

Overpowering the enemy

Introduction

- I wonder how many of you are shocked to hear me say that Christians live in a constant state of war!
 - The truth is we are live-targets! And, the enemy, who is more powerful than us, had us in his sights from the moment we decided to follow Christ! Do I have your attention?
- Who is this enemy? At this time, I will tell you who the enemy is NOT. The enemy is not...
 - World terrorists,
 - Our government,
 - Your spouse,
 - Your children,
 - Your boss.

The Context

Jesus' public ministry took Him to various towns within Israel... He sent His disciples ahead to prepare for His coming. Jesus went to where people lived! His ministry was three-fold. The Book of Luke says in Chapter 10...

v1a. The Lord chose seventy-two other disciples.

v19. He gave them authority over all the power of the enemy

v1b. and sent them on ahead in pairs to all the towns and villages He planned to visit.

v17. When the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to Him, "Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name."

My message comprises of four main parts ... The **enemy** (Identity and Purpose), The **battlefield**, The **enemy's weapon**, and **Our weapon**.

1. The Enemy ...

a. His identity

John says in the Book of Revelation... *"This great dragon—the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world—was thrown down to the earth with all his angels" (12:9).*

Paul says in the Book of Ephesians... *"We are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realm" (6:12). (Friends, our real fight is against *spiritual* forces, not physical)*

Peter cautions us in First Peter ... *"Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour" (5:8).*

- Scripture exposes Satan as our great enemy! Satan is 'the' commander-in-chief of all *lies, conflict, and evil* in our world!

b. His purpose

Jesus says in the Book of John, *"The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy"* (10:10a). (Temporal life: peace, contentment, health, relationships, wealth, opportunities, dreams, hopes.... and, Eternal life! (Both, our journey and destination.)

2. The Battlefield ...Our minds (that's where life's critical battles take place).

Friends, our **attitudes** and **actions** reflect our **thinking**. When we permit Satan to *screw-up* our thinking, he will succeed in "our" *screwing-up* of our lives... it's as simple as that.

Adolf Hitler was the instigator of World War II. He relied heavily upon the use of 'propaganda' to gain an advantage in his quest to conquer all the countries of Europe (and England)... and he nearly succeeded!

Propaganda was used inwardly by the Nazi's to "fire-up" a German national spirit in support for an all-out war effort, and it was used outwardly as a weapon... aimed at "crippling" the fighting spirit of the allied forces.

The Australian English Dictionary defines 'propaganda' as ... *"Organised dissemination of information to assist or damage political cause."*

Deliberate lies, dressed as truth, is the enemy's powerful weapon that is aimed at the minds of his opponents.

Friends, 'right' thinking is crucial to the health and well-being of our lives and relationships (with God and with one another).

Paul says to us in The Book of Romans... *"Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person... by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is"* (12:2).

Concerning our minds, Paul also says in the Book of Philippians we must *fix* our thoughts on... *"what is true and honourable and right."* We are to *"Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable"* (4:8). Paul classifies these six 'qualities' of thought as excellent and worthy of praise.

Each of us is responsible for what we choose to 'think' about. If we choose to *think* wrong, we will *act* wrong... and the outcome will be wrong,

To change your *behaviour*, you must first change your thinking.

- Sending children to their bedroom for misbehaving, or a criminal to prison achieves punishment, but not correction.

To be victorious in our life-long battles we *also* need to make allowances for other people in our lives who, at times... without intent and control... behave in strange, hostile, and unloving ways toward us...

- Advice: Next time you are attacked, don't go on the offensive!
- Remind yourself: Their thinking toward you must be *distorted* in some way. (Be patient and understanding. They are not your enemy!)

3. Satan's weapon

It was in the Garden of Eden that Satan first used propaganda as a weapon to enslave mankind to himself (and to sin) ... through a clever *3D Approach*:

- Doubt, Distortion and Deception

Firstly: Satan caused **doubt** in the mind of Eve when he asked her, "*Did God really say.....?*" (Gen. 3:1a).

Secondly: Distortion followed by Satan saying, "...you must not eat any of the fruit in the garden?" (Gen. 3:1b).

Thirdly: The trap - **Deception** (the lie)... "*You won't die!*" the serpent hissed (Gen. 3:4)

- Q: What had God warned Adam earlier in Chap.2:16 and 17?

Our enemy, Satan, is a liar... that's his character. He's not capable of telling the truth. In the Book of John, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their unbelief with these words,

"For you are children of your father the Devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning and has always hated the truth. There is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies." (8:44).

- **Doubt, distortion and deception** are the weapons of our enemy.

4. Our weapon.

The weapon God has given us to combat the enemy is **His Word** and His **Authority** (delegated to every true believer).

a. The Word of God.

Matthew tells us in his Gospel account that after 40 days of fasting in the wilderness, Jesus disarmed Satan's weapons by simply quoting Scripture in His response to each of Satan's three temptations (Chap. 4).

Paul says in the **Book of Ephesians**, "*Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*" (6:17).

- God's truth is our conquering weapon against Satan!

b. God's authority ... has been delegated to us in the Name of Jesus! Friends, in the name of Jesus, there is 'power' to ...

- **Forgive sins** - 2 Cor. 2: 10-11
- **Heal** – Lk. 9:1 I
- **Teach** - Acts 9:27
- **Preach** - 2 Cor. 2:17
- **Baptise** - Acts 19:5... and, there is power to...
- **Cast out demons** – Matthew says... "*Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them **authority** to cast out evil spirits*" (10:1)

- In the Book of Acts, Paul issued this directive to the demon, controlling the possessed slave girl at Philippi: *“I command you **in the name of the Jesus Christ** to come out of her”* (16:18). (Instantly the demon left her!)

In Closing

There are three questions, all needing a ‘yes’ response, before any person can successfully battle against the enemy (with absolute calm and confidence):

Q 1. Have you received authority from Jesus?

This is what Jesus says to every believer...

- In the Book of Acts ... *“When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power”* (1:8).
- In the Book of Matthew ... *“I have been given complete authority... I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (28:18-20).

Q 2. How well do you know the Bible?

(i.e., How should you react against your human enemies? *“Love them and pray for those who persecute you”* (Mat. 5:43, 44).

Q 3. Are you in the habit of putting-on the whole armour of Jesus?

Pauls says to us in Ephesians 6:10-11... *“Be strong with the Lord’s mighty power. Put on all of God’s armour so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil.”*

Friends, if you can say ‘yes’ to all three questions, then you can overpower the enemy (Satan), every time... all the time!

Here’s a simple jingle you can use to put Satan in his place...

*“I command you Satan, in the name of the Lord that you take up your weapons and flee, for the Lord has given me **authority**... to walk... all over thee.”*