



Spiritual Warfare: Pulling Down Strongholds

JAMES 1:13-15

LESSON 15 – THE DEVIL OR DEPRAVITY?

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The Wiles of the Devil

- ▶ Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
- ▶ We know that if we are to stand against the schemes of the devil and succeed at living the Christian life to the glory of God then we must put on the whole armor of God. In order to defend ourselves and fight against false ideologies, ideas, and doctrines, we must know who it is we are fighting!
- ▶ We forget that we who are believers in Jesus Christ are soldiers! We are engaged in a conflict with eternal implications. There is the war between the spirit and the flesh (Gal 5:17). There is the battle for our will – doing what we want to do or instead doing what God would have us do. There is conflict, division, and casualties. We are at war.
- ▶ Further we are in conflict with the rulers of darkness. We are in a fight with the devil. He, as a roaring lion, is seeking those whom he may devour, and we are to resist him. He tempts us, just as He did our Lord. He seeks to lure us away from the truth and to deceive us with his lies.

The Wiles of the Devil

- ▶ This verse in Ephesians 6 tells us that with the armor of God we can stand against the wiles of the devil. The word translated “wiles” is the Greek word *methodia*, better known as methods. These are cunning, deceptive methods that the devil uses to attack us, discourage us, confuse us, and accuse us. In fact, as we mentioned him as a roaring lion, he is stalking his prey – hoping they will not pray!
- ▶ The methods of our enemy include appealing to our fallen flesh through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. He plays and preys upon our desires, fueling them into areas where they do not belong, tempting us to depend upon ourselves instead of walking by faith. He also deceives by spreading false doctrine and giving false hope. And yet his demonic wisdom leads to destruction. He uses counterfeits. This is part of his deception. He lies about what is good, and substitutes what is evil.

The Wiles of the Devil

- ▶ These schemes involve using the works of the flesh to entice us into pursuing our own selfish wants and needs. Where God gives us as a fruit of the Spirit love, the devil offers adultery and fornication. Where God provides joy, we find that the devil substitutes uncleanness and lewdness. These are literally a lack of restraint when it comes to attempting to satisfy self.
- ▶ We also find that as God gives us peace, the devil deceives us by leading us to believe that true peace is found in idolatry and sorcery, terms which are used to describe the worship of a false god and the use of drugs and other substances to alter our mind and our mood. With each fruit of the Spirit there is a counterfeit work of the flesh, yet these counterfeits never deliver what they promise. Sin in the end does not give us true or lasting fulfillment. In the end, sin only leads to death.

The Wiles of the Devil

- ▶ So how do we stand against these schemes of the devil? By taking advantage of God's power through putting on the armor He provides us. We must put on the whole armor, all of it.
- ▶ Let us think back to the Old Testament where Israel was confronted again and again by the Philistines. Surely we all remember the account of David taking food to the front lines for his older brothers and there hearing the blaspheming of the giant Goliath. And as David responded in faith he wanted to stand for the Lord and His people. Before he did King Saul had this young shepherd boy adorned in his royal armor. And yet it did not fit. David found his defense in the power and might of the Lord, and the armor that was not his and did not fit would only serve to hinder him in the fight. As a result he rejected Saul's armor and went to fight and win the battle armed only with a sling and 5 smooth stones (1 Samuel 17).

The Wiles of the Devil

- ▶ Our application of course is that we must be ready to stand in the fight but we must not wear the armor of another man. We must put on the whole armor of God. It is His power, His might, and His armor. He has made it for us. And it fits! We cannot rely on the faith, doctrine, works, or life of a friend, teacher, parent, mentor, pastor, or spouse. We must stand before God and stand against the devil armed with what God gives us – not with what He gives others around us.
- ▶ Perhaps the most important point to be made here is the most often overlooked. How often have we heard teachers and preachers tell us that we must get up every day and put on the spiritual armor? As if we take it off each night before we go to bed and so must put it back on every day. Now, I will say that it is not a wrong intention on the part of those who say this. We do need to be aware of the armor we have been given. We need to USE it. But as we look at this text it does not say that we are to keep putting the armor on, over and over. It says, “Put on the whole armor of God.” The phrase “put on” is permanent. It means, put it on once for all. This is the last suit of armor you will ever need!

The Wiles of the Devil

- ▶ As John MacArthur states in his commentary on Ephesians (p. 338): “It is not a uniform to wear only while playing a game and then to remove when the game is over. The armor of God is to be the Christian’s lifelong companion.”
- ▶ The truth is we have been given this armor, but the question is, are we using it? As Paul taught us earlier in this epistle we are to put off the life we lived when we were alienated from God and dead in sin because when we were saved we put on a new man – we became a new creation in Christ (Eph 4:20-24). And as a new creation we have been given the whole armor of God so that we might stand firm in the fight that rages around us.

The Wiles of the Devil

- ▶ The sad truth is that there are so many Christians who are in the midst of battle and have no idea how to fight and no clue about the armor that God has given them. They flee the field of battle time after time in defeat because they fail to see what God has given them. And they have been deceived into believing that the difference between victory and defeat is a matter of their own faith. They have heard over and over that if they will just have enough faith then everything will be okay.
- ▶ But the Bible tells us that the battle does not depend on our faith, our ability, our might, our cunning, or our intellect. The battle is the Lord's. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord." (Zech. 4:6). We have been given the whole armor of God so that we might stand against the schemes of the devil. Let us understand then what it means to put it on once for all. For when we are armed by the Lord we have nothing in this world, or in the world to come, to fear.

The Devil Made Me Do It

- ▶ We will learn more next week about how to resist the devil, and tactics for attaining victory in the battle against the world, our flesh, and the devil. To finish this morning we need to see that it is not ever that the devil makes us sin. When we sin, we cannot say, “The devil made me do it.”
- ▶ Our sin does not originate in, from, or with the devil. It begins in our own fallen flesh.
- ▶ James 1:13-15 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

The Origin of Sin

- ▶ Whether it is willful or done in ignorance, sin blinds us to the truth. Sin is transgressing God's Word. It is a violation of everything we learned about overcoming immaturity. Transgressing God's Word is indeed an obstacle to discernment.
- ▶ Today we ask the question, "Where does our sin come from?"
- ▶ The answers available from a variety of books, sermons, and studies on the topic run from one extreme to another. Some say there is no such thing as sin. Others that sin is actually just weakness, or a disease. Character flaws replace habitual sins. We even rename besetting sins so that they are not so sinful sounding. Adultery becomes an affair. Drunkenness becomes a disease. Lying becomes stretching the truth. Cheating becomes finding an advantage. The list goes on.

The Origin of Sin

- ▶ But what I hope we do understand is that if we are to know the root of our sin then we must go to the only place on this earth where we can get a clear and concise explanation. Of course I am speaking about the Word of God. It is the Bible that shows us the truth about our sin. What does the Bible say?
- ▶ Well many today start off back in the Garden of Eden. They take us back to the beginning, and they blame either other people or even the serpent. It is the influence of others, peer pressure, misuse of authority – whatever we claim – it is another person's fault and not our own. But if we really want to make a point, we play the blame game by pointing at that old dragon, Satan, Lucifer – whatever name they call him they blame the devil. In fact, the phrase that has become almost comical is that when people sin they glibly proclaim, "The devil made me do it."

The Origin of Sin

- ▶ Let us look at the Garden and see if this accusation will stand the test of Scripture. Can we blame the devil when we sin? After all, when we do that we are only acting in accord with our nature – like the children of Adam and Eve that we truly are. For there in the Garden when confronted with their sin Adam was quick to blame Eve and Eve immediately blamed the serpent. There is nothing new under the sun.
- ▶ But who did God blame? He blamed them all! Each one there had sinned against Him. The serpent by tempting Adam and Eve to rebel, Eve by listening and giving in, and Adam for failing to protect Eve and eating the fruit with her knowing all along that it was sinful. God always holds the sinner responsible for his or her own sin. The Bible is clear, He will not hold another person responsible for our sin. Consider Ezekiel 18:20: “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.”

The Origin of Sin

- ▶ But wait, you say, surely there is an exception. Yes. There is. There is one gracious exception to this standard of responsibility. By grace God decided that His Son would become a substitute for those who would be saved. So, He bore the penalty of our sin upon Himself even though He was sinless! Praise God for the exception to the rule.
- ▶ However, we are still faced with the question, “Where does our sin come from?”
- ▶ Another answer that is often given is that God created all and is sovereign and so God must have created evil as part of His overall plan for His glory. So, God created evil, He made sin, and He caused Adam and Eve, and you and me, to sin. Some will even quote a verse of Scripture to try and prove their point. They will take their Bible and turn to Amos 3:6 in their King James Only Bible and they will proclaim with assurance and pride: “shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?”

The Origin of Sin

- ▶ What? The Lord causes evil?? Well, actually, NO! To say so would mean that the Bible contradicts itself, but more on that later. First let us look at this verse. A simple study proves that the word translated in the King James as “evil” is better translated “calamity” as it is in the New King James and New American Standard or “disaster” as it is in the English Standard Version and the New International Version. You see, the word does not mean God creates or causes evil. It means He can and does cause disaster and calamity when He so chooses.
- ▶ But back to the idea that to say this would mean that God’s Word contradicts itself. For the Bible presents a picture of God who cannot be touched with sin, accused of sin, or guilty of sin. To the point that we are told that He cannot even be charged with tempting us to sin. He does not cause sin, and He does not even tempt us to sin.

The Origin of Sin

- ▶ We come to see the answer to our questions in these verses in James 1:13-15, “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”
- ▶ You see, God does not tempt us. Our sin then is not the result of the doings of the devil or the pressure of other people. Neither is it the work of God. No. Our sin simply put is a result of our depravity. Each of us is tempted to sin when we are drawn away from the safety of truth by our own desires. It is the lust of our fallen flesh that dooms us! Our desires. Our lust. Our wants. Our fallen flesh. This sinful body craves satisfaction and sin – and so we are drawn into sin by our own fallenness.

The Origin of Sin

- ▶ It is not the devil, it is depravity. Sin starts in our fallen flesh as we battle the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” This is the bait that lures us into sin and away from God and His Word. And the Bible tells us that when that desire conceives, when it takes root and starts to grow, the result is sin. And sin produces only one fruit – DEATH.
- ▶ Sometimes we forget that the wages of sin is still death. But that is the only place sin will take us. It offers the heights of pleasure and fulfillment but ends only in death. Our fallen body sure does a good job of painting a pretty picture of those things which lead inevitably to our demise!

Learning to Hate Sin

- ▶ We cannot downplay the role that the world (other people) and the devil do play in our being led into sin – but ultimately each of these things only appeal to some unfulfilled lust already present in our fallen flesh. As it is said, the world the flesh and the devil simply appeal to our lust. We are the ones to blame when we sin. Just as God dealt a consequence to Adam, to Eve, and to the serpent – so to He tells us that there are consequences for our sin.
- ▶ What are we to do then about our sin?
- ▶ Sin comes from the enticement of our fallen flesh – that one part of us yet remaining and waiting to be finally redeemed at our glorification. Until then we fight and struggle with sin and the desires of the flesh. Those desires serve as the point of conception for sin, and when sin gives birth, it is not life but death that results.

Learning to Hate Sin

- ▶ We should HATE our sin. It is our sin that separated us from God. It is our sin that demanded the death of Christ upon the cross. It is our sin that defames the holiness of God and drives us far from Him. It is our sin that hinders relationships and fellowship and growth. It is sin that causes sadness, sickness, suffering, and death. It is sin that is an affront to the glory and perfection of God. It is sin that defiles and deceives. It is sin that kills us!
- ▶ Matthew 18:8-9 If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.
- ▶ The consequences of sin are so serious that Jesus taught us that we should have an attitude that proves a willingness to mutilate our bodies before we allow our flesh to lead us into sin! Is it your hand that is being used to lead you into sin? Your eye? Our mental, emotional, and spiritual perspective should be such that we think and act as if we were willing to cut a hand off or poke out an eye before we would entertain the thought that we could be lead into sin. Remember – this is WAR!

Learning to Hate Sin

- ▶ Romans 6:12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.
- ▶ We are never in control! It is a myth of serious proportions that deceives us into thinking that when we sin we are actually in control. The analogy has been given that we knock Jesus off the throne of our hearts and we sit on that throne and we call the shots. But the truth is that Jesus is Lord and He cannot be dethroned. Further we know that if we are not submitting ourselves willingly to the rule of Christ then it is not we who are in charge. No. It is our sin! We are either serving as faithful slaves of Christ or we are slaves of sin! So the next time you think that sin will set you free and prove your independence, remember – if you are not bowing to Jesus you are bowing to your sin!

Learning to Hate Sin

- ▶ Psalm 32:3-4 When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer.
- ▶ Sin has consequences beyond death. Oh yes, it is true. Sin will bring about all sorts of consequences as it slowly kills us! Conviction and discipline mean that we pay a price, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and even physically. The weight of conviction wears down our bodies and our souls. Sin dries us up and starves us to death. And death is just the beginning, for hell is forever and has no exits.

Learning to Hate Sin

- ▶ Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.
- ▶ We are sinners from conception. We are born sinners and we will die sinners. The question is will we die sinners who have been forgiven or not? So, hating sin is really understanding where we have come from and what great price was paid to redeem our life from death and hell.
- ▶ **We should hate sin because sin is what keeps us from Christ!**
- ▶ We see then that sin is hideous. It is not nice, pleasant, or pretty. And if it deceives us and lies to us and makes itself look desirable we need to remember how serious a matter it is to sin against God. It is a violation of His Word and His love. It makes a mockery of the death of His Son. And it ultimately causes us a great deal of pain and suffering!

Be Holy by Hating What God Hates

- ▶ 1. Be Holy
 - ▶ a. We are Commanded – Lev. 11:45; 1 Peter 1:13-16
 - ▶ b. We are Enabled – 2 Peter 1:3-4; James 1:21; 2 Thess. 2:13-15; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:28-30
- ▶ 2. Hate what God Hates
 - ▶ a. “Top Seven” – Proverbs 6:16-19
 - ▶ b. Lying – Prov. 13:5; Zech. 8:17; Ps. 119:104, 128, 163
 - ▶ c. Evil – Ps. 5:5; 97:10; Prov. 8:13; Amos 5:15; Is. 61:8; Heb. 1:9
 - ▶ d. Idolatry – Jer. 44:4-5; Deut. 16:21-22
 - ▶ e. False Worship – Amos 5:21-24; Ps. 119:113; 139:21-22; Rev. 2:6
 - ▶ f. Violence – Ps. 11:5

Be Holy, by Loving What God Loves

- ▶ 3. Love what God Loves (and commands us to love) – vs. 1
 - ▶ a. Our Enemies – Mt. 5:43-48; Lk. 6:27-35; Rom. 5:8; John 3:16
 - ▶ b. One Another – 1 Peter 1:22-23; Prov. 8:17; John 13:34; 1 John 4:7
 - ▶ c. Salvation – Ps. 40:16; 70:4
 - ▶ d. Mercy and Righteousness – Micah 6:8; Is. 61:8; Jer. 31:3
 - ▶ e. Truth (the Word) – Zech. 8:19; Ps. 119:97,113, 119, 127, 159
 - ▶ f. Our Neighbor – Ps. 3:23; 69:36; Mt. 19:19; 22:37
 - ▶ g. Husbands and Wives – Col. 3:19; Eph. 5:25, 28, 33; Titus 2:4
 - ▶ h. GOD – Deut. 6:5; 11:1, 13, 22; 19:9; 30:6, 16; Joshua 22:5; 23:11; 1 John 5:2-3

Next Week

- ▶ Lesson 16 – Resist the Devil – James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-11