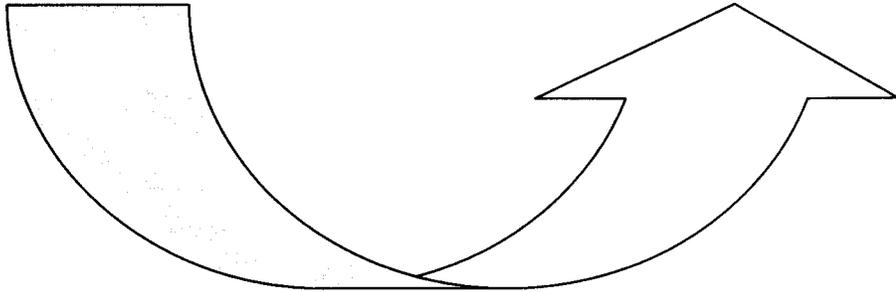


Following-up



New Believers

by Richard Price

Following-Up New Believers

Richard Price

Before we have our opening prayer and introductions, I want to be sure every one is in the workshop they intended to be in. This is NOT a workshop for a disciple maker in the traditional discipleship training mode. This IS a workshop to encourage you and me to come alongside a new believer. For the purpose of this workshop, a new believer is defined as the first 30 days after conversion to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This new believer may be in your church, at work, school or a friend in the neighborhood. Wherever God has planted you, a new believer needs help. This is a workshop, not a lecture. The things we will discuss are applicable to each of us for the remainder of our spiritual life regardless of how long we have walked with Jesus.

How long after conversion was it before you really started serving the Lord?

This is the heart of today's workshop. My name is Richard Price I am employed by Mardel Christian book store of OKC. I have been coming to Key Men's for a number of years and I have never been disappointed. My prayer is that you will not be disappointed either. Dan Newton is a financial advisor for a brokerage firm in Guthrie, where we both live and attend church.

Temptation

Can imply two different ideas:

1. A testing to determine the inner quality of a person
2. An enticement into sin

Tests and Trials Sent by God

Temptation is that which puts to the test. Trials sent by God do this. A test is never employed for the purpose of injury. A weight is attached to a rope, not to break, but to prove it. Pressure is applied to a boiler, not to burst it, but to certify its power of resistance. The testing process here confers no strength. But when a sailor has to navigate his ship under a heavy gale and in a difficult channel, or when a general has to fight against a superior force and on disadvantageous ground, skill and courage are not only tested, but improved. The test has brought experience, and by practice is every faculty perfected. So, faith grows stronger by exercise, and patience by the enduring of sorrow. Thus alone it was that "God did test Abraham" (Gen 22:1).

From this point on:

When I hear the words ... tempt / tempted / temptation,

I'm going to see it as ... test / tested / testing.

For some reason, temptation just almost immediately implies failure.

Every one in this room has undergone, is undergoing and will undergo tests and temptations.

Job 23:10

"But He knows the way I take; when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

I'm not being tested by some one or some thing but by the LORD!! Not until I've been tested by the Lord Himself can I come forth pure as gold.

James 1:12-14 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

If I can see my struggle as a test in which I can prove my inner quality I will get over my bitterness against whomever or whatever is bringing the struggle. HE, God Himself has tried me. If I can see that God is allowing me to stand strong in Him then my bitterness against someone else goes away. God is not punishing me, He is blessing me. He is offering me the opportunity to determine who I am.

I have a favorite non-biblical, thought provoking quote. I heard it on a Woodrow Kroll radio broadcast one day at lunch. I went back to my office, pulled it up on the internet, printed off the script and here it is:

"These are the years when a man becomes the man he's going to be the rest of his life." (Woodrow said this quote came from the movie "Spiderman")

I can't change what I've done, but I can change what I'm doing. And when I do, I will change who I am and how others see me. The men you and I come into contact with can't change what they've done, but they can change what they're doing. But they need to know what to expect.

The Temptation of Jesus

Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written,

'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU; And 'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'"

⁷Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"

⁸Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; ⁹and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.' " ¹¹*Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.*

Temptation

Expect it –

John 10:10 The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.

Adam & Eve were put to the test - Genesis 3:1-7

Jesus was put to the test (Matthew 4:1-12, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-15)

Paul was put to the test - 2 Corinthians 12:7-9

Recognize it –

Matthew 26:41 "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

What it looks like - If something looks too good to be true ... it probably is

When it's likely to show up - When everything's been good AND/OR bad

Where it's likely to show up — Home, work, family, friends, in groups or alone

Luke 22:45-46 When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, ⁴⁶and said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and ^apray that you may not enter into temptation."

Deal with it –

Romans 12:2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect His will really is.

A believer's watchfulness is like that of a soldier. A sentinel posted on the walls, when he discerns a hostile party advancing, does not attempt to take the hostile party on by himself, but informs his commanding officer of the enemy's approach, and leaves the officer to take the proper measures against the foe. So the Christian does not attempt to fight temptation in his own strength; his watchfulness lies in observing its approach, and in telling God of it by prayer.

Exodus 20:18 Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin."

So we've started out as a new believer ourselves, then we've looked for and expected tests. Then we've recognized and determined to use that testing as a blessing to prove these vessels we live in. Now, it's about preparing that new believer in Christ.

Warn others – (Richard's going to get into that)

In the average church the average man will receive about 2 hours of spiritual instruction a week from the following:

- Sunday School - After the music and announcements about 30 minutes of teaching
- Worship Service - Maybe 30 to 40 minutes
- Sunday Night Service - A growing number of churches do not have service
- Home Bible Studies - Some churches have gone to these
- Wednesday Night Service – Almost non-existent

This equates to about two hours of spiritual teaching vs. thirty hours or so of TV. Which one will most likely guide man's decisions? If he misses church or Sunday School he gets zero hours of spiritual instruction.

We have the responsibility to dig in for ourselves but where do we begin? The Ethiopian official reading Isaiah asked the question, "Who is Isaiah writing about?"

Question:

How long will it take for a new believer to reach a level of maturity moving at the pace of two hours per week?

Two issues for today's workshop:

- 1) Understanding the battle the new believer is going to face early on
- 2) The emphasis on attendance

Sunday school, worship, choir and the many other resources the church has to offer are all good things, helpful things, and please understand I am not talking against the church, but sometimes these good things obscure the number one thing ... Jesus.

For men, the key question is not "Am I saved, confirmed, baptized, a church member, a practicing Catholic, a believer, a Christian, or Spirit filled?" All of these are good, but they do not get to the heart of the matter. The real question is not one of status but one of practice: "Am I walking with God? Am I following Jesus Christ Today?"

In his book "Why Men Hate Church" by David Murrow, he writes 'Once men are saved, confirmed and baptized members, we tend to forget about them. We teach them principles and give them moral guidance, but we do not show them how to walk with God.

The average church-going man has no idea how to follow Jesus for three reasons:

- 1) He has never been shown how to do it
- 2) He has never seen another man do it (other than a pastor)
- 3) He thinks following Jesus is about religious practice and moral living

Many times we try changing a man's behavior without first identifying his values and core beliefs. Addressing behavior will not produce a lasting change.

Man's Worldview
+ What He Values
= His Behavior

Example:

II Samuel 16:5-12. Read the passage then answer the following questions:

- 1) What was Shimei's worldview and core belief?
- 2) What values of Shimei caused him to act as he did towards David?
- 3) What is David's worldview and core belief?
- 4) What values of David caused him to act as he did toward Shimei?

Unless Shimei's worldview is changed, his behavior will not change.

Shimei believed earthly kingdoms are inaugurated, carried on, and brought to an end by human force. His values were that David had become King by force, by eliminating the opposition, and, as a result, David would be dethroned the same way.

David rightly knew that God had given him the kingdom and that he would reign as long as God allowed.

My point is; if we try to correct new believer's behavior and do not correct his worldview according to scripture, the new believer is in for some stressful times.

Proverbs 21:2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart.

Proverbs 16:2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, But the Lord weighs the motives.

The lack of spiritual instruction and the lack of knowledge of who Jesus is and how Jesus desires for the new believer to have daily fellowship with HIM, result in a deficiency in man's behavior.

Jesus said come to ME. - Matthew 11:28-29, John 11:37, Deuteronomy 10:12, Jeremiah 6:16, 15:19

Let's discuss the first issue.

Tommy Nelson, pastor of Denton Bible Church, in his book "The 12 Essentials of Godly Success" states, 'your flesh is hostile to God, and you will never be rid of it this side of death. It is like a constant hangnail. It impedes your progress.'

It is important to note that the flesh is not an equal and opposite force. It has been dethroned in your life as a Christian; the flesh has been crucified with Christ. Its power is broken to be the new covenant in the power of the Holy Spirit. But the flesh is still present. It is a live grenade, it is a pit, a loaded gun ... nitroglycerin. It is a rattler always ready to strike.

No academic degree can help you conquer the flesh. No emotional or spiritual experience will give you the ultimate victory.

C. S. Lewis in his book "The Great Divorce" describes the flesh as a lizard that sits on your shoulder and whispers filth continually in your ear.

Francis Sinatra, the great theologian of Rome, said 'your body is the monkey that is never gone...just waiting its turn.'

John 1:12 tells me I am a child of God, II Corinthians 5:17 says I have become a new creation and NOW I have the power of choice that I did not have until I became a new creation, but my body still clings to the residue of human passions and I must deal with these passions in and by the power of Christ but they never completely go away, this then is the struggle. A new believer who is not enlightened may give up.

Shortly after I was converted and joined the church, I found the old habits still there and difficult to break and the new habits difficult to establish. These constant struggles begin to put doubt in my mind. 'Maybe I'm not really a Christian'; 'Maybe it didn't take.' 'I'm a failure as a Christian.' I had heard testimonies from men who were living the victorious life ... they didn't seem to have any problems, why was I? Things were not working for me. 'Something is wrong and it must be me.' I withdrew from the church. And, for a number of years, life became so unbearable that I decided to try church again. Then, I almost quit again! I would have had I not met a man who is at this conference today. He helped to understand the struggle of the flesh and the Spirit.

In your handout you will find a copy of a book by Richard DeHann. This book is titled "The World, The Flesh and The Devil." Turn to page 11 and go down about 6 lines to the sentence beginning with 'You.' Follow along as I read the remainder of this section.

Paul, in I Corinthians 9:26-27 says 'he beat his body to bring it into subjection.' In Romans 7:14-24 Paul talks about doing that which he does not want to do and not doing what he knows he should do, 'wretched man that I am, who will set me free?'

If new believers are not equipped to deal with these problems they most likely will become drop outs. Or, at least they become ineffective for the service of the King. According to George Barna more than half of all Christian's conversions end as drop outs.

Roy Robertson said "If a new believer is not followed up on in 3 weeks we will lose them. They may or may not come back.

- 1) He will not have the Spiritual food needed to continue in the faith
- 2) He may not know for sure who he has committed to
- 3) He will not know how to have a personal relationship with Jesus unless some one helps him

This is where you and I come into the picture. We should attempt to come along beside a new believer and help prepare him. Here are a few suggestions. It may take a new believer who is not aware of this struggle years to understand and deal with this issue. He may give up early on. At best, he will waste a lot of time before he begins to bear fruit for the Lord.

John Crawford say's ... "People do what they have been done with".

When we have the pleasure to witness a person's conversion at church, or, hear of a person accepting Jesus, I suggest the following.

- Call or visit with the individual to share the joy of a new brother in Christ.
- Ask how he came to know Jesus and who had a part in guiding him to Jesus.
- Ask him if he knows who Jesus is. If he does not understand that Jesus is God, he needs help in understanding.
- Share some of your experiences of being a new Christian.
- Offer to show him how to have an appointment with Jesus every morning, how to pray, read his bible and the importance of memorizing scripture.
- Teach him the assurance of salvation. Give him a devotional book, encourage him to begin reading the gospel of John, and offer to meet with him again to see how he is doing and to see if he has any questions.

All this could be done over a cup of coffee, breakfast or lunch. We want to give him enough to get started but not too much to overwhelm him. A new baby only needs a couple of ounces of milk but he needs it often. Try to make an appointment to meet with him again.

Your brief testimony of the joy of being in the presence of God and His leadership will be important to him.

Try, try not to use church lingo, but share in very simple terms.

Hopefully, you will have an opportunity after several meetings to share with him 'the old and nature', and what to be aware of that could derail him.

Invite him to join your bible study group or to join with you when you meet with your 'Paul' or 'Timothy'. He must have Christian fellowship! He will lose a lot of his old friends of the world and we must fill the vacuum.

As you talk with him ...listen! The Holy Spirit will give you discernment. The man will tell you the needs he has. And, without him knowing exactly what the problem is, if there is a problem.

Pray and enlist some men to pray with you. Pray for each spiritual discipline to be understood and grasped by our new brother.

You can do this in the power of Jesus Christ.

THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL

*By Richard W De Haan, teacher of the Radio Bible Class,
worldwide ministry through radio, television, literature.*

THE WORLD - THE OUTER ENEMY

Most people will agree that "life is a battle." We live on a planet marked by enmity and strife. The world of nature is "red with tooth and claw," for one animal lives by killing another and every creature struggles for survival in a hostile environment. In the business world the competition is so fierce that it is often spoken of as a "jungle." Then, too, hatred and animosity are obvious when one studies history or observes the international scene, for ever generation repeats the same story of war and bloodshed. The most intense and demanding of all the battles of life, however, is the one in which every believer in Jesus Christ is engaged. This is a great spiritual warfare, and it is being fought on three fronts. The Christian faces a triad of enemies - the world, the flesh, and the devil. These foes are far more serious than those which may threaten his physical welfare, for they are determined to inflict harm which will have eternal results.

The first of the enemies against which the Christian must be on guard is "the world." Jesus warned us that we who belong to Him will be hated by the world-system, for He said,

If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you (John 15:19).

The apostle John made references to this same enemy when he admonished believers,

Love not the *world*, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15).

In this study we will first identify the enemy, then analyze its methods of attack against us, and finally show how we can be assured of victory.

THE ENEMY IDENTIFIED

What did our Savior and His beloved apostle mean when they spoke of "the world"? First, let us understand clearly that the created world is not our spiritual enemy. Even though marred by sin and under divine curse, it still contains much beauty that reflects God's glory and power. The psalmist, looking up at the starry heavens and being filled with amazement and awe, sang,

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork.

Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge (Psalm 19:1, 2).

Discriminating souls through the ages have found great delight in observing the rugged grandeur of the mounts, the shimmering beauty of a sunset, the awesome power of surging and sparkling ocean waves, and the quiet beauty of green pastures in which cattle graze contentedly and streams gently flow. Who but a totally insensitive person could gaze upon the glorious colors of a flower garden without being thrilled! No, God does not tell us that the world of nature is a threat to our spiritual welfare.

Second, the individuals who make up society are not to be identified as the world which we are commanded not to love. On the contrary, God loves sinners and so must we. One of the most quoted verses in the Bible declares,

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16)

The Lord loves not only good people and those who love Him in return, but all, even those who spurn His mercy and grace. Some of these people may indeed be enemies of the Christian faith and hate all believers, but God love them, and He holds us responsible to do like wise. Jesus said,

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy;

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you.

That ye may be the sons of your Father, who is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:43-45).

It is obvious, then, that we must not look upon individual human beings as enemies to be avoided or destroyed. The Lord expects us to show them compassion. We are to forgive and help them, not hate, suppress, or harm them.

A GODLESS SYSTEM

What then is "the world," our spiritual enemy? It is our society as it is organized on selfish principles, improper motives, and unworthy standards of value. It is a system of thought and conduct which does not give God His rightful place. In fact, "the world" is hostile to the God revealed in the Bible, and deludes mankind into thinking it does not need Him. The sciences, arts, politics, and entertainment are dominated by this man-centered approach which ignores the Lord and repudiates His Word. Men and women, blinded by Satan and deluded by their own evil hearts, try to find happiness without God. They are drawn away from the Lord by patterns of thought that make man "the measure of all things."

The actual leader of this world-system is the devil, and the details of its administration are carried out by the evil spirits who make up his kingdom. Men and women who are unwilling to acknowledge their sinfulness, and who try to devise their own way of salvation, become mere pawns of the evil spirits whom Paul identifies as "the rulers of the darkness of this world." (See Ephesians 6:12). The same apostle also set forth the deceptive power of this system of evil which blinds mankind when he said,

But if our gospel be hidden, it is hidden to them that are lost,

In whom the god of this age hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them

(2 Corinthians 4:3, 4)

I am deliberately emphasizing the fact that "the world" is a system of thought under satanic control, and not individual sinners, in order to make it clear that we can love people even though they are bitterly opposed to us. Therefore, even as we can love a sinner while hating his sin, we can be compassionate to men and women while possessing a real aversion to their conduct and attitude toward God and His Son Jesus Christ.

THREE AVENUES OF TEMPTATION

Having explained what the Bible means when it speaks of the world as a system we must not love, we are now ready to consider the three avenues by which it seeks to harm our spiritual lives. The apostle John lists them as (1) the lust of the flesh, (2) the lust of the eyes, and (3) the pride of life.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, *the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*, is not of the Father, but is of the world

(1 John 2:15, 16)

THE LUST OF THE FLESH

The first channel of temptation used by the world is the "lust of the flesh." While it is true that John here has reference to our physical being and its desires, we must not think of the "lust of the flesh" as meaning only our gross sexual passions. The scope of this avenue of temptation is far greater than that. You see, bodily appetites are not wrong in themselves. The enjoyment of good food, the exercise of sex within marriage, and the procurement of things which promote our physical comfort are not to be looked upon as evil. Paul declared that the Lord "giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17). Therefore, physical desires in themselves are not evil, but the satanically dominated world-system uses these perfectly normal and proper appetites to lead us into sin. Occasionally Christians are tempted to commit gross sexual sins, but usually the enticement to evil is of a far more subtle nature. When we make material things and physical desires the most important things in life, when a larger house, a new car, rich food, or sexual pleasure become our consuming passion, we are victims of the "lust of the flesh." Although we may never be guilty of adultery, theft, or murder, we may still be living for self-gratification in other ways. Even though you do not go to movies, play cards, dance, drink alcohol, or smoke, you may still be "worldly."

If you try to earn more money by some devious method which takes advantage of a fellow human being, you are guilty of loving "the world." You are a victim of "the lust of the flesh." If you are so preoccupied with your material comforts that you have little money for your church and other Christian service, you have given in to "the lust of the flesh." You see, one must be on guard not only against sexual passions, but also against a multitude of temptations by which our physical desires can lead us into sin. Whenever we become engrossed in the quest for that which satisfies the physical at the expense of the spiritual, we lost ground to the evil world-system.

THE LUST OF THE EYES

The second avenue of temptation through which the world tries to defeat a Christian is the "lust of the eyes." The eyegate affords a means by which we can find sensual pleasure through the experiences of others. For example, if one has hate feelings, he can find vicarious fulfillment for these emotions by reading books or watching television with sexual thoughts, he can find a great deal of gratification through what he sees. He may not have the courage or opportunity to carry out his inordinate secret desires, but he can find pleasure in contemplating such acts as he reads pornographic literature or watches certain television programs. It stands to reason, therefore, that every Christian should shun all reading material or other forms of entertainment that feed his lusts and evil inclinations.

But the lust of the eyes sometimes causes a Christian to fall without the use of evil material. For example, the eyegate is a means by which we enjoy all kinds of spectator sports. Athletic activities in themselves are not wrong, but too often a child of God can become so immersed in these pleasures that he doesn't find time to feed his soul. When one reaches the point where watching a football game, whether on television or at a stadium, takes priority over Bible reading, worship services, or other spiritual activities, he has lost a skirmish to the evil world system.

Friend, how are you doing in your encounter with the world in this matter of "the lust of the eyes"? Are you allowing your eyes to make you a spiritual weakling? Are you a useless believer in God's army because you are too preoccupied with the pleasures you derive from what you let yourself see? If so, the forces of Hell are chuckling, for they have won an important battle.

THE PRIDE OF LIFE

The third avenue of temptation used by the world-system is "the pride of life." When John uses this expression, he has reference to that vain ostentation which causes one to put great stock in "being somebody." You may think this can be true only of people who are in the upper brackets of society, but that is not the case. The "pride of life" operates on every level of our social and economic world. It is this inherent evil in humans that has produced what some people call a "pecking order" in society - behavior which resembles that found in a chicken coop. Both roosters and hens fight to determine the order of command. until finally only one lonely creature is left without anyone to "lord it over." We see this kind of behavior among both children and adults. People want recognition, love power, and will do almost anything to obtain prestige. In fact, our whole society is permeated with the evils that stem from this "pride of life."

Of all the sins to which men and women are prone, the one that most nearly expresses the root of human depravity is pride. A man may lie, steal, or kill because of greed, or be led into gross acts of immorality through his sexual passions; but pride will even move a wealthy person to these evil acts that he might obtain more. It will incite a man who is already married to steal someone else's wife just to satisfy his own ego. It will cause a pretty girl to capture and reject one man after another for no other reason than to make another conquest. This "pride of life," the desire to be somebody, is the source of innumerable evils.

Remember, the world-system which is arrayed against God utilizes human pride even in the lives of Christians. Let me ask you, are you working hard to "be somebody" in the eyes of your fellowmen? Are you stepping on others just to enhance your own prestige? If so, confess your wicked pride to the Lord, and ask Him to give you the spirit of humility which characterizes the life of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, let me remind you that we are involved in a serious battle with the world-system which ignores or denies the God of the Bible. Secular society - whether in the area of politics, economics, science, education, or entertainment - is dominated by a philosophy of life which glorifies man, rejects the absolute standards of the Bible, and disregards Jesus Christ. The vast majority of mankind is blinded by Satan and caught up in this way of thought and life. We who are Christians are continually subjected to the subtle influences of this world-system. We can lose our spiritual joy and destroy our effectiveness as a witness for Christ if we drop our guard for just one moment. Hardly being aware of it, we can begin living for physical gratification, allow the eyegate to harm our spiritual welfare, or let our desire for prestige lead us into actions that are unkind. Let us make sure that we do not for one moment allow the earthly and physical to take precedence over the spiritual. Jesus said,

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doeth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal,

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matthew 6:19-21).

If you will put first things first, making Christ the master of your life, you will never become a victim of the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." If you will set your values upon spiritual realities and upon eternity, you will be able to enjoy the good things of earth without allowing them to control your life. When you remember that you are now preparing yourself for glory, you will not succumb to the temptations of the world and live for self-gratification.

If you are not a Christian and you're putting your confidence in material things, let me warn you that this world-system will soon be destroyed. John said,

And the world passeth away, and the lust of it; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever (1 John 2:17).

When you attach yourself to the values and ways of the world, you are giving yourself to things which literally have no future. Nothing this world can offer you has any permanence. Every pleasure will eventually be the victim of change and decay, and you are doomed to disappointment and eventual despair. How foolish to dedicate your life to that which by its very nature cannot endure!

When Mark Twain was 71 years of age, he met a prominent American commercial magnate who was just a little younger than he. Twain, as is well-known, was utterly opposed to Christianity, and said, "Well, I don't know what you think of it, but I think I've had enough of this world, and I wish I were out of it." The other man replied, "I don't say much about it, but that expresses my view." Both of these men, having had opportunity to try everything this world affords, confessed that it did not satisfy. You may think that if you could only have a little more of this world's possessions, a greater share of its pleasures, or a little higher position, you could be satisfied. But if you attain these goals, you will find that they are really nothing but empty baubles.

If you will believe on Jesus Christ and make Him the center of your life, you have the promise, "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever." If you will acknowledge your sin, receive Jesus Christ as your Savior, and set the will of God as the goal of your life, you will find satisfaction that lasts all through time and extends into eternity.

THE FLESH - THE INNER FOE

Some years ago it was quite common to hear people in the public prayer asking the Lord to forgive "our besetting sins." Each individual would then think of certain evils to which he himself was prone. For one it might be lust; for another, greed; for others, envy, hatred, bitterness, back biting, or some secret transgression. You see, even though a person is a sincere Christian, he may be troubled by definite sinful tendencies that seem to be part of his very nature. Every child of God, if he is honest, must admit that he has a number of faults uniquely his own, and must acknowledge that he possesses evil inclinations against which he wages a continual warfare. In fact, some believers become extremely discouraged in the battle, and go to their pastor or some other friend for counsel because their ineffectiveness causes them to doubt their salvation. It seems that no matter how much they try, they cannot conquer certain sins which are destroying their testimony and robbing them of spiritual joy. It is of great importance, therefore, that we understand the teaching of the Bible about indwelling sin.

In this lesson we will first set forth the Biblical explanation of this inherent disposition toward evil, and then show how the Christian can be victorious over it in his everyday life through the Holy Spirit.

INDWELLING SIN

The Bible tells us that we are born with a sinful nature, and that this tendency to do what is wrong will be an active force in our lives until we die. It is commonly called "the flesh" in the New Testament, although Paul also refers to it as "sin that dwelleth in me" and "the law of sin in my members." As human beings, a proclivity to self-centeredness is at the very core of our personalities. We do not naturally love God and our fellowmen. In fact, even our most lofty aspirations and longings are tainted by selfishness and pride. Isaiah described this aspect of the human race when he said, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way..." (Isaiah 53:6).

The principle of sinfulness as a dynamic part of our fallen humanity expresses itself in wicked attitudes and conduct. Paul declared,

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousy, wrath, factions, seditions, heresies,

Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and the like; of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).

Man's sensual passions of immorality, impurity, and shamelessness are outward manifestations of his sinful nature. The religious perversions that have marked man's history - idolatry, the worship of false gods or the enthronement of one's desires above God, and sorcery, the practice of occultism in all its forms - are also the visible indications of indwelling sin. The same can be said about man's unloving conduct: enmities, strife, and jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, and factions. His intemperate excesses, drunkenness and carousing, are also manifestations of his flesh.

THE FLESH AND THE BODY

Though the term "flesh" is sometimes used to denote man's physical substance, we must not make the mistake of equating "indwelling sin" with the body and its desires. Our physical makeup is not sinful in itself. In fact, Jesus Christ took upon Himself a genuine human body. God made our first parents as flesh-and-bone beings with the capacity to eat, to have sexual relationships, and to perform all the functions that are part of bodily existence.

Therefore, our appetite for food, our desire for comfort, and our biological urge for sex are not wrong in themselves. But they must be regulated by God's laws. Whenever they are exercised for the mere gratification of self they become evil, and this is how the sinful nature exerts its influence. It utilizes the bodily desires as avenues of wickedness. The natural hunger for good food is perverted into gluttony. Our normal desire for physical comfort is made the motive for greedy and cruel deeds to gain personal advantages. The sin principle twists our longing to love and to be loved and our physical urge for sex into animal passions and gross perversions. You see, "the flesh" takes the normal desires God has placed in us and makes them vehicles for evil.

THE FLESH AND THE WORLD

Even as the sinful nature utilizes our physical appetites to attain wicked ends, it also works in close cooperation with the Satanically dominated system called "The world." Referring to our first study in this series, we pointed out that mankind operates largely under the control of an evil world-system that is masterminded by Satan and is in utter opposition to God. We warned you to be aware of the fact that this

anti-God system makes its appeal through our natural appetites. It addresses itself to our physical wants, the eyegate, and the innate desire for recognition, which is pride. That is why John declared,

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And the world passeth away, and the lust of it; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever (1 John 2:15-17).

This triad which Hon said is of the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - constitutes an extremely dangerous foe because it appeals strongly to our sinful nature. Indwelling sin, the flesh, is the reason the world and its allurements are so tempting to the Christian.

THE FLESH NOT ERADICATED

Having defined the flesh in Biblical terms, I must warn you that you will be engaged in a battle against this indwelling sin principle until the Lord takes you to Heaven. The sinful nature was not eradicated when you believed on Christ. The apostle John, writing to Christians whom he calls "little children," declares,

If we [believers] say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8).

In these words the beloved apostle is saying that if we deny the presence of indwelling sin, we are being self-deceptive. We are not fooling God, the members of our family, nor the people with whom we work. The Lord sees our hearts, and our fellowmen are able to detect flaws and shortcomings in us. But we are deluding ourselves. In fact, John very strongly states that if we fail to recognize our own sinful nature, we are devoid of that knowledge which ought to be present in every true believer. Because of indwelling sin, we still commit evil deeds. Therefore, every instructed believer should live daily in the awareness of the fact that he possesses a sinful nature, and that he must resist its urgings, with the knowledge that the battle will not be over until his earthly life is concluded.

A Christian has two natures, the new life which he received when he was saved, and his old nature, the flesh. The life imparted at the time of salvation makes him "a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17), and partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). What happens when this sinless new nature is placed alongside a depraved "law of sin"? Conflict! The "law of sin in our members" resents the new nature as an intruder, and is not at all in sympathy with its holy desires. Paul wrote of this warfare, saying,

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (Galatians 5:16-17).

The Christian now possesses a nature which is born of the Spirit and controlled by the Spirit. Its wishes can't help but come into conflict with the desires of the sin principle which are still present in the believer's personality.

THE STRUGGLE DESCRIBED

Paul, speaking from his own experience, dramatizes the nature of the conflict in Romans 7. From verse 14 onward, he clearly describes what happened in him after he became a believer.

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man;

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members (Romans 7:22, 23).

Some people have thought these words describe the struggle within an unsaved person, but this experience is unique to the believer. Although non-Christians sometimes go through an intense inner conflict between what they know they ought to do and what they desire to do, they can never say that they possess an "inward man" which finds joy in God's holy law. This inner self, which delights in the truth and wants to walk in obedience to God, can only be the new nature. An unregenerated person could never declare, "For I delight in the law of God." Paul therefore pictures himself as possessing two natures - one which loved God and longed to do His will and another which resented the Lord's ways. A great struggle took place within the apostle's personality, and he went through a period during which he often succumbed to sinful inclinations. As a result, he cried out, "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24).

THE WAY OF VICTORY

We feel the pulse of defeat in the apostle's heart cry, but we rejoice in his next triumphant statement, "I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Romans 7:25). Paul learned through his failures, and found that way of victory. He discovered that when he abandoned all self-effort and placed his full confidence in Christ's redemptive work, he could win in his battle against the flesh. Yes, the old nature was still present within him as an unwelcome tenant to be suppressed, but his new life in Christ became the dominating principle of his thoughts, words, and deeds.

How can you and I win in the battle against indwelling sin? On the basis of Paul's personal experience and his inspired statements, let me make three suggestions: (1) Don't try to overcome the flesh by ritualistic observances and zealous service. (2) Avoid any form of instant sanctification. (3) Place your confidence in the full scope of what Christ has done and is doing for you.

You must remember that you cannot overcome your old nature by just being religious. In Romans 7, Paul describes how he tried to obtain victory by keeping the law and doing his best - but victory eluded him. Some people today have the idea that if they will be baptized, attend church faithfully, celebrate the Lord's supper, and participate in every Christian endeavor possible, they will defeat their sinful nature. But it just doesn't work that way. In fact, the person who tries to gain sanctification by such efforts will probably resemble the self-righteous Pharisee rather than the publican with whom Jesus said God was well-pleased. You could serve on every committee in the church and go out on visitation every night of the week without becoming a victorious Christian. You could pray all night and confess publicly even the most private of your sins, and still be spiritual weakling, a victim of the power of indwelling sin.

You must also be wary when someone tells you that by going forward in a service you will be able to receive the Holy Spirit and instant sanctification. Neither the road of strenuous self-effort nor instantaneous achievement through a so-called "second work" of grace leads to victory over indwelling sin. Growth in grace and holiness is a lifetime process which often includes suffering, persecution, and hardship.

Simply place your confidence totally in the past and present work of Jesus Christ. This is precisely what the apostle Paul did, and exactly what he told us to do. After he had realized that his best efforts could not give him victory over indwelling sin, and had cried out, "Oh, wretched man that I am," he concluded that Christ's redeeming work was sufficient and said, "I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Romans 7:24,25). He reflected upon the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and realized afresh the power of the new life through the indwelling Holy Spirit. These truths caused him to rejoice in the assurance of victory.

Yes, Jesus died to pay the price for our sins on Calvary, but He also went there to destroy the power of sin. When He died a sinless man, all the combined forces of evil were defeated, for they had been unable to cause Him to fall. When we by faith receive Christ as our Savior, we are united with Him, His life becomes our life, His death becomes our death, and his resurrection becomes our resurrection. We are "in Him" and "He in us." We become the recipients of a new life and the Holy Spirit indwells us. This is our basis of victory.

The opening words of Romans 8 are a glorious declaration that we can defeat the power of our second enemy, the flesh. Paul said, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus..." (Romans 8:1). This joyous statement tells us that we are not only pardoned from sin's penalty, but also freed from its power and liberated from its slavery. The Greek work *katakrima*, usually translated "condemnation," actually refers to "the punishment following sentence." Believers, redeemed from the guilt of sin, are also delivered from its bondage. True, the "law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:23), called by Paul "the law of sin and death" in Romans 8:2, is still powerful! But the believer has received a new dynamic by which he is able to subdue it. The apostle says that the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" has freed us from bondage to this "law of sin and death." The *living* Spirit of God has entered the believer to overcome the death-dealing effect of indwelling sin.

Christian friend, recognize the fact of your sinful nature and then appropriate to yourself the full provision of God's redemption. After you have done this, spend time with the Lord in prayer every day. Read His Word, obey its admonitions, reject evil thoughts and desires, and claim the victory on the basis of your union with Jesus Christ. The indwelling Spirit will enable you to defeat the power of indwelling sin.

THE DEVIL - THE DIABOLICAL ADVERSARY

From the very beginning of the Christian era, believers have thought of themselves as soldiers in Christ's army, fighting on three fronts. First, they have seen themselves as a company of men and women delivered from the enslavement of an evil world-system, but they still have viewed it as an enemy that hated them and sought to destroy them through temptation. Second, followers of Christ have always known that within their personalities they still possess a sinful nature called the flesh, and that this principle of evil is at war with their new life. Third, they have been aware of opposition by a powerful kingdom of evil headed by Satan. These three enemies of all Christians are: (1) the world, the outer enemy; (2) the flesh, the inner foe; and (3) the devil, the diabolical adversary.

In this study we will consider the third antagonist, Satan. We will identify him, examine his tactics, and consider how we can defeat him.

WHO IS HE?

Satan is the name of a fallen angel also known as the devil. He hates God and His people, and leads an organized host of evil spirits. He and his followers have dedicated themselves to the task of fighting God and all who have accepted His salvation.

HIS FALL

The Bible teaches that Satan was once an exalted angelic creature, but that he fell from his lofty place through pride. He was created a free moral agent with the ability to choose whether he would serve God or oppose Him, but apparently pride and self-confidence lead him to think he could successfully lead an insurrection against God. Only two passages in the Bible speak of this event, Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, and they only allude to it.

In Isaiah 14 the prophet was speaking of the king of Babylon, an earthly monarch who typified the Antichrist of the endtime. God's servant declared,

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, who didst weaken the nations!

For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north,

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High (Isaiah 14:12-14).

It is obvious that the full import of this prophecy cannot be limited to any earthly king, but that it refers primarily to Satan, the power behind the wicked monarch in Babylon. Lucifer was the name of the devil before he rebelled against God and was cast out of Heaven.

The other reference which indirectly speaks of Satan's fall, Ezekiel 28:12-15, is really a dirge against an earthly king - the ruler of Tyre. It is apparent, however, that the ultimate object of Ezekiel's words could not have been this flesh-and-blood ruler. The passage ultimately refers to Satan, the being who instigated the Tyrian king to his deeds of cruelty. Ezekiel, like Isaiah, describes Satan as once having been an exalted prince in a beautiful world, but now cast out of this delightful abode.

The fact that many angels (who also like Lucifer were free moral agents) joined in the rebellion is clearly implied in Scripture. The New Testament speaks of "angels that sinned" (2 Peter 2:4), "angels who kept not their first estate" (Jude 6), and describes the red dragon (Satan) as pulling down a third of the stars from heaven with his tail (Revelation 12:4). These former angels are now evil spirits, part of the invisible company described by Paul:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12).

Satan is therefore a very powerful being who heads up a kingdom of evil spirits, and they together make up the formidable army arrayed against God and His people.

WHAT ARE HIS TACTICS?

We are now ready to consider the devil's tactics. As we do, we must keep in mind that he is a clever and subtle foe. He would not be as successful as he is if he always tempted believers to gross

sexual sins or barbarous acts of cruelty. He would not be as successful as he is if he always tempted believers to gross sexual sins or barbarous acts of cruelty. Instead, as the leader of the world-system which rejects the one true God, he cleverly makes his appeal to the sinful nature. One can be well on the way to spiritual disaster without being aware of what is happening, for he methodically breaks down one's confidence in God and His Word. He also promotes deceptive religious ideas, and sometimes utilizes evil men to divide God's people into contesting factions. We should not be surprised at these tactics, for Paul declared that the devil finds people who want to be religious but refuse to accept the message of the Gospel, and uses them as false teachers. In fact, the apostle says that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

HIS AVENUES OF ATTACK

In our previous studies we pointed out that the world is our spiritual enemy, that it is a system of thought and conduct contrary to the Word of God, and that it is dominated by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. We also declared that every human being from the time of birth onward possesses a sinful nature, and that this principle of indwelling sin remains within us until we die. We explained how the allurements of the world make their appeal to our inherent depravity, and pointed out that this evil nature makes us prone to do what God forbids. Thus the world and the flesh often combine, making a temptation very difficult to resist.

We must also recognize the role played by Satan, who is the "brains" behind the whole range of temptations to which we are subjected. Discovering our weaknesses, he can effectively bring into our lives the very enticements to which we are most vulnerable. If you are prone to be envious, he'll attack you there. If your weakness is fleshly lust, he'll tempt you with pornographic material or confront you with immoral people. He is an intelligent and resourceful foe, and he utilizes our sinful nature and the allurements of the world to their fullest extent.

For example, the current teaching that the sexual appetite is to be handled exactly like our desire for food works beautifully into Satan's program. The same can be said for philosophies of life which deny the sacredness of marriage, the sanctity of human life, and the absoluteness of moral standards. The devil knows that our self-centered, depraved nature is inclined to go along with such ideas, and that we are apt to be influenced in the wrong direction.

Therefore, though we can distinguish between the world, the flesh and the devil, we cannot always attribute temptations exclusively to any one of the three. In most cases, the invisible evil spirits work with the world-system and our sinful nature to lead us into conduct which does not honor God. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are declared by John to be "of the world," but they make their appeal to our "flesh" and are manipulated by the kingdom of Satan.

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DECEPTION AND DIVISION

In addition to utilizing the world-system and the flesh as means of temptation, the devil also is highly successful in the area of deception. This is not to deny his cruelty or intense hatred of God. Peter depicts him as a ferocious foe, a "roaring lion,....seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8), and Jesus said he was "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44). But Satan carefully conceals his real nature and often uses falsehood and cunning to accomplish his ends. Our Lord declared, "When he [the devil] speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). Paul spoke of the "wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11), and made reference to "the snare of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:7). Satan achieves his purposes most successfully through promoting false religions, perverting Christian teachings and dividing believers into warring camps.

To illustrate the devil's use of false religions, think a moment about the tremendous rise of occultist activity. How can we account for it? After all, belief in witchcraft, magic, sorcery, and astrology is completely contrary to the scientism of our day. Moreover, they are clearly forbidden in both the Old and New Testaments. How amazing then, that students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (people with the highest average math scores in the country) hold seminars in which they experiment with drugs and seriously consider subjects like magic, witchcraft, Zen Buddhism, Yoga, Harakrishna, and other "way out" forms of occultism. Dr. Vernon Grounds comments, "Strange! In a place like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a temple of rationalism dedicated to higher education in the sciences, weird forms of gross superstition, absurd manifestations of irrationality, are flourishing! Strange indeed!" (Christian Heritage, January, 1973, p. 6). Dr. Grounds says this is strange, and I agree with him. But I believe we have an explanation. The devil knows the human race cannot live with the logical implications of total atheism, and therefore he is masterminding the development of religions which deny Jesus Christ and His salvation. Listen to the words of the apostle Paul,

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1).

Practitioners of white magic, as well as some spiritualists, use Biblical terms and proclaim a high standard of morals; but since their practices are explicitly condemned in the Scriptures, we can confidently assert that such beliefs are an example of Satan transforming himself "into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians

11:14). Every set of religious beliefs which bypasses Christ or fails to honor Him as the eternal Son of God must be viewed as coming from Satan.

The devil also works within the organized church, generating confusion and strife. Surely the Bible is not so poorly written that it can be blamed for the chaotic maze of beliefs and practices among people who call themselves Christians. Actually, the great central truths of the faith are clearly set forth. Why then all the hodgepodge of beliefs? The answer is found in recognizing that evil spirits promote factions and false teaching, for they seek to divide and corrupt the Church. The apostle John declared,

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).

In view of the fact that Paul clearly said some would "give heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons," we have good grounds for believing that Satan and his kingdom of evil spirits stand behind the confusion and division that marks Christendom today.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, every believer must be continually on guard. The devil and his invisible army will cooperate with the world-system and our sinful nature to lead us into sin through our legitimate physical appetites. They will seek to deceive us into accepting ideas contrary to God's revelation. They will try to confuse and divide us, so that we will be ineffective in the service of our Lord. How can we win the victory? Some sincere believers, aware of Satan's power and intelligence, may wonder if we can ever defeat him. The answer is, "Yes we can!" Every Christian who wishes to overcome the devil must combine careful discrimination with stouthearted opposition.

CAREFUL DISCRIMINATION

The first prerequisite for defeating the devil is the wisdom to detect his activity. This means that you must be alert to the fact that he is clever and deceitful. Paul declares, "We are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11), a phrase which someone has translated, "We are on to his tricks." Remember, the devil is able to make the philosophy of this world appear logical and attractive. He uses the literature you read, the programs you watch on television, and the value system of the people you meet day by day to make an imprint upon you. You may not even be aware of what is happening. However, before you know it, you may be thinking man's thoughts instead of God's. The devil will also seek to tempt you through the eyegate and will utilize your natural disposition toward pride. In addition, he will use false teachers to deceive you regarding Biblical doctrine. He will lead them to deny Christ's deity, the reality of a present and personal salvation, the atonement, the physical resurrection of Christ, and other vital truths. A prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit and keen interest in the teaching of the Bible will enable you to discern error when you encounter it.

DETERMINED OPPOSITION

A strong and determined stand against Satan is also a definite necessity if you wish to defeat him. James says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). Peter, after describing him as a roaring lion says, "Whom resist steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:9). The apostle Paul declared, "Neither give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27). He had just been talking about unrestrained anger and bitterness, and warns that whenever we give in to such sins, we open the door for temptation. Let's make sure we "leave no loophole for the devil."

You will notice that James, Peter, and Paul agree that if we, living in submission and obedience to the Lord, determine to resist Satan and his temptations, we will succeed. No one has a right to use the popularized excuse, "The devil made me do it." Satan can't make you do anything you don't want to do! The believer who realizes that he has received a new nature, relies upon the indwelling Holy Spirit, and rests upon the adequacy of Christ's redemptive work is more than a match for his diabolical foe!

Christian friend, you can defeat Satan and his hosts. After all, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

THE HOSTILE TRIAD - ITS POWER BROKEN

Months before Adolph Hitler committed suicide and his military leaders surrendered to the Allies, the defeat of the Axis powers had already been made certain. But the dedicated Nazi leaders, proud and filled with hate, kept on fighting with no real prospect of victory. They intended only to do as much harm to the enemy as possible and to postpone the humility of hoisting the white flag. Yes, hatred and pride will incite a person who knows he cannot win to continue battling grimly as long as he can. This is true in war, in business, in sports, and other areas of human activity.

The same stubborn continuation in bitter conflict despite the knowledge of certain defeat marks Satan and his cohorts in their spiritual battle against God and His people. They are well aware that Christ, by paying the price for sin on Calvary and breaking the power of death through His resurrection, has sealed their doom. But they still fight on. The devil certainly understands that God's children are secure as far as their eternal destiny is concerned, but he still utilizes the world-system and the sin principle to bring spiritual harm to believers. Unfortunately, he often achieves remarkable success, but this is not as it should be! Christians are given strength by God to overcome their outer enemy, the world; their inner foe, the flesh; and their diabolical adversary, the devil. In fact, by His death, Jesus Christ has already brought condemnation to the world-system, destroyed the power of sin, and defeated Satan and his followers. The triad against which believers in Christ must wage continual warfare is already vanquished and doomed to eventual destruction. This realization should be of great comfort and help to all of God's children.

THE WORLD-SYSTEM CONQUERED

The Bible explicitly states that Jesus has overcome the world. His death at the hands of wicked men not only made known the true nature of the world-system, but also condemned it. The Lord Jesus expressed this shortly before He went to the cross by saying, "Now is the judgment of this world" (John 12:31). In what way could Jesus' death be called "the judgment of this world"? The answer is to be found in the knowledge that the world-system, in crucifying the Lord of glory, revealed fully and finally its bitter antagonism toward God.

People of Christ's day were in a state of frustration and despair, for they had been unable to find a satisfactory view of life even in the works of the most brilliant Greek philosophers. Yet when God's Son, the final and complete revelation of the Father, came upon the scene, they rejected Him. Then, too, the Greco-Roman world was marked by cynicism and gross immorality because men had concluded that real unselfish love is an impossibility. But when Jesus Christ, the supreme demonstration of God's love, came to live among the, they hated Him and nailed Him to a Roman cross.

Yes, the world-system demonstrated with finality its spiritual blindness and depravity by rejecting the Savior. No further witness is required. It was judged by the cross, and the centuries between Calvary and the return of the Lord Jesus Christ can be compared to the period between the death sentence

of a murderer and his actual execution. During this intervening time God in grace is offering salvation to sinners. He then enables those who trust Christ to live victoriously over the world. You see, Christ's death on Calvary not only provides the pardon of sinners from their guilt, but also their release from enslavement to the world-system. There fore, the world has already been judged, and is under the sentence of destruction.

Christian friend, do you realize that your redemption from slavery to the world-system which the apostle John declared "is passing away" has already been made certain? Reflect upon this truth and rejoice! You may not have the reputation for great knowledge in the eyes of your fellowmen, but you are a recipient of a salvation that has "made foolish the wisdom of this world" (1 Corinthians 1:20). You are a member of a select company of people who share in Christ's victory over the world. Paul declared,

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called;

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;

That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

The Lord in grace has exalted people whom the majority consider to be nothing. In contrast, those who are looked upon as possessing authority and prestige in this world will someday be reduced to a state quite contrary to their present position. Those who pride themselves in their own wisdom and live for the gratification of earthly desires are part of a system which will eventually be brought to nothing; but we who have placed our faith in Christ are members of an army whose Leaders has already defeated the foe.

This truth that the world-system has been condemned and sentenced by Christ's crucifixion should become a living reality for every believer. The knowledge that the battle already has been won by the Savior ought to fill our hearts with joy. It should be easy for us to reject all the vain things in which men of this world put such great confidence. We should look upon this world with its arrogant denial of God's Word as already condemned, worthless, and totally objectionable. As we view people trying to find satisfaction in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, we should reexamine our own hearts and determine anew to dedicate ourselves to doing God's will. The apostle Paul could say,

But God forbid that I should glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Galatians 6:14).

The world was crucified to Paul - nothing it offered could charm him into sin. He was crucified to the world - a real change had taken place within him, making him dead to everything it had to offer.

THE SIN PRINCIPLE DEFEATED

The Lord Jesus not only condemned and sentenced the world-system. He also destroyed the power of sin. True, our Savior did not possess a sinful nature as we do, but He was assaulted by temptation from every quarter. The writer of Hebrews declares that he "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). The devil used the sin principle, which pervades this world-system and is an integral part of our old nature, to attack Jesus Christ throughout His entire ministry. But He was completely unsuccessful. Paul therefore depicted sin as a cruel tyrant who had gained mastery over the whole human race, but was unable to defeat Christ. When he said that the Lord Jesus "died unto sin once" (Romans 6:10), he was saying that our Savior's death on Calvary once-for-all ended sin's opportunity. The sin principle, which had enslaved mankind, found in Jesus the one man it could not overcome.

In the light of what Christ accomplished when He as the last Adam successfully resisted all temptation and gave His life to pay the price for our iniquities, you and I can rejoice in the assurance that we need not live as slaves of sin. We have been united with Christ through faith. We have been made sharers in all the benefits of His sin-conquering life and atoning death. Through Him we receive not only forgiveness but also glorious deliverance from sin's tyranny. Paul uses our Savior's conquest of temptation as the basis for the exhortation:

Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ, our Lord (Romans 6:11).

The present tense of this command indicates that daily we are to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. Many Christians, after struggling vainly to overcome evil in their lives, have found victory when they began practicing this truth.

If a specific sin seems to have you in its grasp, you can escape that evil by reckoning yourself dead to it. Whenever the temptation comes, remind yourself that Jesus broke the power of sin, and that you died to it through your union with Him. This reckoning is not merely a psychological exercise. It possesses a dynamic power, for the Holy Spirit makes effective *in us* that which Christ did *for us*. Praise God, we need no longer live in bondage to sin.

THE DEVIL'S KINGDOM DESTROYED

We have seen that the death and resurrection of our Savior doomed the world-system to eventual destruction and that it broke the power of sin. We are now ready to consider the fact that our Lord also destroyed the kingdom of Satan. That the devil was dealt a death blow when Jesus went on the cross is clearly set forth in the New Testament. Our Lord Himself, looking forward to His crucifixion, made the declaration,

Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

This he said, signifying what death He should die (John 12:31-33).

Christ knew that His coming death on the cross would fulfill the prophetic statement of Genesis 3:15, "He [the Messiah] shall bruise thy [Satan's] head, and thou [the devil] shalt bruise his [the Redeemer's] heel" (Genesis 3:15). The Lord Jesus was well aware that Satan would indeed be able to inflict grievous indignities upon Him through the hatred of wicked men. He also knew of the agony He

would endure on the cross. But on the other hand, He recognized that by offering His sinless life in sacrifice through this ignominious death He would pay the price for sin and fulfill the prediction, "He shall bruise thy head." The devil had led man to sin, and thus had brought the death penalty to the human race. But Christ's sinless life and atoning death removed sin's power to condemn, destroyed death's sting, and made Satan's weapons ineffective. After Calvary, the evil one could not say God was being unjust by forgiving sinners, nor could he enslave men through the fear of death anymore. This is why the writer of Hebrews said,

Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,

And deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:14, 15).

You see, the devil is a defeated foe! His doom is sure! All of us who have been united with Christ can be certain of eventual victory over the kingdom of darkness. Satan cannot make an appeal to God's holiness and demand that He punish us for our sins, for Jesus has borne the penalty in full. Nor can he enslave those who are trusting Christ, for they have been united with Him who as the last Adam overcame all the combined forces of evil and then conquered death.

What does all of this mean to the Christian as he daily faces the devil and his hosts of evil spirits? After all, the Bible teaches that though Satan has been defeated and sentenced, he has not yet been imprisoned. He is still our "adversary" who "like a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). He is even now "the god of this age." (See 2 Corinthians 4:4). Ephesians tells us that we are presently engaged in a battle against an invisible kingdom of darkness. Yes, we are involved in a struggle with the powers of evil, but the fact that the devil was "destroyed" at Calvary is a truth of great significance. Paul goes on to say that even though we recognize the great power of Satan and his myriads of followers, we need not be afraid of them. If you and I, drawing strength from the truth that Christ defeated Satan, will yield to God and fight against the evil one, we can defeat him. Listen to the words of James,

Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7).

Notice first that you are told to "submit to God." Humbly draw your strength from Him and rely upon His provision made for you at Calvary. Second, you must "resist the devil." You may find it difficult to understand how a mere human being would dare engage in a battle with Satan and his kingdom of darkness. Isn't he far more powerful than any one of us? Of course he is, but every Christian lives in vital union with the One who as man met and vanquished Satan. We have within us the Holy Spirit, and John assures us that "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Remember, Satan has been defeated!

Yes, you and I who know Christ are in a battle. We are involved in a war against a *world-system* which ignores the Gospel, hates God's truth, and seeks to allure us to sin. We must fight daily against the *flesh*, for we possess within our personalities that same principle which pervades the entire universe. We are also engaged in a struggle against *Satan and his kingdom of darkness*. But we must look upon these three enemies as already sentenced, defeated, and destroyed by the redeeming work of Christ. As recipients of His salvation, we must view ourselves as dead to all the enticements of the world, the temptations of the flesh, and the deceitful activity of Satan. We must be careful to maintain an attitude of daily trust in God and humble reliance upon Him. After all, we are on God's side, and with the apostle Paul we can say,

Who is he that condemneth? Shall Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?

What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord (Romans 8:34-39).

Paul had experienced almost every conceivable form of suffering, but nothing had been able to separate him from the consciousness of Christ's love. He proceeded to search God's universe for any possible element that might be hostile to the Christian, and declared with absolute certainty that neither death, nor life, nor any kind of supernatural beings, nor anything in time or eternity - in fact, nothing in all the universe can separate us from God's love in Christ. The world is passing away, and the sin principle will have no place in God's new world. The devil, his power destroyed by Christ's crucifixion, will someday be cast into the lake of fire. Praise God, we are on the winning side!