

The Enemies we Face: World, Flesh and Devil

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Bible Text: James 3:13-18

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James chapter three and starting there at verse 13.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peace-makers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.¹

May we pray?

Lord, we pray that you would meet with us through the ministry of the Word of God. Surrounded as we are with lies on every hand, propaganda machines, manipulators of public opinion, advertisers—all of these things, and the children that we would teach have been brainwashed with this barrage of things and so have their parents. Lord, we pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit who alone can take this Word that we have read and make it real and vital to us, applying it to our hearts, opening our minds to the truth of your Word. Lord, we look to you and ask you in the name and the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the power of his blood that you would bind all distractions—whether of the world, the flesh or the devil—Lord, that they may not distract us or hinder your Word from accomplishing what you want to accomplish with us today the rest of this morning; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

I want to talk to you today a bit about the three enemies that we face. And this is a theme that I have kind of done year by year, but I want to do it again this year with a slightly different twist. And I think it is important because we tend, as Christians, to limit ourselves to one of these three things. That's particularly true when we deal with counseling people, with emotional problems or mental problems or temptation. We tend to say, "It's either this or it is that. If it is this it can't be that." But I want you to see in this passage

¹ James 3:13-18 (All Scripture references come from the New International Version of the Bible unless indicated otherwise).

that the Holy Spirit inspired Jesus' brother James to write that we are told we have three enemies.

In James 3:15 he speaks of a false wisdom there on page 1883. "Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil."² Earthly, unspiritual and of the devil. It is of this world. It is of the sinful human nature. The word translated in the NIV "unspiritual" is literally the word soulish. It is of the soul. And we need to get away from the idea of pagan Greeks that somehow or another we have a good soul imprisoned in an evil body. That is not a biblical view.

The soul—that non-material part of human beings that includes the mind—the soul is corrupt and defiled according to Scripture. And we could say, in this context, it's really synonymous for what Paul might refer to as the flesh; not meaning—in Paul's case, the meat on our bones—but that fallen human nature.

So he tells us that we have three sources of false wisdom. One is this world and its system, the other is our fallen sinful nature and the other is of the devil. It is demonic. So I want to think about those things for a moment with you today.

First, let's think about the fallen, sinful nature. That is something that we deal with. People are sinners.

Turn with me, if you will, to 1 John chapter one. Why do children misbehave? Why will your kindergarteners, first graders, junior high, senior highs tell you lies at times? Why will even a fellow teacher deceive you, say something bad about you behind your back? Why do people do things like that? Why do people—even people who love Jesus—gossip and get their feelings hurt?

Well, here we're told—page 1899—1 John chapter one, verse eight:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.³

A couple of things to point out. 1 John 1:10 talks about past, the past. If somebody said, "Well, I've never sinned," we're told here that that person is calling God a liar. And we're told here that God's Word has no place in that person's life. Anyone who would tell you that they have never sinned is simply profoundly self-deceived.

Secondly, we look at verse eight: "If we claim to be without sin..."⁴ That's a present tense. "If we claim to be without sin..."⁵ This morning, if you believe that you have no

² James 3:15

³ 1 John 1:8-10

⁴ 1 John 1:8

longer the influence of sin on what you do, what are we told here? You're deceiving yourself. The truth isn't in you.

That's a very profound truth. The influence of sin is with us all the days of our lives. That doesn't mean—turn over to chapter three for a moment—that we are as people who have come to know the Lord and have gotten a new heart who have been born again; that doesn't mean that we will live in perpetual bondage to sin. 1 John 3:9—page 1901. Listen to what he says: “No-one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.”⁶

A little knowledge of the Greek language is helpful at this point. First of all, and I will translate it a little paraphrastically, but trying to give you the sense of the tense. “No one who has ever been born of God, if someone has ever been born again—that is an important thing—if a person has ever been born again he cannot live on and on in sin without repentance.” Why? Because God's seed remains in him and he cannot go on living in sin without repentance because he has been born of God.

What does that tell us? It tells us that if we encounter a person who is living in sin and that person steadfastly refuses to repent and deal with his or her sin; notice I said steadfastly. We all refuse at times to deal with our sins. You get your feelings hurt. God says to forgive the person. Forgive him then and there. Let go of the bad feelings. Begin to bless them. Begin to pray for them. And you know what? That's hard to do. There is a process involved. But sooner or later if I have ever been born again I am going to deal with my business and get it right with the Lord. So, I said, “steadfastly refuses to repent.”

Christians can entertain sin for a season. But, according to this passage, if a person has ever been born again that person can't go on and on and on in sin.

Many years ago I was counseling a woman. A lady who was in our church brought this woman to talk to me one night after prayer meeting. And while the two women were there this woman was seeking to justify a divorce from her husband. And so I asked her this question. This is what I planned to ask her: Has your husband been faithful to you? I was looking for the loophole.

“Well, no. He's not been faithful.”

But, in the goodness of God the Holy Spirit messed that up and what came out of my mouth was: “Have you been faithful to your husband?” which is the question that the Lord wanted her to be asked. And she began ashen and silent and I said, “Would you like your friend to step out of the room for a moment?”

And she said, “Yes.”

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ 1 John 3:9

And then she unfolded a story that was an amazing story to me. Here was a woman who was married. And yet for 20 years she had gone through one affair after another. The one that she was having at the present time had gone on for six months. But many times she had had one-night stands.

And so when I talked to the woman and said to her, “You know, you need to come to the Lord Jesus,” she said, “Oh, I’ve taken care of that. I’m a Christian.”

In fact, she was a prominent leader in an evangelical church. “Oh, I’ve taken care of that. I’m a Christian.”

And so I said, “I’d like you to read something to me out loud.” And I turned to 1 John chapter three and I had her read this to me out loud. And I said, “Let me put it to this way. I can’t say tonight absolutely that you are not a Christian, but I can say to you absolutely tonight that if you don’t deal with your business and get right with God and determine to turn from your life of adultery, you’re not a Christian. You’ve never become a Christian. You’ve never been born again.”

She was ashen. But do you know what? I believe that she was a Christian or became a Christian because the Spirit of God took that word and pierced her heart. And she took steps immediately to deal with her sin. The first thing that she did was to permit me to contact her husband and the two of them sat with me as she confessed her sins to her husband.

All this time she had been the self-righteous goody-goody-two-shoes who had always been in the position of spiritual leadership in the home because she was the one who was always there for Sunday school and for church, whereas the husband had a drinking problem. And so there was this sense of moral superiority looking down on moral inferiority. But suddenly she fell from her position of spiritual leadership and moral leadership and spiritual intimidation of her husband when she confessed the sordid truth that for 20 years she had been carrying on one affair after another. She did deal with her sin.

The point is: I don’t know how long a Christian can resist the pull of the Spirit of God to repent. But when the Word of God comes home to a real Christian, to somebody who has ever been born again, that person will repent of their sins.

A classic example—speaking anachronistically because he is an Old Testament figure—David is a classic example. David commits adultery, commits murder to cover it up. He’s an oriental despot. He had the power to kill people at will if he had chosen. Yet when God’s prophet Nathan comes to him and tells him a parable that grips him emotionally about a rich man who stole a poor man’s lamb, David is outraged and Nathan points his finger and says, “You’re the man.”⁷

And what happens? At that point the Spirit of God smote David’s conscience and David faced his sin and he dealt with it.

⁷ 2 Samuel 12:7

So what are we saying here in 1 John chapter three, verse nine? We're saying that if a person can live on and on in sin without repenting, that person has never been born again according to what 1 John 3:9 teaches. No one who has been born of God—that's a Greek perfect tense. It refers to a past action that has results that continue on into the present and future. No one who has ever been born again, or born of God, will continue on in sin. Because God's seed remains in him he cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God.

So we have to get that out of the way. At first we say, when we go back to 1 John chapter one and verse eight, we're not saying that real Christians live in bondage to sin on and on and on. But what we are saying in 1 John 1:8—remember, this is John writing all of this. He is not contradicting himself. In 1 John 1:8 when he says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us"⁸ the point is this: There is that element of sin that is always present even in the good things that we do.

Turn with me if you would to the book of Isaiah. There is that presence of sin that never ceases to exist as long as we are this side of eternity. Isaiah chapter 64, a familiar verse, but a very important verse. Isaiah 64 and verse six—page 1162. We are thinking now of the sinful nature that we all have even if we have been born again. Even if we have been born again there is still the influence of sin in what way? He says here in verse six—Isaiah 64:6: "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away." A couple of thoughts about it in verse six.

Verse six takes us back to the Torah, to the law of God. And in there there is a cry. If a leper is coming down the road and he sees someone he cries out: "טמא טמא." That is what Isaiah has us saying here. "All of us have become like one who is טמא unclean."⁹ The leper must notify people that he is טמא, that he must be segregated and separated and isolated from other people because he has a contagion that will spread.

The second part of this is that he refers to our righteous acts and he says they are like filthy rags. Literally in Hebrew it is a cloth of the time. It refers to the cloth that a woman would wear during her monthly cycle. And in the Old Testament that was a defiling thing. When a woman was going through menstruation she was unclean. Her husband could not touch her. She had to be separated and segregated from her husband because the monthly flow of blood—of menses—made her unclean under Old Testament ceremonial law.

So what is he saying to us here? He is saying all of us—he includes people who know God—indeed, that's...this is not really addressed to the world, but to the people of God. "All of us have become like one who is unclean, like the leper who cries out 'טמא' and

⁸ 1 John 1:8

⁹ Isaiah 64:6

all our righteous acts are like,”¹⁰ that cloth that has become defiled with the blood of menstruation, that would defile and make you unclean and unable to worship God.

If the high priest would have come in contact with such a cloth he would not have been able to do his duty on the Day of Atonement, **יום כפר**. He would not have been able to come into the holy of holies to offer the sacrifice.

Now, I want you to notice, then, he is speaking of defilement. And notice what he says about that in verse six. “all our righteous acts are [that way].”¹¹ In other words, even the good things we do have enough of a presence of sin in them that they can’t pass the test.

That’s an important truth. You’ve never prayed a perfect prayer. You’ve never loved someone the way that you truly ought to love and you have never loved God the way you ought love him. That’s a fact. And the reason that’s a fact is: there is that contaminating presence of sin even in our good deeds. Self gets into it.

Now what’s the importance of this truth? The importance of this truth is several-fold. One is to understand the nature of the gospel. The gospel is not our faith plus our works because our works can’t pass the divine test. The reason that our works can’t pass the divine test is that our works have that element of self in them that causes them to flunk.

I just can’t. Even when I preach there is always enough element of self there that I can’t say, “Look, God. Look at this good work that I have done.” Even if I give my body up to be burned there is enough of flesh there that it contaminates.

So, again, John is not saying in 1 John 1:8 that we can’t have victory over sin. We can achieve victory over sin. A person who has a stronghold in his life, say of sexual immorality or lying or drunkenness or some other thing can have victory in Jesus. But even in our victory in Jesus what John is telling us in 1 John 1:8 is: there is still self, the sinful self that’s there. Though crucified with Christ, it’s still there. The old man has been put to death with Christ. But we’re carrying the corpse on our back to the day that we go to be with Jesus.

And so in this life there is no perfection. And this is an important truth. It means that when we come to God we come on the basis of his grace alone and we receive his grace on the basis of faith alone. And it isn’t even our faith that makes us right with God. It’s the object of our faith who is Christ. Christ is the only one who is perfect. Christ is the only one who not only didn’t sin, but whose good deeds are actually truly good, intrinsically good, perfectly good, wholly good in thought and intention as well as in act. And we can’t say that of any of us.

So it is important for us to understand that the gospel is not about what we do, but about what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. “Not the labor of my hands,” Rock of Ages,

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

Augustus Toplady's great hymn. "Not the labor of my hands can fulfill thy law's demands. Nothing in my hand I bring," Toplady writes, "simply to thy cross I cling"

Faith is an empty hand coming to a God who invites all of us to come. And it is coming as we are, realizing we will never, in this life, be good enough to approach a holy God by our own merits. Our merits are those that are put to our account through Jesus Christ. And so it is important in understanding the gospel that we understand the nature of sin; that sin is with us and it corrupts us and it contaminates us.

And it does something else. Turn with me, if you would, to Jeremiah chapter 17, verse nine. Over to the right there of Isaiah—page 1201. He says here: "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"¹²

We have to understand something. There is, in the nature of sin, a blinding influence. Sin not only is with us in our good deeds, that is, that element of self is there so that our good deeds don't pass muster amazingly because of the blood of Jesus who died not only to wash our sins away, but to wash away the guilt and contaminating influence of sin on our good deeds. God actually rewards our good deeds at the Judgment Seat of Christ, as if they were perfect, because Christ has removed that contaminating, defiling guilt that's there even in our good works. But here we're told something else; that sinful nature corrupts our thinking. It corrupts our thinking.

This is a profound truth for many reasons. It is why people will look you in the eye and tell you that they are telling the truth when they are actually lying.

What Jeremiah 17:9 is telling us is this: We all have an incredible, uncanny ability to whitewash our own sins. We have this incredible ability to deceive ourselves and trick ourselves to believe that we're doing good when we may be doing evil because the heart is deceitful. Human nature, even after a person has received the Spirit of God, been baptized with the Holy Spirit, there is still that influence of the old nature, of the flesh that tricks us about ourselves. So "the heart," he says, "is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"¹³

It is because of that that when Jesus tells us in the Sermon on the Mount—Matthew chapter seven, page 1505, Matthew chapter seven and verse three—when he tells us here about the problem we have in conflicts with other people, he is basing this, in reality, on the incredible ability of the human heart to deceive us.

He says in Matthew 7:3—page 1505:

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye,

¹² Jeremiah 17:9

¹³ Ibid.

and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.¹⁴

There is a profound truth that's here. It's why, if you're married, you have conflicts from time to time in your marriage. If I ever talk to a couple and they tell me they never have conflicts in their marriage I know I am talking to people who are completely self-deceived. Every marriage has conflicts.

This past Saturday our youngest son got married and he and his new wife are in Mexico on the Pacific coast enjoying their honeymoon. I'm sure they've already had an argument. I really don't doubt that. And the reason I don't doubt that is: Both of those people have a skewed view of reality. She sees reality in light of her own upbringing, her culture, her viewpoint and her own particular unique personality, which has sinful elements in it. And he looks at reality differently. Finally, very much the way she does, but from his perspective, his upbringing, those sinful traits that are uniquely his. So they will have conflicts and I'm sure they've already had at least one argument.

The wedding began, by the way, this is an odd story, a shotgun wedding. They were married in the Memphis zoo and my son-in-law who is a pastor in Appaloosas and I did the service. But after it's all over and they're leaving near 11 o'clock at night, the first guests to go out are confronted by two men in full face masks with a sawed off shotgun. Cocked it back and said, "Get on the ground and throw me your purses, your wallets and your keys." And so they headed to steal this one car and the bride's first cousins—twin cousins, nine years old—one was in the car and the other was getting ready to get in. And the dad screamed, "Get out of the car." And they jumped out and the robbers sped off. And so it was kind of a shotgun deal.

And then we have to wait for the police and the bride and groom can't make their exit for almost an hour and his wife had undoubtedly babysat these little girls over the years. So she's having to comfort these crying, screaming little girls while their mother and father are outside the gate out in the parking lot talking to the police. And, of course, the bride is crying.

It is because we're in an imperfect world. We're in a world in spite of planning and money and effort to have a perfect wedding it was flawed. It was flawed. And it's flawed because there is such a thing as sin in the world. In this case it isn't directly their own sins. But I'll tell you this: My son told me as he called me the next morning at the airport. "She never got to sleep that night." Every time she closed here eyes she kept thinking about what had happened, this carjacking. It was deeply disturbing. Will that affect them? We pray God not. But it does affect them for a season.

My point is this: There is always going to be conflict in every relationship because we never see reality the same way. The thing that Matthew 7:3-5 is telling us is this: I can have a great glaring fault and be utterly oblivious to it. Yet I can see the tiniest frailty in you with crystal clarity to the point that it is obsessive.

¹⁴ Matthew 7:3-5

Have you ever been obsessed, being in a room, you're sitting down and there's a picture that's crooked. And it really bothers you and you know that you can't stand up and straighten it. You just can't do it, but it's just off centered and it bothers you.

The point is that we can focus on somebody else's fault just that way while having something terribly wrong with ourself.

This is a fairly gross story. A pastor friend of mine, Melvin Tisdale, told me this story. Years ago before he became a pastor he was doing some volunteer work for the Gideons. And he was calling on pastors throughout south Louisiana. And, at the time, he sold bricks for a living and he never wore a tie. And so he was a little bit unused to that. But he thought, "Well, if I want to get these preachers to hear me I ought to put on a coat and tie." So he did. And as cranking up the car he had to sneeze and he sneezed. And he didn't think anything more about it and he went to see a pastor. No pastor that he went to see would look him in the eye, not a single pastor. They would all look over here, look over there, look down at their desk, look up at the ceiling. They never had eye contact and they all seemed in a hurry for him to finish his spiel for the Gideons and get out of their office.

At the end of the day after seeing many pastors he went to remove his tie. And there it was, the product of his infected sinuses glaring. People could see it, but he couldn't see it.

Sin is that way, isn't it? Our own sin is that way. We can have something that is repulsive to other people, that really bothers other people, that turns them off, that makes them want to avoid us and yet somehow or another we can never figure out what it is about us they don't like. And so we get some kind of paranoid persecution complex. "People just don't like me for this reason or that reason," when the problem is there is something about me or about you that is there, visible and standing out and it really is something that causes people trouble. Yet no one...as he told me, "None of those pastors had the grace simply to tell me the truth about myself."

It is important, at times, to confront other people with their sin if it is a problem if it is something that needs to be confronted. Lot's of things we simply need to pray about and give to the Lord. But there are things that people need to be told.

The point is this in Matthew seven, verses three to five. We have this incredible ability to con ourselves, to look people in the eye with a straight face and say, "You know, I swear to God I'm telling you the truth," and believe we are telling the truth to the point that we would even swear. And yet this sinful nature has such an ability to con us and deceive us.

People have sometime wondered, "Well, you know, I don't know how a person like that sleeps at night." I would submit to you that some of the most wicked people in history slept quite well at night.

I'll throw this one out for you. We often, as we think of great villains, particularly in the 20th century, we think of Adolf Hitler. I would submit to you that Adolf Hitler probably slept with a clear conscience at night. Saddam Hussein probably sleeps with a clear conscience at night.

You know, as we hear these defenses—turn with me, if you will, to the gospel of John chapter 16—as we hear these defenses that people make of themselves we think, “Oh, that’s ridiculous.” And we tend to think—page 1678—John 16:2. We tend to think that the person knows that he is lying. Kind of like the child who has obviously violated the rule. You have baked a pie. You’re having the women’s missionary union over for a social and prayer meeting at your home and you’ve gone to a lot of trouble to make three beautiful, fine pies. And there is one with a paw print or a hand print. Your four year old child clearly is...and the apple stuff is there on his lips and the crumbs even on his chin and his little hands are dirty. And you confront him and he says, “I didn’t do it.”

Well, we tend to think that that’s how other people are when we confront them, that they are like that child who knows good and well that he did what was wrong, but just refuses to admit it. But what John 16:2 is telling us is that people have an ability to deceive themselves so that when we’re listening to them we’re thinking that they know that they are lying when, in reality, they are not.

John 16:2 says, “They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God.”¹⁵

If there is any lesson we get in the Middle East it is that people can do terrible things, commit great atrocities, killing little people and elderly people and women, non-combatants and believe that they are doing what is right and go to bed and sleep with a clear conscience. That is the incredible ability of the human heart to deceive itself. We can commit war crimes and feel good about what we’re doing.

So, what’s the practical application of point one, the flesh? Well, it’s about ourselves, isn’t it? You won’t get through this year without having a conflict with another teacher, probably. You won’t get through the year, probably, without having a conflict with someone in leadership; not that you would have an open conflict, but you will have your feelings hurt, you will feel that you are being dismissed and marginalized. It is just human nature.

And I guarantee you there isn’t a teacher or staff person here who isn’t going to have a conflict with a child or a parent. And you need to know something about those parents who come; that they are absolutely sincere most of the time. They really believe the nonsense that their spouting that their child never really would do those things.

You catch their child cheating and stealing which is just naturally what children do and you tell them something like that. They are terribly offended and greatly insulted that you

¹⁵ John 16:2

would insult them by insulting their child with insinuating that their child might cheat. It's just the nature of human beings.

Deception. But it is a two way street, isn't it? When you believe that you are being kind and gentle and open and you've been gracious and you're just laying it out in a very humble way you may be wrong. You may have been arrogant and cocky and condescending and all those things. The point is this: You can't trust yourself. That's why accountability is so important. It's why daily seeking the Lord is so important because we can deceive ourselves and then we can harden our hearts and convince ourselves that we were right and the other person is wrong. It's a profound truth in terms of conflict with others.

It is a profound truth as you teach children because you are dealing with people who, even when they come to know Jesus, still are subject to self-deception and the contaminating influence of sin. And sometimes the student that's your prize student and he really has given his or her heart to the Lord Jesus will bitterly disappoint you with something that is truly wrong that they do. That's human nature and it's something we all contend with.

But James talks about something else. He talks about the devil in James chapter three, turning back there for a moment. He talks about this false wisdom as not only soulish. We've said that's synonymous really with the fallen nature, the flesh, as Paul talks about it. There's also the devil. There really is a devil.

Turn with me, if you will, and we won't spend a lot of time on this, but Matthew chapter 12, I think, is a classic passage for understanding the nature of Satan and His kingdom. Matthew chapter 12 and Jesus' parable of the haunted house. Matthew chapter 12 and that's page 1516—Matthew 12:43. The parable of the haunted house.

When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.¹⁶

I want you to focus with me for a moment in verse 45. There are several Greek words that are used for "other." And we don't want to press this rule too hard and fast here because I don't want to overplay the Greek at this point. But commonly the Greek word ἄλλος means "another of the same kind." And the Greek word ἕτερος means "another of a different kind." And I say, I don't want to press that distinction too much.

We have, for example, in every day language we have heterogeneous grouping; that is, different types of people brought together in a group ἕτερος, another of a different kind.

¹⁶ Matthew 12:43-45

It's interesting that the words that Jesus uses here as Matthew quotes them and writes them for us in Greek the word for "other" here is *ἑτερος*. He takes with him seven other spirits of a different kind.

Now, if that were all we had I wouldn't press that distinction in those two Greek words. But I want you to notice what follows the word "spirits" here in verse 45. Notice, "more wicked than itself,"¹⁷ "seven other spirits more wicked than itself."¹⁸ What does that tell us?

Let's think about it for a moment. It tells us that there are different kinds of demonic spirits, different kinds of unclean spirits. And it tells us that some are relatively good and some are relatively bad. Now, notice I said the word "relatively" because there are no good spirits. They are all evil. These are fallen spirits. They are fallen angels. And I won't go into a defense of that from Scripture this morning. Just, you know, if you want to pursue that study with me, be happy to, but these are fallen angels. And they now are unclean spirits.

And we notice, then, that there are some that are more wicked than others. There are some nice spirits.

Hold your hand there for a moment and I will read you a description of some relatively good spirits, some that are relatively benign, not so bad. 1 Timothy chapter four. Keep it because we're going back to Matthew 12. Keep your hand there. 1 Timothy chapter four—page 1848—1 Timothy 4:1: "The Spirit [he's referring to the Holy Spirit] clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons."¹⁹ This must be something really horrible.

Well, let's see what it is. Verse two: "Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron."²⁰ So we have the human element in verse two. We have the supernatural element of deceiving spirits in verse one. And then let's see what these horrible things are being taught by these demons:

They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.²¹

In other words, verse three is a false religious asceticism. "They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods."²² I want you to contrast those demon

¹⁷ Matthew 12:45

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ 1 Timothy 4:1

²⁰ 1 Timothy 4:2

²¹ 1 Timothy 4:3-5

²² 1 Timothy 4:3

spirits there, who are religious spirits, who give people religious goose bumps when they go into certain types of worship services so that they will be deceived. And the message they are getting across is: “You shouldn’t marry. Something is wrong with marriage. If you really want to be a spiritual, if you really want to be a godly person, if you really want to be sold out to the Lord then you never marry. And then you should abstain, you shouldn’t consume this substance or that substance.”

Now, that’s the demonic teaching that’s in view in 1 Timothy four. And to us it doesn’t sound real serious at all. But notice it is demonic. It’s through deceiving spirits.

My point is: These are relatively kind and relatively benign. I didn’t say they were kind and I didn’t say they were benign. I said, “relatively so,” because there are much worse spirits. When I think about a much worse spirit I can’t think of a better illustration than James Dobson’s interview with Ted Bundy before he died. You know, Ted Bundy was the serial killer. And he is the one who killed Captain Crunch. Just trying to see if you were still listening.

Anyhow, Ted Bundy was a serial killer and he was executed in the state of Florida. And Ted was a very smart man. He was a relatively handsome man. He had a great personality. He was very engaging. He was very friendly. And most of the time he was a good neighbor. He would have been the kind of person that if he lived next door to you that you would have been happy, probably, to have had in your home and you would have been ok with your sister going out on a date with.

But Ted Bundy described this situation. Sometimes he would see somebody and he described a feeling, “coming over him.” And as that feeling came over him he would become obsessed with stalking that person and then obsessed with trapping that person, raping that person, killing that person.

And then once he had satisfied that particular thing that feeling would leave him. Now, when that thing would come over him it would come with such force that it seemed to be an irresistible power that grew stronger and stronger until he satisfied the blood lust by killing the person. And then the thing would go away. And he might go...in the beginning he went for a long time between these murders. Then it would come again. And in the end of his life or the end of his killing spree it was with greater intensity, greater perversion and greater frequency.

What was it about Ted Bundy? I’m not in any way excusing Ted Bundy’s behavior. He’s a sinful man who yielded to his sinful nature. But I’m telling you that there was more at work than Ted Bundy in those killings. There was something demonic. There was something supernatural. That sense of something coming over him was a result of an unclean spirit coming over him, a spirit of murder.

So when Jesus tells us here in Matthew chapter 12, turning back there—page 1516—he talks about seven other spirits more wicked than itself. He’s saying that there are all kinds of demon spirits and they affect things profoundly.

Turn with me, if you will, to the book of Daniel for a moment. There are all kinds of different spirits, some more wicked than others. Turn with me, if you will, to the book of Daniel chapter 10.

And we see here a bleeding through from world and flesh and devil so that they all kind of complement each other and bleed through. Daniel chapter 10 will close out this middle section, section two on the demonic and will introduce us to the third topic, which is the world. Page 1389—Daniel chapter 10, verse one:

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel (who was called Belteshazzar). Its message was true and it concerned a great war. The understanding of the message came to him in a vision. At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over. On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold round his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.²³

So Daniel now has an angelic vision, an angelic visitor, in this case an archangel. And listen to the message that we are given here. Verse seven.

I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. When I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground.

A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling. Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. [Here is the key verse, verse 12:] Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days."²⁴

²³ Daniel 10:1-6

²⁴ Daniel 10:7-13

How long did Daniel pray and fast according to Daniel chapter 10 and verses two and three? How long did he pray and fast? Three weeks. Now, how many days are in a week? And there are three weeks so seven times three is 21.

So Daniel prayed and fasted for 21 days. Is that correct? Now, I want you to notice, when we read the words of this archangel—Gabriel, in this case—notice what he says. Verse 12: “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.”²⁵ Verse 13 says that he was hindered for 21 days.

What are we told here? We’re told that the very day when Daniel first prayed and fasted God heard his prayer and answered his prayer and dispatched this archangel Gabriel—Gabriel’s name, by the way, means God is my hero—God is my hero is dispatched, this archangel Gabriel is dispatched as God’s chief messenger to humans on day one. But why does Daniel not get the answer to the prayer until day 21 according to what Daniel 10 is telling us?

What does it tell us? There’s a reason for the delay. What is the reason for the delay according to verse 13? The prince of the Persian kingdom did what? Resisted me.

Now, who is this prince of the Persian kingdom? Persia, of course, is modern day Iran. Who is the prince of this Persian kingdom? Is it a physical human being? No, it’s a spiritual being to combat an archangel.

Remember that when Sennacherib’s army surrounded the city of Jerusalem around 701 before Christ, God simply sent one angel and roughly 180,000 Assyrian soldiers were wiped out by one angel. This is not a human being resisting this archangel of God, Gabriel. This is a supernatural being. This is a demonic spirit. This is what in the New Testament is referred to as either a principality or a power. In other words, when Jesus—teaching in Matthew 12 that there are different kinds of spirits and some are more wicked than others—he’s telling us that there is a hierarchy of angels and anti-angels, if you want to call them anti-angels. There is a hierarchy of high ranking angels, lower ranking angels, lower ranking angels, lower ranking angels still. And, conversely, because Hell is modeled on Heaven, because the kingdom of darkness is the mirror opposite of the kingdom of light you have at the top instead of God the Father, you have Satan. And under Satan you have these evil principalities and powers going on down to little imps that bother people like you and me with worry, anxiety, paranoid thoughts. They’re looking at you, did you know? Distractions in all kinds when you’re going to pray reminding you of your sins even though you’ve confessed them and forsaken them. Little imps all the way up to principalities and powers.

So what we’re told here in Daniel chapter 10 is that there are supernatural forces at work that are every bit as powerful as any angel of God. There is a balance, a yin and yang, if you will, not entirely; light side and dark side. The difference is, of course, that at the top is Creator and the Creator is against creatures and God is omnipotent and the most pow-

²⁵ Daniel 10:12

erful of creatures is very impotent compared to the omnipotent God. And that is why we can say even of Satan himself and his power when we think of that in contrast to God; “Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.”²⁶

So we’re not on the losing side. Nevertheless, it is important that we understand that just as there is a balance having to do with the fact that we don’t have to live under the dominion of sin and live defeated lives, yet at the same time there is a balancing truth to remind us that the contaminating influence of sin is always there with us ‘til we go to be with the Lord Jesus.

So there is great truth: God is absolutely sovereign, fully in control of everything, not a sparrow falls to the ground apart from him and yet there are supernatural forces pitted against God and his holy angels and us. And these supernatural forces are incredibly powerful. And, in the words of Martin Luther’s hymn, *A Mighty Fortress is our God*,

*Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,
Were not the right man on our side, the man of God’s own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he,
Lord Sabbaoth his name.*

And so we have these powerful forces. I don’t want you to minimize what your told here in Daniel 10:13. I want you to understand that an archangel from the very presence of God, sent on a mission of God in response to the humble prayer of a believer, of a child of God who has cried out, on the very first day that he cried out to God, God heard and answered his prayer and dispatched that prayer. And yet that answer didn’t get there for three weeks because there were powerful supernatural forces at work hindering the purpose of God. That’s what Daniel 10:13 is saying. “But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes [his name means, ‘who is like God’ and he is a good chief prince. He is an archangel]. Then Michael, one of the chief princes came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.”²⁷

I want you to ponder that for a moment. Here is this powerful archangel Gabriel and he’s been detained for 21 days because of a very powerful, evil prince or king of Iran. And he would still be there right now, thousands of years later, except reinforcements were sent, supernatural reinforcements.

Notice what he says. Unless another archangel had been dispatched by God—I’m reading that between the lines here—“Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.”²⁸

²⁶ Paraphrase of 1 John 4:4

²⁷ Daniel 10:13

²⁸ Ibid.

What's the implication of verse 13, the last half? Without that supernatural reinforcement Gabriel would still be there being hindered by the supernatural archdemon, this principality or power over the realm of Iran.

Now, the answer to the question is: How did God happen to send Michael his reinforcements? And I've got a theory and I'll throw it out, not dogmatically, but for what it's worth. And take it as a theory and I can't be dogmatic about it.

How long did Daniel pray and fast? 'Til he got an answer, 21 days. I'm going to throw out my theory is this: If Daniel had given up and said, "Well, the Lord's will be done. Obviously this isn't God's will or I would have had my answer." If he had acquiesced and ceased praying, ceased fasting, ceased seeking the face of God, he'd have never gotten the answer. Even though God sent the answer I don't believe he would have gotten it. I believe that as Daniel sought the face of God and continued to seek the face of God and humbled himself more and more—because fasting is an outward sign of an inner humbling—that as he sought the Lord with greater intensity, greater humbling, I think that God heard and answered that prayer and God dispatched the archangel Michael.

I believe, by the way, that this particular passage, Daniel 10, answers a question that we often have about prayer. See, Jesus tells us sets of parables that seem to contradict each other. They don't contradict. They seem to contradict. On the one hand he teaches us that God is a Father to us who delights to give us good things. "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."²⁹

And then he tells us things like, you know, "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?"³⁰ And, of course, the obvious answer is "No." If your child asks you for bread and asks you for bread you're not going to give him a rock and scorpion. And Jesus said to them—and notice he is talking to God's people when he says this. "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"³¹

So here is this one strand of truth about prayer. When we come to God we don't come to a reluctant God that we have to manipulate, tease, cajole and reward and bribe and harass because God is reluctant to give. Nothing in the Bible tells us that God is reluctant to give. Everything that Jesus teaches us about the Father in answering prayers; God is just waiting to do good for you and me.

Yet, there is this second strand of truth and it is about persistence in prayer. And Jesus tells us a story. He said, "If you are there in the middle of the night and you just don't have much food in your house and you have a late night guest who arrives and you know that the laws of hospitality of the Middle East are such that you've got to put a meal on the table even though it is midnight and you don't have any food in the house to put that

²⁹ Matthew 7:7

³⁰ Matthew 7:9-10

³¹ Matthew 7:11

meal on. What do you do?” He says, “You go next door to your neighbor and you knock on the door. And, of course, the neighbor ignores you at first and so you knock a little harder. And finally you hear a groan from the upstairs window or wherever in the house and you keep knocking. And the neighbor comes to the window and says, ‘Look. Look, man, please leave us alone. We’re in bed asleep.’”

And, of course, in those days people often times locked within the confines of the house certain of their animals so they wouldn’t be stolen. And common courtesy, decency, the laws of civilized society would mean that you leave the person alone. It’s after midnight after all.

But do you do?

‘Til finally the person...the baby is awake and screaming, the rooster is crowing, the cow is mooing, your wife is saying, “Do whatever you’ve got to do to get that nut away.” And so the guy gets up and gets the food and gives it to his friend.

And he says, “That’s the way you have to pray.”

Now, you see the seeming contradiction between these two things in prayer? You’ve got a God who is a Father to us who is waiting to bless us, waiting to do good things for us, who is eager to do for you everything that you need and to satisfy your great desires. “Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.”³²

And yet Jesus tells us that when you pray you’ve got to be like an uncouth neighbor who won’t take no for an answer and just harasses and harasses and harasses until he gets what he wants.

So how do you put that together? And I say the way you put it together is Daniel 10. You’ve got the God who hears and answers prayer in the first part of Daniel 10. The day that Daniel prays and humbles himself, God sends his answer. But because there is more to the way the universe works than meets the eye, it’s only as Daniel persists in prayer with this importunity, this shamefacedness, it’s only as he does that that he gets the answer to prayer. And that’s the answer, I submit to the paradox of prayer or the seeming contradiction; no contradiction at all. God is sovereign. Satan is powerful. God is all powerful. But Satan’s power is real and there really is demonic hindrance.

Now, I want you to see something else in this passage, Daniel 10, because as I say it’s a transition for us in this three point message: the flesh, in this case and Satan and the kingdom of darkness and now the world. It’s a transition passage for us because it touches on the matter of the world.

Turn with me back to Daniel 10 and listen to what he says. The angel tells Daniel—page 1390—Daniel 10, verse 20: “So he said, ‘Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will

³² Psalm 37:4

come; but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No-one supports me against them except Michael, your prince.”³³

Let’s ponder what he’s just said. This archangel, Gabriel, is telling Daniel that he has a fight still on his hand because in tag-team angelic wrestling Michael came and Michael is now dealing with the prince of Persia. But the prince of Persia is not yet defeated. Gabriel is now come with the answer to Daniel, but he’s got to go back—tag team again—and defeat the prince of Persia. But then he says, “But it isn’t over yet because after him the prince of Greece is coming.”

Now, it’s interesting that the time frame of this in verse one of chapter 11 is—and also in chapter 10, verse one—“ In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia.”³⁴ And under Cyrus is this person of chapter 11 verse one, Darius the Mede.

We’re at the point when the Babylonians Empire, the neo-Babylonian Empire is falling. And the year is 539. And here was this impregnable city, Babylon, at that time the greatest power on the face of the earth. It was the superpower at that time, 539 BC. It was the world superpower. And they were impregnable as the city spanned there the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. My geography isn’t wrong.

And what happens is in the middle of their arrogant self-confidence they’re having a drunken feat, Belshazzar’s blast: “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN.”³⁵

“MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN.”³⁶ Wait a minute. Where did that come from? Oh. “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN”³⁷ is the handwriting on the wall. It wasn’t “many, many tickling the parson.” Anyhow...tThe handwriting on the wall...just trying to see if you were still with me.

Belshazzar’s blast, his drunken festival, is because he is confident that as a superpower Babylon cannot be defeated. But what the Persians did is, they damn up the river. And they are able to walk in to an impregnable fortress and slaughter everybody in leadership except they spare Daniel’s life.

So this revelation has come to Daniel right after the Babylonians Empire has fallen and as the new Persian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, has come into power.

And notice, then, what the archangel Gabriel is saying to Daniel. The affairs of earth are ruled over by supernatural forces. The prince of Persia is going to fall. And we know that, I think it’s about 331, that Persia is defeated by Alexander the Great. And so now God’s people contend with a different worldly power. They were under Babylon, then they come under the Persians and then in 331 they come under the yoke of the Greeks.

³³ Daniel 10:20-21

³⁴ Daniel 10:1

³⁵ Daniel 5:25

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

And notice how Michael the archangel describes this in verse 20: “And when I go, the prince of Greece will come.”³⁸ He’s dealing with the prince of Persia in verse 20. But when he goes the prince of Greece will come. That tells us something about the nature of the world.

Do you remember in the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness he faces three great temptations? “Turn these stones to bread.”³⁹ He is taken to the pinnacle of the temple and told that... “Throw yourself down,”⁴⁰ claiming the promise of Scripture from Psalm 91. In other words, put God to the test. And then Satan says to him...he shows him the splendor of the world: Washington, DC in the year 2006, Baghdad in the year 1989. He shows him imperial Rome in the height of Roman Power during the *pax Romana* before the death of Marcus Aurelius around 180 in the Christian era. He shows him all the splendor. He shows him Red Square in 1947, the Russians have been victorious over the Germans. He shows him the Nuremburg rallies of the 1930s and he says, “All this I’ll give you if you’ll bow down and worship me.”⁴¹

He takes him to Hollywood and he shows him movie stars. He shows him MTV and music stars. He shows him celebrities. He shows him the buildings of Donald Trump. He shows him the investments of the Rockefeller family and he says, “I’ll give you this if you’ll just worship me because it’s mine to give.”⁴²

What we understand, then, is that the world changes its fashion. And what seems to be successful and glorious and glamorous and powerful at one time isn’t in the next. And part of that is because there is this ongoing changing of the guard in terms of these forces of evil in darkness. We see the world around us all the time.

The way you are dressed today tells me that the world influences how you think and how I think, the width of a tie, the colors of a tie, the colors of a shirt.

After the wedding we went to early morning church. And my one son was married a year ago in central park. He is an attorney; told me as I was there in a short sleeve shirt and tie. He said, “Dad, that really is...that doesn’t go.” He said, “Nobody wears short sleeve shirts with ties anymore.” He said, “These are the buffoons on television.” He said, “Nobody wears that anymore.”

And so immediately as I’m leaving church I remove the tie and stuff it in my pocket, being influenced by the world. The point I want to make is that the way your children dress: flip flops, raggedy jeans. I mean, you know how college students dress today. People didn’t dress like that when I was coming out. I mean, when I was in high school and college people wore, Weejun loafers. They wore their pants high enough to see their

³⁸ Daniel 10:20

³⁹ Paraphrase of Matthew 4:3

⁴⁰ Paraphrase of Matthew 4:6

⁴¹ Paraphrase of Matthew 4:9

⁴² Ibid.

gold cuff socks. They wore Madras shirts which would bleed. I wanted a bleeding Madras so it would never be the same color after you washed it. That's how people dressed. They wore Madras shirts, pants that exposed your socks and Weejun loafers. Not just any old penny loafer, Weejuns. That's how people dressed. Nobody dresses like that anymore. They wear flip flops and raggedy jeans. They look skuzzy.

What am I saying? I'm saying that the world is constantly changing, but it is not simply changing in an abstract way. It's changing because there are supernatural forces behind it. So as I bring this to a close I want to reflect with you for a moment about how the world is changing.

Very briefly, what is going on in the world today? We are fighting the war on terror and we're going to lose it and I'm going to tell you why we're going to lose it. We're going to lose it because of Daniel 10 and what Daniel 10 tells us. This is not unpatriotic. This is not an attack on politicians or the military. But it is a basic simple truth that unless something changes we will lose the war on terror.

Why?

Because we're not dealing with natural forces simply. Let me tell you. What we call "the West" with a capital "W"—Europe, The United States, Canada, Latin America—we used to call "Christendom." We don't call it Christendom anymore. There is no such thing as Christendom left in the world. Christendom began to die with World War I in Europe. By World War II it had been wiped out in Europe. By the turn into the 21st century Christendom ceased to exist in the United States. We are no longer a Christian nation.

Were we ever a Christian nation? Sure.

What does it mean to be a Christian nation? It means, without necessarily having an established church, that you respect God. And the moral law of God is the foundation of your philosophy of law, your jurisprudence. And so America was, from the time of its founding until well into my lifetime, a nation that self-consciously thought of itself as a Christian nation just like Israel thinks of itself, self-consciously, as a Jewish nation, India thinks of itself, self-consciously, as a Hindu nation, Pakistan thinks of itself as a Muslim nation. Not that you have to be a Christian or have to be a Buddhist or have to be Hindu or a Muslim, but the philosophy that governs your way of life, governs your laws, that undergirds it, is influenced by Christianity. That's Christendom. Christendom ceases to exist.

What do we have in Europe today? What you have in Europe today is a hollow shell where once you had Christian civilization. In saying "Christian civilization" am I saying that it was always like Christ? No. People are sinners and the systems that we come up with are ravaged by the influence of sin. But you had Christian civilization. You had restraint in war. You had restraint in society: marriage is respected, divorce is regulated, homosexuality is suppressed, respect for life—those were basic values of Christian civilization.

Today in Europe, Europe is fundamentally—even in places like Italy—a secular part of the world, very secular—Ireland, Italy, England, Germany, France—a pervasive secularism. You have, in effect, an empty, windswept house. And that's happening in America. And it's happened over the decades.

Now, on the other hand, you have in the place of that hollow shell a very devout, very militant, very persistent form of Islam. Islam is on the rise. Christianity is on the decline. And the spirit behind Islam is very forceful. Now, the amazing thing that intelligence communities are wrestling with in Europe and in the United States is this issue: How is it that boys who are born in Great Britain, born in the United States of immigrant parents who were somewhat in their liberal understanding of Islam, when they go through western adolescence come out embracing a radical kind of Islam, Islamicism? How is that possible? Just like kids going off to college in the 60s ending up in cults.

See, what we're up against is a radical movement that will eventually destroy the democratic traditions of the West. And there is nothing that we can do to stop it. Is that pessimistic? Except one thing which I'll get to. We're going to lose. Why are we going to lose? Because the spirit behind Islam is stronger than the spirit behind the West. Just as the neo-Babylonian Empire viewed itself as impregnable and yet fell overnight to the Persian Empire and just as the Persian Empire, which was the wealthiest empire the world had ever known, fell before the armies of Greece led by a Macedonian, so we're going to lose. And why, according to Daniel 10? Because of principalities and powers. There is a cosmic shift in the heavenlies and we are witnessing that cosmic shift.

So Britain uncovered another terrorist plot this past week. Ten aircraft heading from England to America were going to be blown up on the same day with bombs that were smuggled on the airplanes using ordinary household chemicals that would be mixed on the plane back in the bathroom and then ignited. How are you going to stop that?

Well, do what happened to folks traveling to our wedding that flew. "You're going to have to leave that. Can't take that on the plane."

One of my daughters won an argument. She said, "This makeup has no liquid in it." She got to carry it on.

The point is: We're up against a very forceful spirit and that spirit is supplanting the weak spirit of the West because the spirit of the West is inferior to the Muslim spirit.

If you don't have a foundation of belief in God and of life after death you have nothing that can withstand a religious movement that believes that the only way you can know for sure that you're going to go to Heaven is to die in the cause of jihad. See, in Islam...I brought the imam a couple of years ago to speak to our Bible class and planted a question: How can you know, in Islam, that you are going to go to Heaven? How can you know for sure?

And the answer of the imam was: “You can’t know.” And then he said, “You can’t know in Christianity either. Nobody knows if he’s been good enough.” That was his answer.

But, you see, the imam had never encountered real Christianity, which is a Jesus focused Christianity that says you can know. You can know for sure you’re going to Heaven because you’ve turned from your sins and cast yourself on God’s mercy in Jesus Christ. You’ve come to the Lord Jesus as he bids you come. But you can also know in Islam that you are going to Heaven. There is one way to know that you are going to Heaven as a Christian. It’s no whether you’ve been good enough; it’s confessing that you’re not good enough and trusting in the goodness and the death of Jesus. That’s how you can know.

In Islam there is a way to know as well. The only way to know for sure you’re going to go to Heaven under Islam is to die as a martyr in the cause of defending Allah, the Koran, the prophet Mohammed. If you die defending these things you automatically go to Heaven. Your sins are taken care of. You automatically go to Heaven.

Just as in Christianity it’s by the shed blood of Jesus that your sins are washed away and entrance is given you to Heaven. So in Islam it is by the shedding of your own blood that you can know for sure you’re going to go to Heaven.

So while the Koran and Islam condemn suicide, suicide bombing is a totally different matter. In Islam the suicide bomber is like the American soldier who dies on a hand grenade to protect his comrades in his platoon. In Islam the suicide bomber is like the American pilot who knows he doesn’t have enough fuel to make it back to the aircraft carrier and so he decides to fly his plane loaded with bombs—like a kamikaze—into the enemy target and he loses his life. In Islam it’s that way.

And another thing: In Islam there is not a view of government the way that we have it. There is the nation of Islam, the world of Islam. And territories between one nation state and another are not really viewed the way that we view them. And so what I want you to understand is: In the Muslim mind whether a person agrees with Osama Bin Laden or disagrees with Osama Bin Laden, in the Muslim mind Osama Bin Laden can represent as true and authentic a government leader as George W. Bush or Tony Blair because that’s how government works under Islam. It isn’t little divisions here and there of made up nations.

What are we up against? We’re up against a force that’s going to win because we don’t have what it takes to defeat them. Let me tell you the disaster that happened last week. Israel blew it because Israel followed the same tactics that the United States has followed in Afghanistan and Iraq. And it doesn’t work.

You can bomb people—to quote Curtis Lemay—back into the stone age, it doesn’t stop them because you have a committed militant force that where one is struck down like a hydra 10 spring up. People who are committed and with hate. And so now we have a nation that was, after Israel, the most pro-American nation in the Middle East, Lebanon,

now hates the United States. And the marginalized group that represented 40% of the population, the Shiites of Lebanon, and their political leadership in Hezbollah has now, in the mind of the Muslim, defeated Israel.

Then, understand, it's not what you're television tells you. It's what they understand. They're reality is that this force in southern Lebanon of Shiites, Hezbollah, defeated the fourth most powerful military in the world. See Israel...we're the most powerful. The fourth most powerful military in the world was Israel....was. Israel has suffered a humiliating defeat in spite of what people are telling us.

What I'm telling you is this: We're in deep trouble. We're in deep trouble because we're up against a force that is supernatural and the forces of supernatural power on our side are weaker than the forces on their side. The West is dying. Islam is rising. Just as Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries was on the rise and defeated the forces of Christendom in the seventh and eighth centuries. We're seeing that again.

Guns, big guns—artillery and bombs—can't destroy them because for every one that's wiped out, 10 spring up. Hezbollah is now popular with 80% of the population of Lebanon. You never hit a snake on the tail with a stick. You hit him on the head and you kill him. You never go to war unless you're going to finish the job. This was what Hezbollah wanted from the get go once Israel came. And they didn't think Israel would come with this kind of force. They were attempting to arrange a prisoner swap. But once it started this is what they hoped would happen: Israel would fight to the point that they would have to have a cease fire. And so they did.

And so in the Muslim mind, Israel has been defeated. And in the Muslim mind the United States has been defeated. And in the Muslim mind the United States is being defeated in Iraq and Afghanistan. You see, force is always affecting in its perception and loses its effectiveness once it is executed.

Where am I going with this? Is this politics? No. It's what we're faced with. Things are going to get worse. The fashion of the world is going to change. Trouble is coming. Crisis is ahead. The world that you are in is not unlike the world that I experienced in high school.

When I was in high school we had the Cuban missile crisis. I remember in high school getting under our desks—like that's really going to help; going into the hall—like that's really going to help. We had a tactical air command base where I was raised in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. It's going to help?

People of my generation grew up with that sense of insecurity. But for decades we've had a growing sense of security. I'm telling you, that is coming to a close as the West is dying.

So what can we do about it? Well, it's why we're here. We can't change the whole world. We're up against supernatural forces stronger than the supernatural forces on the

side of America. You've got to understand something: God is not on America's side. He's not on their side either.

You know, with ancient Israel as she was about to go into the Promised Land Joshua was confronted by this angel of God and he says, "Are you for us or our enemies?"⁴³ And he tells him, "I'm not for either one."⁴⁴

You had better be on God's side. We're not on God's side. We have supernatural forces helping us, not God. They have supernatural forces helping them, not God. There is a shift going on. What can we do?

What we can do is to train children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We can't change the course of America, but we can change the course of things in central Louisiana. It's worth the sacrifice. It's worth the effort. It's worth getting up in the morning and working for less money than you can make somewhere else. It's worth it praying because as you pray, things happen.

That's the whole lesson of Daniel 10, isn't it? You've got these supernatural powers that you're pitted against, that are more powerful than you are. But as Daniel prays archangelic forces come to reinforce and the world is changed.

We still can change the world through prayer and through evangelism. It's later than we think. Our situation is far worse than our news media ever tells us, far worse than our politicians ever tell us, far worse than most preachers will tell you. Our world situation is very desperate. But it is not too late.

I want to challenge you as I close, realizing that we're up against three forces: the world, which has changed so much in my brief life and is about to change far more radically and much worse than it's ever been in my life before. I believe that's God saying that to you; Satan, who is more powerful than you are and the enemy within, the presence of sin from the old Adam, the old man that has been put to death, but the corpse that hangs around.

What can you do? You can pray. You can pray.

Nothing is impossible.

Transcription by Audioposting: (www.audioposting.com/transcription.php)

⁴³ Joshua 5:13

⁴⁴ Paraphrase of Joshua 5:14