

the third enemy

Christians struggle against three enemies in this life: **the world**, the mass of unsaved mankind; **the flesh**, the old nature within that desires to sin; and **the devil**, the evil one named Satan. Many are hindered in their attempts to live for the Lord because they do not identify which enemy they are struggling against and fail to do what God says to do for victory. Why must believers endure spiritual warfare? Because God expects them to trust Him for victory day by day.

Who is the third enemy?

Satan is *the third enemy*, but most believers attribute their problems to the world or the flesh. They believe Satan works in faraway places, but never against them personally. However, believers should not be complacent. Satan and his demons are hard at work against every believer, weak and strong, at this very moment (Eph. 2:2-3; 6:12). Therefore, the question is this: “How can I have victory over this enemy?” Here is the biblical way:

1 Identify Your Enemy

Ephesians 6:12 — *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.*

1 Peter 5:8-9 — *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 ...*

Remember, those verses were written to believers, not to unbelievers. Sometimes Satan causes persecution by unbelievers; other times he hides behind “the flesh.” But sometimes he attacks us directly.

For example, Satan used the natural desire for food to tempt Jesus to turn stones to bread (Matt. 4:2-4). He used the attraction of wealth and glory to tempt Jesus to worship him (Matt. 4:8-10). Notice that Jesus did not struggle with hunger or worldliness; He addressed Satan directly. He faced His real enemy and was victorious.

Do you have a sin that you frequently commit even though you have often prayed for help? Are you oppressed by fear, anxiety, bad thoughts, depression, or nervousness that no amount of medical help has cured? Has your ministry been hindered, but you’re sure everything is right between you and God? Perhaps you have never faced your real enemy!

Romans 6 and Galatians 2:20 really work in the believer’s struggle against the flesh. If those principles are applied, but no relief is found, then your enemy is the devil and not the flesh. If you are disobedient to God’s Word, then you must forsake that sin and submit to the Lord. You must apply Romans 6. But if your desire is to serve the Lord, and you cannot seem to have victory, then look elsewhere. Identify the right enemy.

2 Get Right with God and Man

1 John 1:9 — *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Once Satan is identified as the enemy, then be sure that you are right with God and man. Confess any known sin to God and thank Him for forgiveness. Remember that things like bitterness, resentment, hatred, and an unforgiving spirit are also sin. Ask God to show you any unknown sin so it can likewise be put away.

In getting right with man, confess only to the person or group affected. Make it a matter of sincere prayer; do not rush into confession. If you determine through prayer and the Scriptures that apology or restitution is necessary, make a decision to take the proper steps

(James 4:8-10). Be sure to follow through lest you give the Enemy ground through disobedience to God. However, don’t wait until apology and restitution can be made; complete the following steps now. It may take time to right a wrong, but you can have victory now.

3 Acknowledge the Blood of Jesus

Revelation 12:11 — *“And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb ...*

Acknowledge in prayer, preferably aloud, the absolute sufficiency of the blood of Jesus Christ for your personal cleansing (1 John 1:7) and protection from Satan (Col. 2:15). Claim His protection for yourself and your property. Pray something like: “Lord Jesus, I know You died for me and Your blood cleanses me and protects me from Satan. I now claim that cleansing and protection for myself and all that is mine.” Also claim the protection of the blood of Jesus for the people and property of all those with you; do the same for your loved ones. A similar action was pictured when Old Testament priests sprinkled both people and things with the blood.

4 Acknowledge Your Unity with Jesus

1 Corinthians 6:17 — *But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

Luke 10:19 — *“Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” (Serpents and scorpions are symbols for Satan and his demons.)*

Ephesians 1:19-21 — *and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power²⁰ which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.*

Ephesians 2:6 ...and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

As a believer, you are spiritually united to the Lord. The Scripture above says that you sit with Him at the right hand of God in heavenly places, which is the place of spiritual authority. Jesus has given you His authority over Satan and his demons. That authority is exercised in the Name of Jesus (Luke 10:17-20; Mark 16:17; 2 Cor. 10:3-4). Deliberately take your place with Jesus in His death, burial, resurrection, and exaltation to the right hand of God. You have been made complete in Jesus (Col. 2:9-10).

Resist the Devil

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James 4:7 — Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Many believers stop short of definitely resisting the Devil and thereby lose the victory. Resisting him is as necessary as submitting to God. How do you resist Satan? By renouncing the hidden things of darkness (2 Cor. 4:2), destroying all occult books and objects you own (Acts 19:18-19), and speaking the word of authority (Rev. 12:11). Jesus used Scripture to resist Satan and commanded, “Away with you, Satan!” (Matt. 4:10). He resisted in Matthew 16:23 with the words, “Get behind Me, Satan!” The spoken word is important in resisting the Enemy. “And He (Jesus) cast out the spirits with a word...” (Matt. 8:16).

You should also resist Satan by using Scripture and a command spoken in Jesus’ Name. Be sure Scripture is kept in its context. Satan quotes the Bible too, but twisted for his evil intentions. You may say something like, “In the Name of Jesus Christ I resist you, Satan, and command you to leave me.” If you identify the exact spirit at work, for example, the spirit of fear (2 Tim. 1:7), use that name rather than the name Satan. The wording does not have to be exactly the same. The point is that a definite act of resistance must be used against the Devil, and he will flee.

Commit All to the Holy Spirit

6

1 John 4:4 — You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Commit yourself and the particular thing dealt with to the Holy Spirit for safekeeping. Though Matthew 12:43-45 apparently was spoken about an unsaved man, the principle remains the same. No one is able to stand against Satan without the Lord. Every area of life must be given over to the control of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18; 6:10).

Remain on the Alert

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Ephesians 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 –

Victory in one battle does not win the entire war. Scripture exhorts believers to be on the alert. Any future attacks should be met quickly and decisively. Attacks may be of a different kind altogether. Satan sometimes comes as an angel of light, seeking to appear righteous (2 Cor. 11:14). Do not be fooled. Live in constant fellowship with God. If you sin, confess it immediately and the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse you from all sin.

Eugene Priddy

Scripture quotes are taken from the New King James Version.

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