

TARGETS

Where the Body of Christ is Under Attack and How To Fight back



Introduction to Targets: *Knowing Your Enemy*

We are going to spend the next 10-Weeks looking at the way the enemy targets believer's lives and what we can do to fight back. The devil has a plan for your life and it is NOT to see you grow and mature in your love for God. In John 10, Jesus is telling his disciples a parable about the "shepherd" who leads and protects his sheep and the "thief" who wants to harm them. We know that Jesus is talking about himself when he refers to the Shepherd. So, who is the thief and what are his plans for the sheep? Jesus told his followers,

"The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life." (John. 10:10 NLT-SE)

Peter calls him, "your great enemy," and says he "prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour." (1 Pet. 5:8 NLT-SE)

However, the clearest teaching regarding the devil comes from Jesus himself in John 8...

³¹ Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. ³² And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

³³ "But we are descendants of Abraham," they said. "We have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean, 'You will be set free'?"

³⁴ Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin. ³⁵ A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son is part of the family forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free. ³⁷ Yes, I realize that you are descendants of Abraham. And yet some of you are trying to kill me because there's no room in your hearts for my message. ³⁸ I am telling you what I saw when I was with my Father. But you are following the advice of your father."

³⁹ "Our father is Abraham!" they declared.

"No," Jesus replied, "for if you were really the children of Abraham, you would follow his example. ⁴⁰ Instead, you are trying to kill me because I told you the truth, which I heard from God. Abraham never did such a thing. ⁴¹ No, you are imitating your real father."

They replied, "We aren't illegitimate children (lit., "Bastards like you are")! God himself is our true Father."

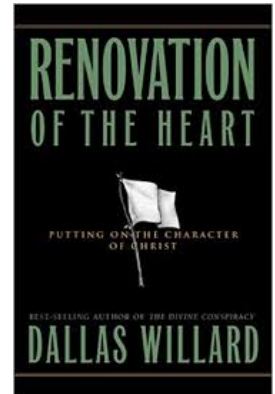
⁴² Jesus told them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, because I have come to you from God. I am not here on my own, but he sent me. ⁴³ Why can't you understand what I am saying? It's because you can't even hear me! ⁴⁴ For you are the children of **your father the devil** (Gen. 3), and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always **hated the truth**, because 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**. ⁴⁵ So when I tell the truth, you just naturally don't believe me! ⁴⁶ Which of you can truthfully accuse me of sin? And since I am telling you the truth, why don't you believe me? ⁴⁷ Anyone who belongs to God listens gladly to the words of God. But you don't listen because you don't belong to God." (John. 8:31-47 NLT-SE)

The Three Enemies of the Soul: the world, the flesh and the devil:

- To the Jesus, the devil is the evil behind the religious leaders of the day. According to John 8, Jesus obviously believes in the devil. To Jesus, the devil is real!



- 2005: 91% of Americans believe in God, 87% believe in Heaven, 84% believe in miracles, 79% believe in angels, 74% believe in hell and 67% believe in the devil.
- 2011: 17% of Catholics believe that Satan is real. 83% believe he is a symbol of evil.
- 2013: 51% of American Christians believe Satan is real. Compare that to 18% in Britain.
- “We don't believe something by merely saying we believe it, or even when we believe that we believe it. We believe something when we act as if it were true.” Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*



- Who are we actually talking about? Satan or the Devil?...

- **Both.** The devil is one of many names used by Jesus and the writers of the NT for a creature we read about throughout scripture...Jesus also calls him the satan, the evil one, the tempter, the destroyer, the deceiver, the serpent of old...all of these are **titles**, not names.
- The original Hebrew term *sâtan* (Hebrew: שָׂטָן) is a generic noun meaning "accuser" or "adversary", which is used throughout the Hebrew Bible to refer to ordinary human adversaries, as well as a specific supernatural entity. The word is derived from a verb meaning primarily "to obstruct, oppose". When it is used without the definite article (simply satan), the word can refer to any accuser, but when it is used with the definite article (ha-satan), it usually refers specifically to the heavenly accuser: the satan.
- In Greek is *diabolos*...where we get the word, diabolical. The Greek root means, to slander or accuse, lit., the slanderer or the accuser.
- Three times Jesus calls this creature the ruler (Greek., *arkon*, a political word for the highest ranking official in the government)...**To Jesus, Satan is the most powerful and influential creature in the cosmos.**

Staying Focused In the Midst of the Fight

- The devil is a liar and deceiver. He would like nothing more than to distract our attention and energy away from God and put it on himself. In the midst of a spiritual battle, you can begin to feel the pressure mount when you turn your attention away from Jesus and on to the accuser. You can also sense the delight Jesus has when, even in the midst of overwhelming external distractions, we choose to lock our attention on Jesus and his love for us, trusting him for all we need.
- ¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ² **We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus**, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. (Heb. 12:1-2 NLT-SE)
- So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, **we fix our gaze** on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever. (2 Cor. 4:18 NLT-SE)
- And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. **Fix your thoughts** on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. (Phil. 4:8 NLT-SE)

The Spiritual Pushback is Real and Normal

- The devil is not one to sit back and "ride it out" when it comes to our diligent and disciplined pursuit of Jesus. Nothing is off the table for him. The OT book of Job paints a picture of an evil being who will stop at nothing when it comes to discrediting God's family. Well, almost nothing. It really messes with him when we don't give up. When he puts pressure on believers, he thoroughly expects them to cave quickly. When we don't, our faith and trust in God attracts the attention of heaven.
- ⁸ Though I (Paul) am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. ⁹ I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning. ¹⁰ God's purpose in all this

was to use the church to **display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.** ¹¹ This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord. (Eph. 3:8–11 NLT-SE)

- **Fight the good fight of faith;** take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Tim. 6:12 NAS95)
- **Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy,** the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. (1 Pet. 5:8 NLT-SE)

Standing Firm is Offense Not Defense

- Many interpreters of the Bible believe Ephesians 6 paints a picture of the defensive position necessary for spiritual battle and victory. “Stand firm” is the exhortation. Actually, standing firm is an offensive move. Standing firm against what? The aggressive nature of the devil as he tries to disable and discredit us. Yet, we accomplish more than we can imagine when we stand firm against the schemes of the devil and his minions. This is spiritual authority made manifest!
 - ¹⁰ A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to **stand firm against all strategies of the devil.** ¹² For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. (Eph. 6:10–12 NLT-SE)
 - ¹⁰ I forgive whatever needs to be forgiven, I do so with Christ’s authority for your benefit, ¹¹ so that Satan will not outsmart us. For **we are familiar with his evil schemes.** (2 Cor. 2:10–11 NLT-SE)
 - I fear that somehow **your pure and undivided devotion to Christ** will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent. (2 Cor. 11:3 NLT-SE)
- **TARGETS:** *Where the Body of Christ is Under Attack and What To Do About It*
 - **Time** ~ The enemy is stealing our time
 - **Spirituality** ~ How the church has been assaulted by unbelief
 - **Family** ~ The key to ruining everything, everywhere, for everyone
 - **Emotions** ~ How fear and stress are burning out believers
 - **Health** ~ How our bodies have been targeted for destruction
 - **Mission** ~ The enemy has a terrible plan for your life
 - **Truth** ~ The shifting sand our world is set upon
 - **Money** ~ The remedy for a “purse with holes”
 - **Morality** ~ Following Jesus in a world with no boundaries
 - **Marriage** ~ The attack on your marriage is real