



Stand Against

Throughout scripture, we see that as followers of Jesus Christ, we have an enemy, whose name is Satan. The question is, do we know our enemy? It is easy to make critical mistakes in how we go about standing against the enemy's plans and lies.

WEEK THREE

We give him far too much credit

Message Passage: James 1:13-15, Gal 5:19-21, Eph 4:20-24, Gen 3:14-15, & Rev 20:1-3

Small Group Passage: James 4:7-10

TEACHING AND VIDEO NOTES

When it comes to spiritual warfare and the topic of satan, we have a tendency to run from one extreme to another

- **Extreme 1 (last week):** Denying that Satan or spiritual warfare has anything to do with our difficult seasons or situations.
- **Extreme 2 (this week):** Blaming everything that goes wrong in our lives on Satan. Or we give him vastly more power and credit than he is due.

C.S. Lewis – *The Screwtape Letters* - "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight."

THE FEARFUL VICTIM

(Doesn't take ownership)

Here is what that looks like. We blame almost everything wrong in our lives and in the world on the work of The Enemy. We live in fear as if somehow Satan is on an

equal playing field with God. We downplay our own sinfulness and, therefore, our own part to play in the crisis that we create.

James 1:13-15 *When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; **14** but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. **15** Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

We do not see Satan in any of those passages. Why? Because we have a sinful nature all our own. We have our own evil desires. Those evil desires have dire consequences.

Galatians 5:19-21 *The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; **20** idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions **21** 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.*

POINTS OF CLARITY

Theology: Satan does not make us do anything. He does tempt us, but he does not control us. Therefore, even though spiritual warfare is real, we must take ownership of our actions when we are led astray.

Theology: As believers, we can not be possessed. You cannot be possessed if you are a temple of the Holy Spirit, which every believer in Christ Jesus is (1 Cor 6:19). This is a direct implication of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 12:29 and Mark 3:2.

How do I know if the Enemy is tempting me or if it is simply my own sinful nature? There isn't a surefire, "here is how I know without a shadow of a doubt, way of knowing."

Ephesians 4:20-24 *That, however, is not the way of life you learned **21** when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. **22** You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; **23** to be made new in the attitude of your minds; **24** and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Look at the language, “Your old self,” “our former way of life,” and “our deceitful desires.” They are all our own sinful nature. We are the origin. But look what is said next.

Ephesians 4:25-27 *Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.*

Who gives the devil a foothold? We do! When we have unconfessed, unrepentant sin that is not being dealt with, we give the Enemy a foothold. Therefore, if Satan is doing a work in your life, you have to ask the question did you give the opportunity unnecessarily to do so

THE DEFEATED FOE

We should not give Satan too much credit because we have to own the reality that we are sinful and rebellious all by ourselves. But we also should not live in fear of the Enemy because he is a defeated foe.

Gen 3:14-15 *So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,*

*“Cursed are you above all livestock
and all wild animals!
You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust
all the days of your life.*

15 *And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel.”*

From the very beginning of our sinful rebellion and Satan’s plan to deceive us, God had a plan. His plan was Jesus. He would pay the penalty for our sins, and he would defeat His enemy, Satan. We see this prophetic prediction fulfilled in the closing passages of scripture.

Rev 20:1-3 *And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving*

the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

In summary, Satan is a defeated enemy, as his defeat is guaranteed. He is mortally wounded. But that does not mean that he is not active today. So....

Segway to Small Group: How do we go about treating the enemy as a real threat while not living in fear? For one thing, we do not give him easy opportunities to lead us astray.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. When you think about spiritual warfare and Satan, which “extreme” (ignoring his existence or fearful victim) do you see as more common?
2. Have you ever seen either extreme play out in your own life or in church culture? What did that look like?
3. How does taking ownership of our own fallen, sinful nature change the way we view our struggle against the Enemy?

Leader Note: When we acknowledge that sin originates in our own hearts, we stop blaming everything on the external spiritual attack of Satan. Instead of saying, “The devil made me do it,” we begin to ask: What sinful desires or patterns in me gave Satan an opportunity to lead us astray? It is only when we adopt this biblical view of Satan’s power and our own sinfulness that we take personal accountability, which is necessary for real spiritual maturity.

4. How does knowing that Satan is a “defeated foe” affect how we face temptation and hardship?

READ: James 4:7-10

5. Vs 7 How do we resist the devil? We submit ourselves to God. The key is that this can not be a partial submission. We must fully submit ourselves to God. What areas of life are tempting to hold onto and not fully submit to God?

Leader Note: Whatever area that is not fully submitted to God is the area of our lives that the Enemy can do a work in. We see a clear example of this in Acts 5, when a married couple, Ananias and Sapphira, lied to the Apostles and the church about the amount of money they gave to the church after selling land. They claimed to have given it all, but in reality, they kept some for themselves because they wanted to appear as generous as others while still enjoying the money. Peter asked Ananias, “How is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?” The unstated answer was that the couple was not living in full submission to God. Their lying, self-righteous glory-seeking, and greed proved that. Because of that, Satan had filled their hearts.

6. Vs 8 “Come near to God, and he will come near to you.” We are meant to have a growing relationship with God the Father. One in which we draw near to Him. What are some habits, events, or seasons that have helped you draw near to God and know him more?
7. Vs 8-9 James makes it abundantly clear that confession must be a part of our lives if we are to draw near to God and resist the devil. Why is confession, especially regular confession, indispensable when it comes to standing against the enemy's plans?

Passage Context for 2 Corinthians 2:5-11: “Someone in the Corinthian church had publicly opposed and sinned against Paul (see 2:5–10), so he wanted to avoid a painful visit like his previous one (2:1). Therefore, Paul had written a tearful letter to them from an anguished heart so that they could deal with the sin, have their joy restored, and know of Paul’s abundant love for them (2:3–4). Paul insists that the person had caused harm not so much to him but to the whole church (2:5). But he acknowledges that the Corinthians had exercised church discipline (punishment) against the person, so apparently the man had repented (2:6). Now it was time to restore this repentant brother by comforting him, forgiving him, and reaffirming their love for him so that he wouldn’t be overwhelmed by excessive grief (2:7–8).”¹

READ: 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

8. Vs 11 - How might Satan use the choice to refuse mercy and forgiveness to outwit us?

PRAYER TIME

DISMISS

¹ Tony Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2019), 1181.