

THE ENEMY'S IDENTITY

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A Christian's greatest enemy is the devil.

For our struggle is not for flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:12)

Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are. (1 Peter 5:8-9)

One of the foundational prayers we must prepare and pray is for the guarding of the church – pastors, elders, leaders and congregation – against the plan and attacks of devil.

The devil has nothing to offer a Christian that is filled with the Holy Spirit, prays, reads the Word and spends their 4T's (time, talent, treasure and touch) in benefitting the church. The devil has simply nothing to offer.

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle." – *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu

As we are not going into a physical battle but one of spiritual warfare (1 Peter 5:8-9) we need to understand the devils' tricks of the trade and be prepared for battle.

1. WHO AND WHAT IS THE DEVIL?

Strong's concordance defines the devil as an adversary, also the name of the superhuman adversary of God. 'Satan' is the personal name of the head of the demons.

The devil in the Old Testament: the Hebrew word most often so translated is *oyebh*, meaning 'one who hates'.

The devil is commander and chief adversary of God – and the arch enemy of good.

What is the devil?

When God created the world, He '*saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good*' (Genesis 1:31).

This means that even the angelic world that God had created did not have evil angels or demons in it at that time. But by the time of Genesis 3, we find that Satan, in the form of a serpent, was tempting Eve to sin (Gen. 3:1-5).

Therefore, sometime between the events of Genesis 1:31 and Genesis 3:1, there must have been a prideful fuelled rebellion in the angelic world with many angels turning against God and becoming evil. The New Testament speaks of this in two places:

'God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of nether gloom to be kept until the judgment.' (2 Peter 2:4)

You also know about the angels who didn't do their work and left their proper places. God chained them with everlasting chains and is now keeping them in dark pits until the great day of judgment. (Jude 6)

The emphasis is on the fact that they are removed from the glory of God's presence and their activity is restricted. Metaphorically they are in 'everlasting chains'.

Who is the devil?

- The devil is NOT God's equal
- The devil is NOT omnipresent (everywhere)
- The devil is NOT omniscient (all-knowing)
- The devil is NOT omnipotent (all-powerful)

REMEMBER: Being everywhere, all-knowing and all-powerful rightly only belong to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2. WHAT ARE HIS PLANS?

Satan has had thousands of years to perfect and hone his craft of evil. Even today some experienced Christians have fallen away from the faith and been deceived by the devil.

The main way the devil tries it with the church family is by creating an evil report. An evil report is Satan's most effective weapon among his arsenal:

1. To discredit leadership
(home, church, government, schools)

2. To cause Christians to close their spirits towards one another
3. To multiply conflicts and produce more ungodliness
4. To prompt non-Christians to mock Christianity and reject Christ

What motivates an evil report?

1. **Bitterness:** reacting because of personal hurts

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:31-32)

2. **Rebellion:** justifying an independent spirit

An evil man seeks only rebellion, and a cruel messenger will be sent against him. (Proverbs 17:11)

3. **Deception:** believing evil reports are right to give

Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight. (Proverbs 12:22)

4. **Pride:** wanting to exalt self

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. (Proverbs 16:18)

5. **Guilt:** justifying an independent spirit

6. **Envy:** desiring what another has

A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot. (Proverbs 14:30)

7. **Jealousy**

For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. (James 3:16)

3. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO WIN?

God has given us everything we need to resist and defeat the devil, any demon or any evil temptation. The Bible makes it clear that we are to never be afraid of him or his attacks. As Christians we must remember that we are in a place of victory – our God has already won.

1. **You are standing in His victory**

'Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.' (Col. 3:1-2)

For nothing will be impossible with God. (Luke 1:37)

(Deuteronomy 20:4; 1 Corinthians 15:57; Romans 12:21; Ephesians 6:11; Isaiah 41:10)

2. Give everything to the Lord

God's hands are greater than your hands. If you have any issues, give it all to Him.

3. Know your Bible and read His Word

If you are not audibly hearing from God, read his Word.

4. Never underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:12-15)

5. Clothe yourself in the full armour of God

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. (Eph. 6:13)

6. Fasting and Praying

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. (Philippians 4:6)

7. Speak to an elder/leader in the church

One of the elders'/leaders' jobs is to guard the congregation. Elders/leaders can give spiritual advice.

CONCLUSION

Take comfort that our God walks with us. However, we must play our part. Remember the devil has nothing to offer a Christian that is filled with the Holy Spirit, prays, reads the word and spends their 4T's (time, talent, treasure and touch) in benefitting the church. The devil has simply nothing to offer.

But 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. (1 John 3:8)

Bibliography: *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu; *Protection Against an Evil Report*, Chip Kawalsingh; *Systematic Theology*, Wayne Grudem