

The Real Enemy

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 August 2024

Preacher: Dr. Daniel Heeringa

[0 : 00] C.S. Lewis, and that's all you're getting by that, just acknowledgement, but anyway, C.S. Lewis wrote a novel called *The Screwtape Letters*, in which *Screwtape* is a fictional demon.

He gives instructions about the art of temptation and the Christian's ability to resist it to his nephew, another demon named *Wormwood*.

It's not biblical, but it gives us a fictional inside knowledge to the schemes of the evil one. And in that work, C.S. Lewis makes a powerful statement about demons, which he calls devils, when he says this, there are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils.

One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves, speaking of the demons, are equally pleased when we make both errors.

That is well written and it is very true because we can become so practically and spiritually dull that we are very much unaware of the warfare that we're in.

[1 : 19] And if that's the case for you, it is my hope through this series of sermons that you will wake up and realize the reality of the world in which we live.

At the same time, I go into these days with fear and trepidation about some becoming too anxious about Satan's whims and wiles and works.

The reality is you need to be aware and you need to act accordingly. Becoming fixated or fascinated with finding or avoiding the demon behind every bush is not our intention at all and can be unhealthy spiritually.

We can live our lives victorious through Christ. But that takes awareness. It takes consistency. And it takes perseverance. 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 8 and 9, Peter dealt with it like this. He said, Let's pray together.

[2 : 45] Lord, I pray today that you will give us insight and understanding not only about what is going on in the unseen world around us, but what's going on in our own lives.

And that, God, you'll give us answers and that we'll respond to that knowledge with faithfulness, with obedience. Guidance. Guide us.

Oh, God, I pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. I'm a lighthearted guy for the most part, but this is serious. It's not a far-fetched story or a story about haunted spooks.

In reality, it's an invisible war. And I want to point out three truths to you today and three actions to respond to those truths. First truth is this.

Satan is real. There is an invisible world that you don't see. It's just as real as what you see. I would beg to say that it's even more real than what we see.

[3 : 53] And the undercurrent of much of the evil and the wrong and the violence and the sadness that we see in the world is, in fact, the invisible world.

Now, if you feel that you must dismiss such an idea, I would encourage you to think again. You do believe in the unseen. I promise you.

I mentioned the wind last week. You can't see the wind, but you can see the dust and you can see the rain and the leaves blow. We lived in Mississippi for a long time, and we've seen chairs and trampolines and trees blow, sometimes cars, but we've never seen the wind itself, the evidence of it.

You don't see natural gas either, but if it's flowing and you light a match, well, you may not know it. Carbon monoxide is a gas that you cannot see, but it is a deadly killer in a contained spot.

And what about bacteria? Can't see that with the human eye, but do you remember when COVID came? People riding in the car by themselves with masks on?

[5 : 09] We were afraid of it everywhere. Church, I was pastoring, we were wiping down pews and spraying the air between worship to keep going.

We couldn't see it, but we sure saw the results of it. Now, if you think about it, it should not be hard for you to believe that there's a spiritual world that you cannot see that's just as real, if not more so, than what you can see.

Satan is real, Scripture proclaims it again and again, and our world gives evidence to it. Not only that, but Satan is active. Notice in our passage today, it says that he's prowling around like a roaring lion in verse 8.

I've never been on a safari except that Disney one, but I have watched it on TV, and the lion, even with its loud roar, spends more of its time on the prowl behind a bush, behind the trunk of a tree, or stealthily and strategically looking for lone and easy prey.

And the hyena better be careful and better stay with the pack. And in the same way, as the metaphor that Peter gives us, we need to be aware of a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

[6 : 36] He tells us to be sober-minded. That means that we need to be sober. And it also means we need to be serious. It also means we need not be flippant about this matter.

In addition to that, it says be watchful. That's the kind of talk that speaks of a night watchman in a tower connected to a walled city that constantly was searching the landscape looking for the enemy.

And by the way, those walled cities would change those guards out every three hours to make sure that the ones that were working were paying attention to what was going on. We need to seriously acknowledge what we're up against and to pay attention to what's going on.

Because Satan is active. And he has two chief weapons. One's the world. And the other's the flesh. Now the world is what is around you. Not the people. Because Ephesians chapter 6 verse 12 says, Our battle is not against flesh and blood.

[7 : 49] John talks about the evil in the world. And the word that he uses there in the Greek is cosmos. And it speaks of the orderly arrangement or system.

It should be easy for you to see how the evil one has influenced our world structure. We are celebrating in this country and in many places in the world, we're celebrating what is wrong and shaming what is right.

That's the evil one leading us in that. He makes what's wrong seem right and what's right seem wrong. Satan loves to turn morality upside down.

And he does that by tempting us to love the world more than God. 1 John chapter 2 verse 15 and 16 put it this way. Do not love the world's cosmos or the things in the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that's in the world, the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life is not from the Father but is from the world.

[8 : 57] So it speaks of three vehicles that he uses through the world. And that is the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life. Now the desires of the flesh are sensual.

And that is that the lion is prowling in this area. When a life is led by lust, it makes for a lousy life. And the devil is just hanging out in this area in the world in which we live. The desires of the eyes are selfish.

Wanting everything you see. Epicurus said it this way. He said nothing is enough for the man to whom enough is too little.

Nothing is enough for the man to whom enough is too little. Or as I've heard J.D. Rockefeller was asked, J.D., how much is enough money?

[10 : 09] He said a little bit more. Just not quite enough. If you are just led by your eyes, you'll never have enough.

Because when you try to keep up with the Jones, the Jones will refinance. And you'll have to work that much harder. The desire of the eyes are selfish.

The pride of life is sickening. It was pride that turned an angel into the devil. And it's pride that will strut a human peacock straight into hell.

Pride is the only disease that makes everyone else sick except the one who has it. Satan works in the world. He is the prince of the world as Scripture describes him.

He also works in the flesh. And the flesh is our innate inherited tendency to sin. Don't ever say the devil made you do it because you were born with an ability and a desire to do it.

[11 : 21] I heard about a little boy that hit his sister, called her a bad name, and then spit on her. And his mama confronted him and said, Son, you don't need to do that.

The devil made you do that. And he said, Mama, the devil made me hit her and call her a bad name, but I chose to spit on her. I mean, listen, the reality is there are some churches that meet, and if the Spirit of God left them, they wouldn't know the difference.

They'd just keep on meeting. And in the same way, if Satan no longer tempts us, without Christ, we'd still have the same problems that we have because it's born in us.

It's innate. It's innate. It's in our flesh, and Satan works through that because he's real. And he's active. Not only that, but Satan's organized.

Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12 says, For we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

[12 : 26] Notice how there's almost like a rank of sorts that takes place that shows us the organization of evil. Years ago, a well-respected evangelist came to this area to do a joint revival among four Easley churches.

And each evening, he'd be preaching in a different church. And those churches asked me if the church I was pastoring could host him that Sunday morning. And I had him come in, and he preached and did a good job.

And I was told as I was talking to him that, and others talked to me about him as well, that he was a spiritual warfare specialist. And that he was doing a lunchtime seminar at another church.

And so I went. And I was fascinated by what he said because he told me things that put me on high alert spiritually and things that he told me I had never heard before, and I had never thought it before.

And it was many years ago. And as I prepared for this series of messages, I thought, man, I'd like to hear that again.

[13 : 37] So I went online and looked to see if there was some way that somehow there was recordings or writings or something to see what this man said because all I could basically remember, I remembered a few examples, but all I could remember was it was different.

And I found it. Somebody had taken a cassette tape and had transferred it to MP3s, and it was on an obscure site. And I downloaded those MP3s, and as I walked, I listened to it.

And as I listened to it, he talked about the organization of evil. And he said that in every county, every county has a head demon.

And every city has a head demon. Certain demons assigned to certain churches. And I can tell you, no, I'm kidding.

I was listening for the text of Scripture. And I didn't hear it. And then I remembered what he said when he started in the process.

[14 : 47] And this is what he said kind of rushed. He said, listen, we're going to be looking at a lot of different things. Now, I really don't have time to point out any Scripture to you today. Because I want you to search it out for yourself.

I don't want to hand feed you. I want you to search it out for yourself and find the Scripture that I'm referring to. He had no Scripture backing for many of his comments.

The second thing he said is, he said, now, this information that I'm giving you is, I got it when I conversed with demons that were inside of demon-possessed people.

They spoke to me and told me these things. And I found out since that there's a lot of guys that love to talk about spiritual warfare that tell similar stories.

That they got their knowledge, not from Scripture, but they got their knowledge from demons speaking through demon-possessed people to them, telling them things about the world of demons.

[15 : 51] There are two big problems with that. One of them is, some preachers are liars. Okay? Don't look at me like that.

I'm just telling you, some of them are liars. Okay? And the second thing is, Satan's a liar. Satan's a liar. His demons are liars as well.

So even if the preacher told the truth, what demons told him was probably not the truth. I don't know where the truth was, but I don't believe the truth were in the statements.

And the ones in Scripture that speak the truth are speaking to Jesus. The demons that speak, they speak truth, but they're speaking to Jesus. While he calls them out.

And that's a little bit different matter. So this is the reality. Okay? We don't know all we'd like to know about the makeup and structure of the demonic army.

[16:53] I can't tell you all the rank and file and all that stuff. I can, however, tell you that there is one. That it is highly organized, highly orchestrated, and it is referred to in this passage.

In Colossians chapter 1 verse 16, it speaks of how it's strategic. That it's planned out. It sounds, especially in this original language of Ephesians chapter 6 verse 12, it sounds like there's a listing, a ranking of sorts and file.

You can dig into those words and kind of pick up some of that, but it's not so evident that I want to take a lot of time with it this morning. We don't understand a lot of it.

The book of Daniel speaks of a demonic prince of a nation. As a matter of fact, it speaks of a couple of them, and they're confronting Michael, who's an archangel. Cosmic powers in verse 12 could be translated world powers over this present darkness, and that hints at an evil influence in the highest ranks of world powers.

And so, folks, I want to assure you world leaders are influenced by such. Satan is organized.

[18:15] Now, I want to reemphasize, don't get excessive and unhealthy fascination with demonic world powers. That is not what Scripture tells us to do.

Instead, I want you to notice what our passage says. First, I've tried to emphasize the reality of our enemy and his involvement on every level in our world.

But I want you to notice what verse 9 says. It tells us three actions. One is, resist him. Resist him.

James 4, verse 7 says this. Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil, and he'll flee from you. Now, my friend, that's a promise along with a solution.

That if you'll resist, Satan will leave. That when you're tempted, if you won't entertain that temptation, and you'll resist, the devil will leave.

[19:28] He will find easier foe than one who wants to resist. And he'll be back.

It may be another day. Let's be real. It may be another minute. But he'll be back.

But Scripture tells us to resist him, and he'll flee. How do we resist him? We submit to God.

Because you cannot submit to Satan and submit to God.

You cannot sin and walk clean. That's impossible. So resist him. The second thing is to be firm in your faith.

He tells us here, be firm in your faith. Trust God. Let me give you a hang-you-hat-on kind of verse.

[20:34] One that you can rest in. One that you need to know. And I'll say this again. You'll hear this Scripture again in coming days. I promise you. This is one that you need to write down on an index card, and you need to put it on a mirror in your bathroom.

You need to write down on an index card and put it on the dash of your car and read it when you stop it. Not when you're driving down the road, but when you stop at a red light. You need to keep it before you. It's in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 13.

It says this. No temptation has overtaken you that's not common to man. God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he'll also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it.

Trust God. He will make a way. You are not required to sin against God.

Sin is a choice. And he will provide a way out. Be firm in your faith.

[21:45] Lastly, know that you are not alone. You're not alone. 1 Peter says Christians across the world face the same thing.

Those across the centuries have faced similar. And one thing the devil loves to do is make us think that somehow we're an exception to the rule.

That therefore our sin is okay because of our different circumstances. And that's a lie.

We think what's happened to us is so individualized and so different that nobody else has ever endured what I'm having to deal with.

And that's a lie from the evil one. If we got really honest this morning, more honest than we'd ever get together, okay? But if we got really honest and I had a big whiteboard up here and I asked you to say what are the areas in which the devil tempts you?

[22:53] Or what is the areas in which he dogs you out? Or he depresses you or he gets you down? What are those areas that he does that in? And I want to write what those things were that you're dealing with.

Well, there's not a whiteboard in Pickens County big enough for us, okay? For one. But the other thing is you would pick up on something that I picked up on after talking to people for decades about such matters.

We ain't much different. What we deal with is not much different. There is not but so many different categories in which Satan works.

And he does it in different ways for different people. But there's not that much difference. Some of us have gravely sinned in some areas.

And then some of us have what we would consider likely sinned in some areas. Which Christ went to the cross for both of them. So I don't know how you weigh that out. But we're different in that way. But the reality is the areas in which he hits us in life, the thoughts in which he throws at us, is strategic and categorized and not that many different things, quite honestly.

[24 : 17] You're not alone in this. Others have been in very similar circumstances as you. And the devil has thrown that out at them.

And one of the emphasis that he loves to do is you... I know I'm repeating myself, but I want you to hear this today. Somebody needs to hear this. You're not that different.

You're not that different. Your circumstances don't justify your sin. He'll convince you that it does, but it does not.

It don't. You're not alone. But there's another way that you need to understand what it means by not being alone. And that is every time you're tempted, every time you struggle, every time you get that bad thought, that depressing thought, that demeaning thought, that demeaning thought, that whisper that you're nothing in life in your ear.

Every time you get that, I want you to know you're not alone. God's right there with you. He's right there with you. You don't walk it alone. God's faithful.

[25 : 33] He'll provide you a way out from that. Why? Because he's there. You're not alone. You say, well, I don't feel like God's here. Well, God's presence is not based on our feelings.

It's not. Well, I don't feel like he hears my prayers. God hearing your prayers is not based on what you feel. I got news for you. Sometimes our feelings are a wreck and are wrong.

We're not all that intuitive sometimes in the midst of our self-doom. God's there.

And he won't leave you alone. And that's based on his promises. And his promises are just as sure as his hand upon us. Friend, I want you to resist him.

Resist him. Stand up. Be firm in your faith. Trust God. Trust God. And know that you're not alone.

[26 : 44] Former college football player. Went back to his coach and said, coach, I want to help. How can I help? You program. And the coach said, I want you to go and find our kind of player.

He said, all right, coach. What kind of player is our kind of player? He said, yeah, there's a guy that gets knocked down. And when he gets knocked down, he stays down. We don't want that kind of guy.

Yeah. Then there's another guy. When he gets knocked down, he gets up. And he gets knocked down. He gets up. But after he gets knocked down a few more times, he stays down.

We don't want that guy. Yeah. Then there's another guy that gets knocked down time and time and time. And he just keeps getting up.

And the ex-ball player said, that's the guy we want. He said, no. I want the guy that keeps knocking everybody down. That's who I want. Let me tell you something, friend.

[27 : 50] I want you to hear me. We can be victorious. We can quit getting knocked down.

And start knocking down. When we resist. When we stand firm. And realize we're on a team, folks. And we got an unseen team around us. And we've got a seen team right here with us. That's what the church of Jesus Christ is all about.

Making each other stronger. 1 Corinthians 15, 57 said, thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that? One more time.

[28 : 59] Do you believe that? If you believe victory is in Christ Jesus. Well then let's walk out of here and win. Let's win. Against the enemy.

Because he's real. He's real. But when we resist him. And when we stand firm. And realize we're not alone. Thank God we got victory.

In the Lord Jesus. With every head bowed and every eye closed. I ask you today. Do you know the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior? If you've never surrendered your life to the Lord

Jesus. You have no hope in this battle that I speak of.

It's very real. And the devil will love to whisper stuff into you. To tell you. Don't you ever commit your life to Christ. You're not worthy of it. What will people say? He'll throw all kinds of things in your ear. But I got news for you. That's where the starting is. If you'll ask the Lord Jesus to forgive you of your sins. To come into your life. And you commit your life to follow him from this day forward.

[29 : 57] It's not about me God. It's about you. If you'll do that. I promise you. Today's the day of salvation. He'll save you and change your life. Scripture's clear. He gives you a choice.

He looked at a man and said. Come follow me. And they had a choice. To follow Christ. Maybe you're here and you have done that privately.

But you've never acknowledged that publicly. And you need to do that. Jesus said. If you're ashamed of me before men. I'll be ashamed of you before my father. In other words. There's no relationship with him.

If it's just a private one. It needs to be a public one. You need to let others know. What Christ has done in you. And if you've never acknowledged that through baptism. I want you to know by Christ's commission.

And by his example. That's exactly how we follow up a decision for Christ. We'd love to guide you in that. Maybe God's drawing you to First Baptist Church. God's doing a wonderful work in our church.

[30 : 55] And we're thankful for that. God's drawing folks. And if God's leading you. I'd love to guide you in that. And talk about that. There's a lot more people in here.

That's just dealing with some stuff. And you need to lay that down before the Lord. You need to ask God to forgive you. And to cleanse you. And to give you the strength.

To stand up and resist. And be firm. And so I ask you today. To deal with that matter. Because I promise you.

When we leave this room. The world gets so loud. We'll forget a lot of things we heard. Right then. Especially the things that we're to act on. And you can do a lot of that.

Right where you'll stand. In just a few moments. Just you and the Lord. Or you can do it at this altar. Or I'd love to pray with you. I just want you to do what God wants you to do. Nothing less than what exactly.

[31 : 52] What God wants you to do. Let's just be obedient. Trust him. Just trust him. And let him work in us. Lord Jesus. I pray that you'll give us victory. Not just right now.

But God. In the days ahead. And that comes by resisting. By standing firm. By resting in you. Lead us Lord.

Save the lost. Strengthen the saved. Help us to be better. At what we're to be. Than we are now. In Jesus precious name.

Amen.