

Overcoming Darkness, pt.1, 3.27.16

Introduction:

1. Slide with Words: Division, apathy, self destructive behavior, oppression, confusion, paranormal activity, sickness, suicidal thoughts, discouragement, terrorism, unforgiveness, rejection, anger towards God, financial bondage, chaos, crippling fear, raging anger, lying, ongoing generational problems, addictions, excessive worry, phobias, disorders, incapacitating indecision.
2. According to the Bible, all of these things and much more have either a common origin or a definite influence from one source.
3. Becoming aware of a reality that existed. My experience at 8 with seeing mountains for the first time. I heard about them and saw pictures, but until I personally saw them I had no idea of their enormity.
4. Such was the case with my understanding of the devil and demonic realm. I knew about them, believed the Bible, was aware of devil worshippers, and experienced limited spiritual warfare, but it was at the age of 18 when reality crashed in at Brookhaven Retreat and the Wade Shakelford experience. It jumped from a picture into an enormous reality.
5. You may not have as dramatic experience as the previous stories, but you can relate to one or more of those words. Wherever the demonic realm influences those areas, you will be equipped in this six part series to both defeat the devil and assist others who need help.
6. Big Idea: We face a real, strategic and organized enemy who has been defeated by the blood of Jesus.
7. "Colossians 2.13-15: ¹³You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵In this way, he disarmed^[a] the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.
8. 1 John 3:8: ⁸But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil.

The Devil Is A Real Enemy - Eph.6.10-13:

¹⁰A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. ¹²For we^[a] 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.

¹³Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.

- Paul assumes his listeners understand that there is a real devil – 6.11. He doesn't have to explain who the devil is. They know through personal experience. Acts 19.13–17; Acts 16.16–24
- Today, people talk about their “personal demons”, which refers to their hang ups or issues. The Bible NEVER addresses demons as some type of problem or issue in your life.
- How the Bible presents the Devil
 - Gen.3 – Speaks to Adam & Eve
 - Job 1 – 2. Please note his actions: Incites marauding, murder, violence, destruction, violent weather & disease. 1.16 & 2.10 illustrate that both Job and his servant thought these actions were directly from God.
 - Matt.4 – Speaks to Jesus
 - Rev.12 – 13 – His end time activity. Rev. 12 gives us insight to past, current and future activity of the devil.
 - Isaiah 14 & Ezek 28 – describe his attributes and fall.
- The attributes of the devil
 - He is personal. He isn't a negative force/energy in the universe, but rather a real, created being.
 - He is a fallen angel.

- He has a conscience. He makes decision and knows the difference between right and wrong. He actively opposes God's will.
- He has emotions. He is filled with rage towards God and his creation. It is a thought-filled response.
- He performs intentional actions against people. Jesus taught us to pray in Matt.6, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One."

The Devil Uses Real Strategy – "to stand firm against all strategies of the devil"

- The word "strategy" means cunning and crafty arts. It is the word for method with the idea of craftiness. He lays down traps and deceives us into falling into the trap. He can't overpower us, thus he covertly approaches and uses cunning rather than power to overtake us. He can't any more defeat the child of God than he can defeat Jesus, but he can deceive us. He deceived Adam & Eve and he tried to deceive Jesus into sinning.
 - We must not be ignorant of his methods (2 C.2.11)
 - He is clever, strong and determined.
- His names & characterizations reveal some of his strategy:
 - Devil means Accuser (Rev.12; Job 1-2). He won't let up either until you take a stand. He will hammer you until you with accusations until you combat him. Therefore, we don't need to have a negative and critical spirit towards others. It reflects more of the enemy's attitude than God's.
 - He's called the tempter – Mt.4.3. This is what he did to Adam & Eve. In both cases, it was very cunning and deceptive language. Everything he tempted the 1st & 2nd Adam with seemed logical and appropriate. He tempted Ananias & Sapphira to lie in Acts 5.
 - The Father of Lies (J.8.44). He lies all the time to you and about you. It sounds just like you too. You have to be able to discern when he's throwing those lies. Don't come into agreement with the lies. He slimes you; you get this sense of

hopelessness, distress, fatigue, helplessness. There are lies you believe about yourself, others, life and God which you've come into agreement with. He will deceive the whole world with lies and lead them astray.

- He's the Angel of Light – He appears as an angel of light (2 Cor.11.14). He sounds so good and positive, but it is all a lie. He promotes a form of godliness (spirituality) that denies the power of God – which in part means the Word of God (2 T.3.5). Moralistic Therapeutic Deism
 - False teachers and leaders have and will arise to lead people away from the truth will have a message of hope with a kernel of truth, and in the end it will lead to destruction (1T.4.1).
 - Ill – Some of you don't believe you should pursue God, b/c you have failed Him so often. You feel like a hypocrite. You think that until you get some things "straightened out" that you shouldn't "pretend" to be seeking God by attending church, reading Scripture or serving. That is like a person waking up one morning to discover that their eyes are bloodshot, toenails have fallen off and their body is covered with sores. The person says, "I'm too sick to go to the doctor...I'll wait until I feel a little bit better and then go." It's not that you too sick to drive yourself; it's that you think the degree of your sickness is too great. You don't go to the very place where you can get help! Likewise, some of God's children have believed the lie that until they get to a better place with God they are staying away from the very place where they can get help! How crazy is that! It is a lie from Hell!
- He is also characterized as a dragon with ferocious power in Rev.12. This seems to be how he will be revealed during the tribulation period (maybe now too). He will try to destroy natural Israel and God's children. He is already inspiring their destruction, but during the end times it will greatly

accelerate as his power on earth increases and his time is cut short. Even now, he is the source of ongoing persecution against believers, Rev.2.10.

- He is portrayed as a roaring lion looking for scared prey (1 Pet.5.8). He will not overcome the Christian who stands his ground. He roars to see who will move. He tries to create fear and rattle our faith. Once we bolt he sends his minions after us. This is why some of us can have seasons of victory and then suddenly be thrown into sudden defeat. We become like Elijah after the defeat of the priest of Baal & Jezebel's decree to kill him.
- Other strategies of Satan:
 - He steals, kills & destroys (Jn.10.10). Anything that looks like darkness is the work of the devil.
 - Physical illnesses can be oppressions from the devil (Acts 10.38). Ex: Mt.9.32; 12.22; L.9.42; 13.11. The Bible seems to make a distinction between directly demonically imparted sicknesses and generally demonically imparted sickness. All sickness is from the devil (Job) and some have an active evil spirit hindering health (these examples).
 - God has given mankind through both prayer and medication the ability to overcome the devil's activity in spreading disease. Both activities are forms of resisting the devil, just as prayer and law enforcement are forms of resisting the spread of violence and chaos.
 - Another demonstration of his destroying work is stirring apathy in believer's lives. Kelli Johnston's quote of wanting to want to get close to God. Like the person wanting to want to get out of bed.
 - He plants unbelievers among believers (Mt.13). You can tell by the fruit of your life. It's not by what you say, but how you live. He also blinds the minds of unbelievers so they can't

believe (2Cor.4.3f) and snatches away the word of God planted in their life (L.8.12)

- False teaching known as doctrine of demons (1 T.4.1). I believe far exceeds just religious teaching, but has to do with every area of study in the human life, i.e., education, business, humanities, arts, sciences, astronomy, but especially teaching about God & spirituality.
- He impedes or tries to impede the spread of God's work – 1 Thes.2.19; L.8.22–27. He resists the activity of God and won't give ground easily. Therefore, we must resist him (Ja.4.7; 1 Pet.5). When God has told/led us to do something we don't give up when there is resistance we stand firm. Sometimes we give up too early, b/c of the challenge
- To discourage believers through hardships and trials – 1 Th.3.1–5. He wants to beat you down so that you see no hope and you will cave in to discouragement.
- Disunity and chaos are clear attributes of the devil's work. Consider some of the nations where there is the complete break down of the civil authority, i.e., Crime, violence, drugs, slavery, illicit wealth, etc. He is the instigator of lawlessness.
 - Illustration of Juarez and drug cartels and the worship of Santa Muerte. They believe this entity gives them power for criminal activity, violence and kidnapping. They have energized this demonic network and creating chaos throughout the country. It's more than an idol; it's a demon.
 - 2 Th.2.7 – Lawlessness is another sign of chaos. Whenever we don't put limitations or restrictions on bad behavior...or on our children...or in our lives...we are giving in to the power of the devil.

The Devil Has A Real Military

- “For we are not fighting against flesh and blood enemies.” There are real, personal forces fighting against God’s people. It is not a person, but the spiritual force behind the person.
 - In WW 2, it wasn’t Hitler that the primary battle was against, but the spiritual forces of evil behind him, which are still with us inspiring the destruction of the Jews.
 - You may have stubborn, or manipulative, or addictive, or mean or hostile or spiritually insensitive people in your life that are always working contrary to God’s will. It is not the person you are at war with, but the enemy behind that person.
- “fighting” – also, wrestle, struggle. It is a present tense verb which implies an ongoing struggle, not a one time temptation. “wrestling” is a hand to hand combat which is far more than a wrestling match. Rather, it is about life and death.
- The military order:
 - “against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world” – world forces of this darkness
 - “against mighty powers in this dark world”
 - “against evil spirits in the heavenly places”
- Its location – “Unseen world; heavenly places.” Eph.2.2, “the commander of the power of the air.”
 - It seems to be a dimension between the physical universe and the presence of God in Heaven. Paul refers to the third heaven in 2 C.12.2 as the place where God dwells.
 - The first heaven is the natural realm of the physical universe and the Lord has given that realm to mankind. It is this dimension that we live and the place of our authority (Ps.115.16).
 - I believe this second heaven is the place where the devil currently resides & much spiritual warfare takes place.
 - Rev.12 talks about a time where he will be cast to the earth and make war against natural Israel & believers. I’m not sure that has happened. He can do those

things now, but he is limited by God's sovereignty and mankind's authority. In Rev.13.7, he has unlimited power against the saints (Dan.7.21).

- Dan.10 illustrates this spiritual realm and the authorities that fill it. The spirit prince of Persia at war with Michael & his angelic army protecting Israel.

Jesus Has Really Defeated The Devil - Col.2.13-15

- The Cross gives me victory over the devil. (Col.2.13-15)
 - Illustrate what Jesus did. Satan held us captive b/c of the debt of our sin. We belonged to the kingdom of darkness (Col.1) due to our sin. At the cross and resurrection, Jesus cancelled the debt and took us unto himself and thus defeated Satan's hold on our lives.
 - As the song says: I owed a debt I could not pay; and he paid a debt he did not owe.
 - Then he shamed the devil and his rulers by giving us authority over them.
 - The Roman way of humiliating their foes through a Roman triumph. It was a military victory parade where they marched through their capital with bounty of the defeated nation, their exotic animals, followed by the defeated King and his generals, and then the conquering General followed by his troops.
 - He disarmed them of their authority. They had nothing against Jesus or his followers. He made them a public spectacle. He led the procession in the chariot of his cross.
 - There is a real war, but we can walk with absolute confidence that the war has already been won. Rev.12.11.
 - **Pic of all the Words**
 - Satan always wants you to think that he has more power than you and the cause is always hopeless.
 - **Pic of Baghdad Bob:** As Operation Iraqi Freedom raged, Mohammed al-Sahhaf, Iraq's Minister of Information, daily refuted clear evidence that Iraq was losing the war. On April 6, after coalition forces seized Baghdad's Saddam Airport, renamed it Baghdad International Airport, started flying planes in, and ventured into Baghdad itself, the *Miami Herald* quoted al-

Sahhaf saying, "We butchered the force present at the airport." On April 7, after U.S. troops penetrated central Baghdad and stormed Saddam's Republican Palace, the *Washington Post* quoted al-Sahhaf saying, "There is no presence of the American columns in the city of Baghdad at all....We besieged them, and we killed most of them."

- Referred to as Baghdad Bob by the media, his efforts to explain away coalition force victories as illusions were comical. In the same way, our spiritual enemy is already defeated at the cross of Christ, yet he continues to hurl out lies, insults, and condemnation at the saints.

Citation: Hugh Poland, Kingwood, Texas

- How many of you have believed that you or situation is a lost cause? Quit listening to Baghdad Bob. He's a liar and a loser. B/c of the cross, the devil is defeated no one is a lost cause!

Conclusion: Though we have a real enemy with a real strategy and a real army, Jesus has really, really, really defeated him through His death. We don't fight for victory, but from victory. The devil lost at the cross and we are given the responsibility to continue advancing God's Kingdom until the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our Savior Jesus Christ. We don't defend the fortress of God we overtake the gates of Hell.

Steps Forward:

Big Idea: We face a real, strategic and organized enemy who has been defeated by the blood of Jesus.

The most common perception today of Jesus can be defined as Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. This is America's civil religion.

- a. A god exists who created the world and watches over human life.
- b. God wants people to be good, nice and fair as taught by the Bible and most world religions.
- c. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself. Dealing with sin and being formed into the image of Jesus are non-existent. It is a non-demanding religious structure.
- d. God does not need to be involved in one's life, except when needed to resolve a problem. In short, God is something like a combination Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist: he is always on call, takes care of any problems that arise, professionally helps his people to feel better about themselves, and does not become too personally involved in the process. He does not hold you accountable.
- e. Good people go to heaven when they die.