

Sermon for Sunday, February 24, 1980 by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D. Pastor
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"I HAVE MET THE ENEMY AND HE IS I"

Galatians 5:1, 13-26

Text: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."

Galatians 5:24

For a good many years now I have been trying to live like a Christian. However, in the process, I have made a discovery. My discovery is this: something or someone is trying to sabotage me! Is that your experience? I suspect most of us here this morning think of ourselves as Christians. We see ourselves as persons who believe in Jesus, who have accepted him as our saviour, and who are trying to live for Him. Yet, somehow in the process, we are discovering that we are not very successful. We keep failing. We keep tripping over our best intentions. Do you do that? Isn't it a fact that you intend to be a lot better than you really are?

Well, what is our problem? What is keeping us from being what we really want to be down deep in our hearts? Indeed, who is our real enemy? I would like to share with you who our real enemy is this morning.

First of all we need to recognize the reality of Satan. Recently we have had some theologians who espoused a theology called the "God is Dead" movement. When Billy Graham was asked what he thought about the God is dead theology, he is reported to have said, "Why, God isn't dead! I talked to him this morning!" Well, good for Billy! But I want to tell you the Devil isn't dead either because I talk to him every day! Don't you?

Now, I don't always recognize the Devil as my enemy. Sometimes he seems to be my friend who wants for me what I want. Somebody has pictured the Devil as a creature with horns, dressed in long-handled red underwear, having a pointed tail and carrying a pitchfork. But I want to tell you the Devil doesn't look like that at all. Actually, he is very attractive. Sometimes he comes dressed as a very pretty, attractive sexy girl. (I can tell some of you men have noticed him lately!) Sometimes he looks like a very attractive item I would like to own.

But let me tell you, there is a perfect defense against the Devil. You can beat the Devil every time. St. Paul tells you what to do. Here is what he says: "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:11,12) In the passage St. Paul tells us two things. First, he tells us there is an outside enemy who is against us. That's a little frightening, isn't it? There is an enemy who wishes us ill, who wishes us bad, who wishes us evil. And this outside enemy is an evil, malignant spiritual force. It is his desire to destroy us and separate us from God.

A lot of people like to pretend there isn't a Devil. I know better. I know better because the Bible tells me he exists. And I know better because I meet him every day. So, though he is my enemy, and though he is frightening, I really don't fear him. That's the second thing St. Paul tells me. He says I can defeat the Devil. He tells me how to fight the Devil and beat him. Here is how you do it. "Therefore take the whole armor of God," says St. Paul, "that you may be able to withstand in the evil day." And then he goes on to tell us what our armor, our defenses, against the Devil are. For example, he says, "...taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:16,17)

So we have a defense against this outside foe. We have protection from this alien enemy. Do you remember how the Bible puts it in I John 4:4? There we read, "He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world." That's comforting to know, isn't it? The Devil can snare us, but not unless we surrender without a fight. Indeed, if we want to beat him, we can. After all, he(that is, Jesus) that is within us is greater than he that is in the world.

So, first of all we have to recognize that Satan is our enemy. But we don't have to be afraid of him because God has given us the defensive equipment to defeat him. Yet, in spite of this, I find myself still captive to sin, still prisoner to evil, still doing those wicked, bad, sinful things that I know God doesn't want me to do. Is that your experience, too? Well, if the Devil doesn't make us do it, who does? Who is the enemy?

Do you know who your enemy is? Let me tell you who it is: it is you. Who is my enemy? Why, I am! There are two ways we are our own worst enemy. There are two ways we meet the enemy--an enemy who defeats us--only to discover that the enemy is us. Let me tell you how we turn out to be our own enemy.

First, we still love the things of the world. St. Paul once had a convert to Jesus who traveled with him. His name was Demas. In Colossians 4:14, we read, "Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you." In the little letter of Philemon, Paul writes, "Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke..."(v. 23,24) So, here was a man who traveled with St. Paul. A man who served the Lord and even suffered for him. But something happened to Demas. Something went wrong in his life and he fell away from the Lord. What happened to him? Well, the fact is, he met his worst enemy--himself--and he fell away from Jesus. Here is what St. Paul writes about him in II Timothy (3:9,10), "Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me..."

Do you find yourself deserting Jesus? I do. And do you know why? It is because we begin to love the things of the world more than we do Jesus. It's easy to let that happen, isn't it? We see the things of the world and we begin to want them and desire them. We see other people who seem to be enjoying life and having the finer things of life and we envy them--we begin to want what they have. We begin to love and long for the things of the world. Then, like Demas, we find ourselves deserting the very things we had committed our hearts to because we are in love with the present world. Wasn't that what happened to Ananias and Sapphira when they became a part of the first Christian church? They meant to be Christians. They meant to love Jesus. They meant to do the right thing. But when they sold their property and apparently got a lot more for it than they had anticipated, they couldn't bear to give it all to the Lord. They fell in love with the world all over again and the Bible says, "and with his wife's knowledge he kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only part and laid at the feet of the apostles". (Acts 5:2) Then Peter said to him, "How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." (Acts 5:4)

Do you lie to God? I know I do. I try to pretend that I love him and serve him, but there is still so much of the love of the present world in me that I'm lying to him.

But there is a second way we are our own worst enemy. You see, not only are there things outside of us in the world that we love, but there is also a lot of garbage inside of us--there are a lot of bad emotions that still control our hearts. St. Paul gives a list of some of those bad things in our souls.

He says, "Now the works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, drunkenness, carousing and the like." (Galation 5:19-21) Did any of those sound familiar? Did any of those describe you? They do me. I suspect we both need to be honest and admit Paul has described our hearts.

Let me ask you a question. Why is it that we still love the things of the world? And why is it that our hearts are still possessed by the kind of "works of the flesh"--those evil passions--that St. Paul described? Let me tell you why.

First, you and I are sinners. By that I mean we are people who have rebelled against God. We are people who want to do what we want--people who put ourselves and our wishes and our desires before God and before others. Wasn't that Adams's sin? He wanted to do what he wanted to do--not what God wanted him to do. And you and I are no different. That's what St. Paul meant when he wrote, "For the desire of the flesh are against the Spirit..." (Galation 5:17)

But second, when we recognize our sin, when we realize that our self-will has separated us from God, when we realize that because of our wickedness we are lost, we don't let the Spirit of Jesus control our lives. Do you remember when you became a Christian--do you remember when you accepted Jesus as your saviour? Wasn't that exciting? Wasn't it a thrill to know you had eternal life and that you had surrendered your will to Jesus? But what has happened since? Why is it we fell in love with the world again? Why is it we let our evil, inner emotions control us again?

Consider this. If Jesus controls our hearts and lives what happens to our love of the world? Well, listen to what Jesus said. He said, "be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) Listen to St. Paul! He says, "but far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world." (Galation 6:14) Again he says, "Do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Romans 12:2) So, if Jesus controls our hearts, we love him--not the world.

By the same token, what happens to our inner emotions, those evil desires of the flesh, if our hearts are controlled by the Spirit? St. Paul says that if we live by the Spirit, we will walk by the Spirit. He says that instead of immorality, impurity, licentiousness, and all those other evil things, we will have instead the fruit of the Spirit--things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness.

Do you know what is wrong with us? We push Jesus out of the driver's seat in our lives. When we are controlled by Jesus and the power of his Spirit, we don't love the world--we love him; we are not controlled by the works of the flesh, we are controlled by the Spirit. But we Christians keep pushing Jesus out. We keep taking the controls out of his hands. Isn't that true for you? What every one of us needs this morning is to recommit and resurrender our lives to Jesus. Why? Because Jesus doesn't control our lives--our enemy does. And I am my enemy; you are your enemy.

Every day we must recommit our lives to Jesus. Every day we must resurrender control of our wills to him. If we don't do that, the enemy takes over. You take over. I take over. I'm going to pray now. I invite you to silently pray after me and make this prayer your prayer. Let us pray.

Lord, I confess Jesus as my Saviour, I thank you that because of him I have eternal life. But Father, I'm not living like a Christian. I'm not living like I know you want me to. Forgive me for loving the world. Forgive me for letting the desires of the flesh control me. Lord, I re-surrender my life to Jesus. I pray that His Spirit will control my life. By your power help me to live for Jesus. Let the fruit of the Spirit be manifested in my life.

And now, Lord, tomorrow--and Tuesday--and every day of the week, help me to give control of my will to you that I can live a life controlled by Jesus. I make this prayer in His name. Amen.