



Stand Against April 1: We Blame Him Too Much

Series Summary: Throughout scripture, we see that as followers of Jesus Christ, we have an enemy, his name is Satan. The question is, do we know our enemy? It is easy to make critical mistakes in how we go about standing against the enemy's plans and tactics of the enemy.

Big Idea: It's easy to push or place blame on our enemy, or even other people, when we have moments of weakness. But not everything is able to be blamed on Satan. We have to take accountability for ourselves as well.

Schedule:

- Live teaching
- Small group

LIVE TEACHING

INTRO

When it comes to spiritual warfare and the topic of satan, we have a tendency to run from one extreme to another

- **Extreme 1:** Denying that Satan or spiritual warfare has anything to do with our difficult seasons or situations.
- **Extreme 2 (tonight's focus):** Blaming everything that goes wrong in our lives on Satan. Or we give him vastly more power and credit than he is due.
 - Yes, there is the devil and his demons. However, there are some things to understand about Satan...

- He is not omnipresent. Only God is. Therefore he cannot be personally affecting everyone at once.

What happens when we have this unhealthy fascination with the evil side?...

THE FEARFUL VICTIM

(Doesn't take ownership)

Then there is the other end of the spectrum we run toward. The end of the spectrum, where we give the Enemy vastly more credit and power than he is due.

- What we hear today...
- "The Devil made me do it"
- "The spirit of ___" is real"

Here is what that looks like. We blame almost everything wrong in our lives and in the world on the work of The Enemy. We live in fear as if somehow Satan is on an equal playing field with God. We downplay our own sinfulness and, therefore, our own part to play in the crisis that we create.

James 1:13-15 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; **14** but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. **15** Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Galatians 5:19-21 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; **20** idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions **21** and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

We do not see Satan in any of those passages. Why? Because we have a sinful nature all our own. We have our own evil desires. Those evil desires have dire consequences.

POINTS OF CLARITY

Theology: Satan does not make us do anything. He does tempt us, but he does not control us. Therefore, even though spiritual warfare is real, we must take ownership of our actions when we are led astray.

Note: Does this mean that when Christians struggle in sin, that the enemy is at work in them? No!

Theology: As believers, we can not be possessed. You cannot be possessed if you are a temple of the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:29). This is a direct implication of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 12:29 and Mark 3:2.

How do I know if the Enemy is tempting me or if it is simply my own sinful nature? There isn't a surefire, "here is how I know without a shadow-of-a-doubt way of knowing."

Ephesians 4:20-24 That, however, is not the way of life you learned **21** when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. **22** You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; **23** to be made new in the attitude of your minds; **24** and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

What happens if we constantly push and pass blame to everyone but myself? We can expect some toxic things to happen...

- We will fall into habits of pride.
- We will run the risk of hardening our hearts because we are going to villainize everyone else just so I can play innocent.
- Conflicts within the church will turn toxic because I will make other brothers or sisters in Christ seem like the enemy rather than Satan himself.

Look at the language, "Your old self," "our former way of life," and "our deceitful desires." They are all our own sinful nature. We are the origin. We must take accountability when necessary. But there's one more piece of info I want us to understand about our enemy...

THE DEFEATED FOE

We should not give Satan too much credit because we have to own the reality that we are sinful and rebellious all by ourselves. But we also should not live in fear of the Enemy because he is a defeated foe.

Gen 3:14-15 So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. **15** And I will put enmity between you

and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

What is God saying to the serpent/enemy? From the very beginning of our sinful rebellion and Satan’s plan to deceive us, God had a plan. His plan was Jesus. He would pay the penalty for our sins, and he would defeat His enemy, Satan. We see this prophetic prediction fulfilled in the closing passages of scripture.

Revelation 20:1-3 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. **2** He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. **3** He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

In summary, Satan is a defeated enemy, as his defeat is guaranteed. He is mortally wounded. But that does not mean that he is not active today. So....

Segway to Small Group: How do we go about treating the enemy as a real threat while not living in fear? For one thing, we do not give him easy opportunities to lead us astray.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Get Them Talking: Why do you think it’s easy for us to want to pass blame to anyone and everyone else?

- 1. When you think about spiritual warfare and Satan, which “extreme” do you see as more common? And why?**
 - Extreme 1: I choose to ignore Satan and pretend like he isn’t there.
 - Extreme 2: I choose to blame everything on him, and play a fearful victim.
- 2. How does taking ownership of our own fallen and sinful nature change the way we view our struggle against the Enemy?**

Leader Note: I believe this creates a healthy balance. If I take ownership of my sin then that should lead me to seeking repentance and sanctification that is only possible by the work of the Holy Spirit. Aka, I take my sinful actions to the cross, own up to my flaws, and walk in step with Jesus daily so that I become more like him and

throw off my old ways. Ultimately, my strength will come from God, and not a fake strength that comes by me ignoring my sin.

3. What bad habits can we develop if we constantly pass blame, and ignore taking responsibility for ourselves?

Leader Note: If we constantly pass blame to something or someone else for our own sinful behavior then we are going to create a hardened and prideful heart for ourselves. Or if we simply ignore our sin, then it's like a sickness we may have, but refuse to get treatment...it's only going to get worse because I'm not treating it as I should be. Examples:

- "Well I wouldn't have said that to them if they would've been nice first"...This is placing blame and not taking responsibility for yourself.
- "I was treated poorly so they deserve for me to gossip about them behind their back"...This is placing blame and not taking responsibility for yourself.
- "Yeah, I may have done this selfish thing, but I never meant to hurt anyone"...This is claiming false innocence and not taking responsibility for yourself.

4. How does knowing that Satan is a "defeated foe" affect how we face temptation and hardship?

READ: JAMES 4:7-10 AS A GROUP

5. (Lead-in) Vs. 7- How do we resist the devil? We submit ourselves to God. The key is that this cannot be a partial submission. We must fully submit ourselves to God.

What areas of life are tempting to hold onto and not fully submit to God?

Leader Note: Whatever area that is not fully submitted to God is the area of our lives that the Enemy can do a work in. We see a clear example of this in Acts 5, when a married couple, Ananias and Sapphira, lied to the Apostles and the church about the amount of money they gave to the church after selling land. They claimed to have given all of it, but in reality, they had kept some for themselves because they wanted to appear as generous as others did while still enjoying the money. Peter asked Ananias, "How is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?" The unstated answer was that the couple were not living in full submission to God. Their lying, self-righteous glory-seeking, and greed proved that. Because of that, Satan had filled their hearts.

6. (Lead-in) Vs. 8-9- James makes it abundantly clear that confession must be a part of our lives if we are to draw near to God and resist the devil.

Why is confession, especially regular confession, crucial when it comes to standing against the enemy's plans?

Passage Context (For question and passage below): Paul explains the reason he delayed his return to Corinth from Macedonia. His first visit had ended painfully. An influential man in Corinth had apparently challenged Paul, perhaps about his authority over the church as a true apostle of Jesus. Paul left. He knew that if he returned as scheduled, it would create another painful visit. Paul did not know if the rest of the church would side with the man who had sinfully rejected his authority or would side with him and correct the man with some form of discipline. So Paul stayed away until he could find out. He wrote a painful letter to them in great sadness and distress, describing what they must do to make things right (2 Cor 2:1–4). It becomes clear that the Corinthians did, in fact, side with Paul and against the man. They punished the man, and he repented in sorrow. Paul urges them now to end the punishment, to forgive and comfort the man, and to reaffirm their love for him. Paul insists that forgiveness must happen in each direction in order to keep them from being tricked by Satan. ([BibleRef](#))

READ: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:5-11 AS A GROUP

7. Vs 11 - How might Satan use refusal of mercy and forgiveness to outwit us?

Leader Note: Refusing to offer forgiveness and mercy to those who have wronged you is one of the quickest ways to a hardened heart, and living opposite of godliness. We will always accept God's mercy, but will be so quick to cutting off mercy towards others. It's a sign that we think we're holier than someone else, and more deserving of grace than others. Remember that Satan is a schemer. Satan can use this for so many destructive things- bringing toxicity into the church, burning unnecessary bridges with each other, redefining our understanding of God's love for us, ineffective ministry, and wasted years on this side of eternity. One of his best strategies is unforgiveness and the longstanding bitterness that follows. That's why Paul always urges quick forgiveness of those who have sinned against us. In this case, Paul is encouraging the Corinthian church to forgive the wrongdoer just as Paul had.