

Sunday December 7th 2008
The Three Great Enemies – Part Four
The Devil

1). Re 3:21 *"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*

a). For every Christian at the Judgment Seat of Christ there will be a determination made, based upon our works, as to whether we are an overcomer or whether we have been overcome.

b). This whole event, as we see here from our scripture, has to do with regality, with rulership over the earth from the heavens, and is one part of the fulfillment of God's plans and purposes for the ages.

c). The overcoming Christian will sit with Christ on His throne after the same fashion that Christ, also as an overcomer, sat down with His Father on His throne.

d). Although the outcome of God's plans and purposes is absolutely sure, for us as individual Christians our individual outcome is by no means sure. We are, during the course of our pilgrim journey, engaged in a battle of cosmic proportions against an enemy who is powerful, ruthless and deadly.

e). We need to keep in mind that we have declared our intent to take a position of rulership from the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places and that position will not be given up lightly.

f). We are dealing with an enemy who brought about the downfall of the first man, who caused Cain to slay Abel. Corrupted mankind to such a degree that the Flood of Noah was needed to cleanse the human race. Who has throughout the centuries sought the destruction of the nation of Israel, whose hand was behind the horrific extermination of 6 million Jews within our recent history. Who consumed thousands of Christians in the Roman coliseums and since those days has wrought havoc in the Church through repression and deception, being responsible for assigning yet more thousands of the eternally saved to the outer darkness where there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth for the duration of the Millennial Kingdom.

g). Let us not be deceived into thinking that we are immune from his attention. It is as scripture states - 1Pe 5:8 ¶ *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

h). And this means you and I – he has been seeking and continues to seek out those of us in this very room, whom he may devour – and we, if we do not remain sober and vigilant, will present him with the opportunity to do so.

i). And none of this of course happens in a vacuum, or somehow apart from us somewhere in the ether.

j). It is in our hearts, it is in our minds, it is within the course of our everyday life that this conflict takes place.

2). We have seen in past weeks that we have three great enemies arrayed against us, all of which are inextricably linked and demonically orchestrated – these being the world, the flesh and the devil.

a). We saw that the phrase ‘the world’ refers to the world system under the god of this world - 1Jo 5:19 *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.*

b). And would of necessity include political systems, culture, social order and institutions, the media etc.

c). Then within these structures we find the means by which we can be drawn away after them - 1Jo 2:16 *For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*

d). The world system under Satan is passing away and with it the lusts that are generated by it. All that is within the present kingdom of Satan is of no value – the only to be found in this present age is in doing the will of God.

e). And it is in doing the will of God that we would find our victory over the world - 1Jo 5:4 *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.*

f). Doing the will of God will be the manifest outcome of our faith as we look from this world to the Kingdom which is to come, organizing and changing our lives accordingly - Heb 12:2 *looking [lit. ‘from unto’ i.e. From all that surrounds us] unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

g). And ‘our faith’ is not a generic term but that which relates specifically to the word of the Kingdom - Ro 16:25 ¶ *Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began 26 but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—*

h). And this faith comes by only one means - Ro 10:17 *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

i). It is our proper engagement with the Word that can establish us in the faith – nothing else.

j). And our ability to hear has nothing to do with the ears on the side of our head of themselves, but the spiritual ears with which we may receive the truth Re 3:22 *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

3). The world system under Satan is the environment into which we are born Eph 2:1b *....who were dead in trespasses and sins,*

a). It is this natural birth into the bondage of sin as a slave to the god of this world that gives our flesh, our sin nature, our 'old man' its direct connection with the wicked one, and provides for him direct access to us - Ro 7:18 *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells;*

b). Our new birth, the supernatural birth from above delivers us from that bondage if we choose to walk in the freedom it provides - Ro 6:6 *knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*

c). In one facet of the picture then our 'old man' was crucified with Christ in that Christ took our sin upon Himself and became sin for us – then again our 'old man', our flesh is to be crucified as an on-going process - Lu 9:23 *Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*

And it is only through continually putting to death the flesh that we can gain victory over it - Ro 8:13 *For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

d). Col 3:5 ¶ *Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

e). Ga 5:16 *I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

f). Putting to death the deeds of the body, crucifying our flesh, by the Spirit and walking in the Spirit can only be accomplished by hearing what the Spirit says and then choosing to act upon it - Joh 16:13 *"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.*

g). We are then just as reliant on the spiritual truth of scripture to put to death our flesh as we are to overcome the world.

h). Ga 5:24 *And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

4). And all of this brings us to the third of our great enemies, the Devil – the very one who orchestrates the present system of rulership and bombards us with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life – the very one who has direct access to us through our first birth into his kingdom.

a). Now let us remember that Satan is a created being - Eze 28:15 *You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you.*

b). And as such, even though he is an angelic being with powers outside of what we would understand in the natural, he is not all knowing or all powerful or present everywhere and can only operate within the boundaries allowed by his Creator.

c). This would mean then that we would not encounter him in a personal sense, but we would encounter him through his emissaries and through the deceptions wrought by them through the world and the flesh.

d). When we speak of overcoming the Devil we are really talking about overcoming that which is contained within his sphere of influence, that which is part and parcel with his rebel kingdom. But so closely intertwined are the ploys and deceptions with their originator, within his kingdom, that our day to day encounters with them are as if we confront Satan himself.

e). And most distressing of all is how these deceptions have taken root in the Church, so perverting its growth as to have provided a home for Satan's emissaries within it - Mt 13:31 *Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, 32 "which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."*

f). 1Ti 4:1 ¶ *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits [angels] and doctrines of demons,*

5). But, as we would expect, the scriptures themselves provide the means by which our enemy, the Devil can be overcome – wherever we may find him.

a). Let's go back to our scripture used earlier from 1 Peter and let's add another verse to it - 1Pe 5:8 ¶ *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.*

b). Resist = Greek – 'anthistemi' = to stand against, i.e. oppose:--resist, withstand.

c). We are then to stand against him – 'steadfast in the faith'

d). Steadfast = Greek – ‘stereos’ = stiff, i.e. solid, stable (literally or figuratively):--steadfast, strong, sure.

e). And we can clearly see that our standing steadfast is with respect to the faith – that which Paul calls, ‘my gospel’-the word of the Kingdom.

f). We are in the race of the faith – and it is while standing firm in the faith, in this race that we are to withstand, to resist Satan.

g). Apart from this resoluteness with respect to the faith we will not be in a position to be able to resist him.

h) We are to be ‘sober’ and ‘vigilant’ in this because it is our enemy’s desire to devour us.

i). Sober = Greek – ‘nepho’ = (figuratively) be discreet:--be sober, watch, to exercise self control.

j). Vigilant = Greek – ‘gregoreuo’ = to keep awake, i.e. watch (literally or figuratively):--be vigilant, wake, (be) watch(-ful).

k). This is exactly the thought we find in - 1Th 5:5 *You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6 ¶ Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.*

l). Our keeping awake and watchful contextually would have to do with us not falling asleep or becoming distracted with regards to the faith thereby becoming susceptible to the deceit of our enemy. We are not to let our guard down, but be constantly on the alert.

m). In this warfare there is no ceasefire, even during the holidays.

6). Then we see this in - Jas 4:7 *Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

a). Again here we see that we are to resist the Devil. And that which comes before the statement to resist, ‘submit to God’ we would see as further explanation of being sober and vigilant.

b). Our lives are to be organized and ordered in submission to God in accordance with the scriptures – if this is our practice then we will be sober and vigilant and steadfast in the faith – we will in effect be faithfully obedient - With this then in place we can resist the Devil.

7). Scripture then gives us further commentary on this process so that we may know how to be properly prepared - Eph 6:11 *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore,*

having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—

a). What we see in verse 11 is that we are to put on the whole armor of God – this is another of those all or nothing situations. We cannot just have a part of the armor, for only in having all of it will we be able to stand against the wiles, the deceptive schemes of the Devil and only in this way would we be an overcomer.

b). We also see quite clearly from v 12 that the battle we are engaged in is not against flesh and blood – it is not against fallen man residing on the earth – and certainly never against our brothers and sisters in Christ.

c). Rather it is against - *principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

d). And as we noted earlier this battle is about our part in the future government of this earth from the heavenly realm as joint heirs with the One who is ‘King of kings and Lord of lords’.

e). And as we have also seen, because of the nature of our enemy, this is not a battle that can be entered into casually and without proper preparation. To enter into it after this fashion will inevitably end in defeat resulting in shipwreck for us at the Judgment Seat.

f). Perhaps we should also note that engaging in this battle is not optional, nor seasonal. The very fact that we are here today means we are already in it, and have been since the mysteries of the Kingdom first were opened to us – it is 24 hours a day, 365 ¼ days a year for the rest of our life or until the rapture.

g). And only if we remain properly prepared can we be victorious in it.

h). This is the reason given in Ephesians Chapter 4 for the placement of pastor/teachers in the Church - Eph 4:11 *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.[the wiles of the devil]*

i). That which we receive on a Sunday morning and through our Bible Studies must be seen within this context.

j). We have to come here on a Sunday believing what God has said here in Ephesians, realizing that what we receive is of strategic importance in our battle with our enemy, and is vital for our proper preparation. If we sit for 40 minutes or so and then never engage with that message again then we are treating the word of God and our part in the battle far too casually.

k). Proper preparation is also the reason for itemizing the battle-dress that we must wear – given in Ephesians Chapter 6.

8). The description of the whole armor of God begins with – Eph 6:14a *Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth*

a). This belt of truth is the beginning point as it is essential for this to be in place before any of the other pieces can be attached.

b). And what we see here is not a reference to ‘the truth’ the word of God as there is no definite article preceding the word truth.

c). Rather this has to do with us entering this conflict in a sincere, honest and determined way – having the deliberate intent to do what is necessary to put on the rest of the armor, with our focus on what lies ahead for us at the Judgment Seat and beyond - 2Ti 2:1 ¶ *You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. 5 And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.*

9). If we have the belt of truth in place we are then in a position whereby we can avail ourselves of – Eph 6:14b.. *having put on the breastplate of righteousness,*

a). This breastplate is something that we are to put on and is therefore not a reference to the imputed righteousness of Christ that we receive at our new birth.

b). Instead this would be referencing the ‘righteous acts of the saints’ that go to make up our wedding garment.

c). And we will remember that these are acts that are performed in relation to faith – believing what God has said and then acting upon it - Jas 2:21 *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.*

d). This is the same righteousness we are to seek first along with the Kingdom - Mt 6:33 *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

e). The very thing that Paul attests to - 2Ti 4:8 *Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

f). Our righteous acts therefore provide protection for our heart, by keeping our focus on our faith, the hope set before us, which will result on that Day in us receiving the crown of righteousness.

10). Next we find - Eph 6:15 *and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

a). This of course would need to be seen in conjunction with a parallel verse in - Ro 10:15b..... *"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"*

b). In one sense we see the feet as the mode of transport by which the messenger is to take the gospel of peace into the world.

c). In Ephesians of course, the preparation of the gospel of peace has to do with us having a proper foundation on which we may stand steadfast.

d). The gospel of peace – the good news concerning peace – is presented in scripture in two parts.

e). Peace with God - Ro 5:1 ¶ *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

f). This is the peace that comes as a result of our being born again.

g). Once we have peace with God we are then in a position to experience the peace of God - Php 4:5 *Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

h). This is the peace that comes from trusting God in the midst of our circumstances, regardless of what they may be. And this again is faith in action.

i). The absolute surety of peace with God and our absolute trust in God would obviously give us a solid, immovable footing as we take our stand against our enemy.

j). And we, as God's messenger, would proclaim the gospel of peace with God, a present salvation and the gospel of peace with God, a future salvation.

11). Then we have - Eph 6:16 *above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*

a). Faith is simply believing what God has said and should have the resulting action of our then organizing our lives accordingly as we look ahead to the fulfillment of His promises. If we were to do this the fiery darts of our enemy could never find their mark.

b). This same thought is what we find in the Book of Hebrews –
Heb 11:39 *And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. 12:1 ¶ Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, [unbelief – a lack of faith] and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

c). Faith as a shield then is intimately connected with patient endurance as we continue to run the race set before us.

12). Next in our array of armor we have this - Eph 6:17 *And take the helmet of salvation,*

a). The exact nature of this helmet is given to us by comparing scripture with scripture - 1Th 5:8 *But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.*

b). It is the 'hope of salvation', the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time – the salvation of our soul.

c). It is the hope that is set before us of occupying a regal position with Christ in His coming Kingdom. There is no greater incentive and no greater encouragement than this to continue in this present conflict.

d). Tit 2:11 ¶ *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,*

e). Heb 6:18 *that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*

13). And finally - Eph 6:17b.....*and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;*

a). The word of God is the most powerful weapon in the universe.

b). It is of course inseparable from all the other pieces of the armor, as we cannot have those without we have a mature understanding of it.

c). However, we are also to see it as a weapon of itself which we must use to counter our enemy.

d). David said - Ps 119:11 ¶ *Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!*

e). The Lord Himself gives us the perfect example of using the word to counter Satan's wiles - Mt 4:2 *And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. 3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." 4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"*

f). When the attack of our enemy comes we need to be able to draw upon that which is written so as to counter every blow.

g). And also note the enemy will use a distorted form of the word as part of his deceptive ploy - Mt 4:5 *Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"*

h). Again bringing us back to the absolute necessity for sound doctrinal teaching comparing scripture with scripture.

14). And having put on the whole armor of God and taking up the sword of the Spirit we are then to be - Eph 6:18 *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—*

a). Overcoming the world, the flesh and the Devil is a lifelong task requiring patient endurance – but every provision has been made for us to be victorious, and rewards await those who would be victors – let us strive to be so with every sinew of our body.

b). To close today we will have one more scripture - 1Co 9:24 ¶ *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*