot miss when you're reading through the Gospels is Jesus' regular confrontation with demons.

[12:17] And he kicks them around. These things are real. Here we are in the 21st century, and we're talking about demons.

Because God's Word talks about demons. So the devil and his demonic host are actively exercising control over the domain of darkness, this present age, by blinding the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 4.4 Their whole operation is built on deception with the intent to destroy. It is malicious.

It's opposed to God. The domain of darkness is real. It's being manipulated by the devil and his demons in order to destroy. So having looked at this first enemy, let's now move on to the next.

The spiritual domain of darkness interfaces with our everyday life with what the Bible calls the world. In Ephesians 2.2, we read that before we became Christians, we were following the course of this world while following the prince of the power of the air.

[13:43] This is the same use of the word world that we find in 1 John 2.15-17. Listen to this. Do not love the world or the things in the world. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride and possessions is not from the Father but is from the world and the world is passing away along with its desires.

But whoever does the will of God abides forever. He's talking about believers right there. So what we need to understand is how this word world is being used here and in other passages like John 3.16.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son. In these contexts, God is talking about people. People who love darkness more than light.

People living in rebellion to God. People blinded by the ruler of this world and living for things that grieve God. That's the world. So the world in these contexts is speaking of people, image bearers of God living in darkness because they've been blinded.

And we live among the majority of these people. They form the majority of people around us. But as Christians we are no longer of the world.

[15:10] John 17.16. We've been transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the beloved Son in whom we have redemption. We've been called out of the world. We're in the world but not of the world.

John 17.18. And what you need to realize is this. That all these people living in darkness blinded by the ruler of this world they create currents.

deceptively dark and destructive currents. You know summer's coming. You know what I'm talking about? Summer is around the corner. Do I have an amen?

And when I hear the word summer I quickly think of the word swimming. We have some friends that regularly invite us as a family to come over and swim and play in their circular above ground pool.

And one of the things that we get to do is get everybody in the pool and we start all walking in the same direction in this circular pool. And in a short amount of time with all these people walking in the same direction a current is created.

[16:17] A current strong enough to sweep people off their feet if they're not firmly planted. And here's what you must realize about the world. The world creates cultural currents that are contrary to the cause of Christ.

When non-Christians are living in close proximity who are opposed to God and blinded walk through life together they create currents. It's not water.

It's ways of thinking. Ways of living. Now don't mistake what I'm saying. We all have loved ones that have yet to be transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of Christ.

What we want most for them is for them to know Christ the King. But we must be aware that these non-Christians we love can be caught up in these cultural currents that oppose Christ. What I want to remind you of this morning is that these currents created by the world are part of the devil's destructive network.

He employs the world for his destructive purposes. He's the prince of the power of the air. He's the god of this world. The ruler of the age. So the connection we see in Ephesians 2 is following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the god of this world.

[17:44] He's behind it. And as Christians, we cannot live for what the world lives for because the world does not live for Christ. It's that simple. As Christians, we create our own currents that are Christ pleasing and Christ like and that will oftentimes come into conflict with the way the world is living.

And what the devil and his demonic host are very effective at doing is tempting us. through the world, appealing to the desires of our flesh.

What I'm wanting you to see here is that once we follow the prince of the power of the air, once we walk, we follow the course, the currents of the world, but we can't make the mistake of thinking that the devil doesn't use the world for his purposes.

He does. He employs the world for his deceptive and destructive purposes by tempting our flesh. We looked at two enemies, let's look at the third, the flesh.

The first two enemies, the devil and the world are outside of us. This last enemy coordinated against us is the flesh, a.k.a. the sinful nature. Your flesh, if you're a Christian, is that part of you that continues to desire things that God forbids.

[19:19] And before you were saved, you were ruled by your flesh. And Satan exploited it. But when you were saved, you were united to Christ and His death and resurrection.

And the power of sin in you was broken, defeated by the cross. So you, Christian, have been united with Christ and you're no longer enslaved to sin.

But that doesn't mean sin is no longer present and influential in your life. You still have a sinful nature. It no longer has dominion over you, but it's still present in you.

And by the way, God has sent His Spirit to dwell inside of you and so that when you have desires that are not pleasing to God, the Holy Spirit will confront them. Galatians 5, 15 and on.

But what we're talking about is how the devil's destructive network uses the world to tempt your flesh. What He's seeking to do is exploit your sinful nature through the world.

[20:25] Typically. James 1, 14 is very helpful because I think it's very important that we make a distinction right now. James 1, 14 says, this, but each person is tempted when he's lured and enticed by his own desire.

We are responsible for our sinful choices. We cannot blame our sin on the devil. That's where I'm trying to make a distinction. He tempts us, but we're responsible for our choices.

Yes, He's actively seeking to tempt us through deception to destroy us. Yes, it's not fair. He doesn't play by the rules. He's forceful.

He makes it really difficult. He's seeking to exploit any and every opportunity we give Him. It's true. But what a Christian can never say is that his or her sin can't say, the devil made me do it.

Why not? He may have tempted us. He may have used the world to tempt us, but He did not cause us to disobey our God.

[21:45] So when it comes to our flesh, there's different commands in our Bibles. One of them is Romans 8.13, which calls us as Christians to put to death the deeds of the body.

We're to be warring against our flesh. We're responsible. Now this raises an interesting question, and maybe some of you have already been asking it.

It's this. Can a Christian be possessed by a demon? Has anybody thought that? Anybody wondered? I have.

Well, it depends upon what you mean by demon possession. If what you mean by demon possession is a demon occupying a Christian's heart and mind and taking over, the answer to that

question is no.

A Christian can't be demon possessed like that. A demon cannot occupy a Christian's heart and mind. Do you know why? there is someone, capital S someone, already occupying it.

[22:57] 1 John 4.4 Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world. And the greater is He is specifically the Holy Spirit in you.

Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world. But if what you mean by demon possession is more like demonized, harassed, attacked, tempted with great force and frequency, yes, that happens.

And that is exactly why God is calling us to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. Against the spiritual forces of evil that seek to employ the world to tempt our flesh.

So we've been trying to look at the devil's destructive network. He uses it. We've seen three enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh. And through this network he attacks us with common tactics.

His schemes. In Ephesians 6.11 we're told to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. And so the devil uses network to try to draw on us in some common ways.

[24:17] And I want to show you four ways, four common tactics that the devil seeks to employ to do us harm. The first is doubt.

Doubt is destroying trust in God's word. We see it in Genesis 3 very early on. The serpent coming on the scene and one of his first things he asks Eve is, did God actually say you should not eat of any tree in the garden?

Doubt. You shall not surely die. Doubt in God's word. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil.

God is trying to win all good from you. Doubting God. Doubting the goodness of God's word.

The devil delights when he causes people to doubt God's word. And so the way that we fight and the way that we're going to learn to fight next week is by using God's word and trusting in God's word when faced with temptation.

[25:35] I mean our king did the same thing in Matthew 4. So first tactic is doubt. The second tactic is distraction. And what distraction does it destroys wholehearted devotion to Christ.

Now there are full frontal distractions but more common are the subtle frog distractions. distractions. As in the frog in the pot of water.

Apparently, and I have not personally verified this with my own experimentation at my house, but apparently if you drop a frog into a pot of boiling water it will immediately jump out.

Have you guys heard that? Would you personally do the same thing? Yes. But if you put a frog in a pot of warm water and incrementally turn the heat up until it comes to a gradual boil, that frog in the water acclimates and eventually gets slowly cooked.

The devil is patient in his distracting us unto destruction. The devil uses the world to distract us from giving ourselves fully to what matters most.

[26:54] Wholehearted devotion to Christ. And here's some of the things he uses. Busyness. Money. Entertainment. Comfort. Exercise. Praise of your own name.

He uses these things to distract us. Some of these things are in and of themselves not bad. But what the devil is seeking to do is move it from good to a small g God.

word. So we got to be careful because the devil will exploit sinful cravings in us to distract us from Christ.

The devil delights when he gradually deceptively distracts us from wholehearted devotion to Jesus. We need his word to sniff it out.

We look at doubt, distraction, distortion. Another tactic of the devil. Destroying the goodness of God's design.

[27:54] What is prostitution? What is sex trafficking? What is pornography? Do you know what they are? They are distortions of God's good design of sexuality that end up destroying people.

We see distortions of marriage. We see distortions of when life begins in the womb. We see distortions of male leadership.

The devil delights in distorting God's good design. And what we see going on in the world is a normalizing of the distortions.

We need God's word. We'll be equipped next week how to fight this. The fourth tactic is division. The Satan destroying God-pleasing unity. Satan destroying the blood-bought unity of his people.

[29:15] One of the themes throughout the book of Ephesians is unity. We see it in Ephesians 4, 1-6. Paul exhorts us, walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've called as one people.

One body. One Lord. One baptism. One faith. One, one, one, one, one. Unity. In Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus prays for us and he prays that we would be united and united in him.

I mean, think about it this way. God's plan for the fullness of time is to unite all things in Christ. So it makes sense that one of the devil's chief tactics is to divide the unity of God's people.

Brothers and sisters of Christ the King Church, it is safe to say that the devil and his host are looking for an opportunity to divide us.

It's safe to say it. It's not if, but it's when. The devil is seeking to undermine God's unifying work in us and he's been doing a wonderful work in this body.

[30:30] So we have warnings like Ephesians 4, 26 and 27. Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil.

The devil is looking to divide us. He's looking to undermine and divide us as a church. Let me give you some possible ways he would do that. He'll seek to divide us over doctrine.

He'll seek to divide us over worship preferences. He'll seek to divide us over joining the Crossway Association. He'll seek to divide us over approving budgets. He'll seek to divide us over decisions regarding carpet texture and wall color.

He'll seek to divide us over hurt feelings. Listen to James. Listen to this. This is so good. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, this is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, worldly, unspiritual, demonic.

That's James. He goes on to say, for where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, also known as pride, for where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder in every vile practice, also known as division.

[31:48] But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, insincere. That's Christ-like stuff right there. That's humility in action.

And he goes on to say, in a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. Unity. God is calling us to guard against the divisive efforts of the devil.

One of the things I hear somewhat frequently is this. Christians saying, I don't need a church. I don't need to go to church. The church is full of people who are jerks. I don't need to go to church.

I'm not making a case the church is perfect. God knows I'm not. But isolation is exactly what the devil wants.

Anybody watch Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom? What happens on the African Serengeti? Pride of Lions? Remember what they do?

[32:59] They identify weak link. Separate weak link. Isolate weak link. Devour weak link. 1 Peter 5.8 Our enemy, the devil, is like a lion prowling around looking for someone to devour.

So for us, what this means is instead of separating and isolating, we congregate and unite. fight. And we take up arms against the devil.

Doubt, distraction, distortion, division are all deceptive methods the devil uses to destroy God's glorious purpose in Christ. But our God's bigger. Speaking of Christ, let's turn to the devil's greatest weakness.

His name is Jesus. The devil's weakness, his greatest enemy, is our Lord and King, Jesus Christ, who gave himself up for us.

Jesus. Did you know that Jesus is the destroyer of the destroyer?

[34:11] He will destroy the works of the devil. Christ's death and resurrection won the decisive victory in the battle against the devil.

According to Colossians 2.13, the cross of Christ disarmed the rulers and authorities, speaking of spiritual powers, and put them to open shame by triumphing over them. What happened at the cross overpowered the spiritual forces of darkness.

All things were put under his feet. Let's back up. What was Satan thinking when he entered Judas in order to betray Jesus?

Speculation. I think he was thinking he was going to destroy Jesus. Apparently, Satan did not realize that what he was doing was according to God's sovereign, glorious plan.

Jesus not only knew Judas would betray him, he allowed Jesus to betray him. He willfully went to his own death because it would be through his death and resurrection that he would destroy death and the destroyer.

[35:25] Christ is risen. He is on his throne. The devil is on the run. And when Jesus comes back, he will completely, finally dismantle, destroy the devil's network and then throw him by the scaly scruff of his neck into the lake of fire.

That's Revelation 20 verse 10. The devil goes by the destroyer. Apollyon.

Way back in Genesis chapter 3:15, the proto-evangelium, the first gospel, there would be a descendant of Eve who would break the serpent's neck.

There are three passages I'd really like to show you, but I'm just going to point you to one. If you would turn to Hebrews chapter 2, I want to gird up your loins with this, strengthen you.

Hebrews chapter 2 verse 14, since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, Jesus himself likewise partook of the same things. He became a man.

[36:52] That through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death. That is the devil. Did you get it right there? He came to destroy the works of the devil and the devil.

And deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. The devil's greatest weakness is our Lord Jesus, who's already triumphed and who is going to work all things out.

His kingdom is advancing. The kingdom, the domain of darkness is shrinking. So let me conclude by saying this.

This morning we've done some biblical recon on the adversary of our souls, the devil. And what I want you to walk away with is this. Christian, you don't need to fear the devil.

He's been defeated. His doom is set. Yes, he's dangerous. He prowls around like a lion. But God is for us.

[38:06] He hasn't even, he's given us his own son. How much along with him will he give us everything we need? Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. God is for us.

Next week, we're to go to the Christian armory to see what weapons God has provided for us to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. We know he's been defeated.

He will be destroyed. He remains dangerous. So next week we learn how to put on the armor and fight. Let me pray.

God, thank you so much for your word. Thank you for making us aware of things that we will generally not think about. God, we are sobered by the reality of a spiritual conflict going all around us and even aimed at us.

But we take courage in knowing that Jesus, our King, reigns over it all and is working his will for our good. God, I pray that you would strengthen us, that you would protect us, that you would unite us, that you would make us wise.

[39:32] We are not ignorant to his designs. designs. And so, God, we pray for the power and the wisdom to walk in a manner worthy of the calling of which you called us as a church armed for the glory of Christ.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.