



Stand Against Mar 25: Understand Our Enemy

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: We hear a lot about our enemy, but it's easy to not understand him or his tactics. The more we understand how our enemy operates, then the better we will be at avoiding his traps and schemes.

Schedule:

- Live teaching
- Small group

LIVE TEACHING

Lead in: 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.

Why this series? (Sports film-room analogy) Teams study their opponent/enemy so they know how to look out for their strategy/tendencies.

ORIGIN STORY

When did Satan fall? We are not certain of that. The only thing we can say for certain is that he fell (i.e., rebelled against God) before he led Adam and Eve astray in the garden.

Why did he fall? That we know vastly more about because the Prophet Isaiah tells us why Satan was cast out of Heaven

Isaiah 14:12-14 How you have fallen from heaven, morning star (a reference to Satan's former high status), son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! **13** You said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. 14 I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

What was Satan's sinful rebellion? He desired to be worshiped rather than God. **Satan's sin was self-idolatry.**

- **The Prophet Ezekiel, in a similar passage in *Ezekiel 28:12-18***, lets us know that Satan chose this rebellious self-worship despite having everything he would have ever desired in Heaven.
- The Apostle Paul warned young Timothy in ***1 Timothy 3:6-7*** about allowing new converts to be Elders out of fear that their conceit would lead to them facing the same judgment as the Devil, because conceit (pride) was his sin.

It should not then surprise us that when Satan tried to tempt Eve and Jesus, he offered versions of self-worship; Jesus got through it, Eve did not.

Why does this matter? A couple of things

#1 We should be careful that we are not led astray by Satan. Yes and amen, **but we should also be careful not to follow in his footsteps.** What I mean by this is that we should also be careful that we do not choose the same form of sinful rebellion that he did. Self-idolatry and pride are not rare!

#2 Satan is not simply our enemy; he is Christ's enemy. Now that may seem obvious, and it is. But we can easily miss how that simple fact tells us so much about Satan's plan.

Transition - You see, we have to recognize that Satan's ultimate goal isn't just our "bad behavior," but the obstruction of God's Kingdom.

HIS MAIN OBJECTIVE

Matthew 13:24-26 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. **25** But while everyone was sleeping, **his enemy** came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. **26** When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

The key to understanding any parable is getting the parts right. Who is represented by what? Good news, Jesus makes this abundantly clear in verse 36-43.

1. The man - Jesus (Vs 37)
2. The field - The earth and by extension all mankind (vs 38)
3. The sleeping/night - this current era between Jesus' first and second coming. This means that the harvest is the final judgment (Vs 40)
4. Good seed - Those who have trusted in Jesus (vs 38)
5. The Weeds - "The weeds are the people of the evil one" (vs 39)

Matthew 13:27-30 "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from? **28** "An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' **29** "No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. **30** Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

- "An enemy" - obviously, that is Satan. But did you notice whose enemy he was? It says HIS enemy. (vs 25 & 39)

To paraphrase... Jesus made it abundantly clear that in this age, the age of the church, Satan is not yet bound. He is active. His defeat is guaranteed, but it is the future. In the meantime, he is opposed to Jesus and the kingdom that Jesus has ushered in. And he will use people like pawns to display his hatred for God.

Why does this matter? I think sometimes we have a far too narrow and personalized view of Satan. We believe that Satan's goal is to simply make us sin more. By all means, I do believe that Satan would love that. But his ultimate goal is to oppose God's kingdom. Therefore, part of what Satan is about is keeping you from taking part in expanding the kingdom of God. Could Satan do that by getting you to live a life of habitual sin? Yes. But Satan could also get you to believe some other lies that would do just as much damage without us even knowing.

- He could get you to believe the lie that you have nothing to offer.

- He could get you to value comfort above all else
- He could get you to believe that ministry is for the professionals
- He could fill your schedule with so many things that Christ gets squeezed out

Transition to small group: If we now know the plans of the enemy, how will we respond? How do we stand against the plans of the enemy? We do not have to answer that question on our own. Instead, we can learn from the Truth of scripture to answer that very question.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Get Them Talking: Was there anything that stood out to you from the message? Maybe something that you hadn't known or thought about before in regards to Satan?

READ: Ephesians 6:10-20 as a group

Leader Note (Vs 10-11): In this passage, Paul uses the image of Roman soldiers to convey how we are to remain prepared against our enemy, Satan. As you discuss the significance of each part of the Roman soldier's armor and the powerful symbolism it conveys, it is important to remember that Roman soldiers did not normally wear their armor at night. They would wake up and put on the armor piece by piece. They made the daily decision to put it on. Likewise, putting on the full armor of God is a daily decision. There is no set-it-and-forget-it in the realm of spiritual warfare. Keep this at the forefront of your small group's conversation.

1. **Vs 12 (Lead-in)-** Paul is abundantly clear that we have one enemy, his name is Satan. Our battle is not necessarily against other people, but against Satan. The issue is that we can easily lose sight of this and treat other people as the enemy.

Why is it easy to think of other people as our enemy rather than Satan?

How do we resist the temptation of treating other people like the enemy, rather than Satan?

Leader Note: It is easy to view people as the enemy because they do, in fact, hurt and harm us. We should not deny that simple fact. But if Satan can convince you that everybody else is your enemy, he has won a key advantage. If he can convince you

that a rival, a family member, somebody from your past, or even a politician is your enemy, then you will easily lose sight of who your true enemy is. You will also lose sight of how we are to view people in our lives as brothers and sisters in Christ, or part of the mission field; there is no third category.

2. **Vs 13 - (Lead in)** We are to “put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.” Notice how the armor of God does not keep the day of evil from coming. Instead, it prepares us for it.

Why is this verse so important to understand and remember?

3. **Vs 14 - (Lead-in)** We are to put on the breastplate of righteousness as we take our stand against the enemy. This means that righteousness should define our lives.

Why is this a non-negotiable as we stand against Satan's plan and temptation?

Leader Note (Breastplate of Righteousness): “The breastplate was usually a tough, sleeveless piece of leather or heavy material with animal horn or hoof pieces sewn on, covering the soldier’s full torso, protecting his heart and other vital organs. Because righteousness, or holiness, is such a distinctive characteristic of God Himself, it is not hard to understand why that is the Christian’s chief protection against Satan and his schemes. As believers faithfully live in obedience to and communion with Jesus Christ, His own righteousness produces in them the practical, daily righteousness that becomes their spiritual breastplate. Lack of holiness, on the other hand, leaves them vulnerable to the great enemy of their souls.”

4. **Vs 15 - How does the truth of the Gospel, and the peace that it brings, give us the strength to stand against the enemy?**

Leader Note (The Gospel of Peace): “Roman soldiers wore boots with nails in them to grip the ground in combat. The gospel of peace pertains to the good news that, through Christ, believers are at peace with God, and He is on their side (Rom. 5:6-10). It is that confidence of divine support which allows the believer to stand firm, knowing that since he is at peace with God, and God is his strength.”

5. **Vs 17 - In verse 17, we are told to take the helmet of salvation. What does it mean to take hold of or grasp our salvation daily?**

Leader Note: Obviously, we do not believe or receive our justification again and again. Instead, it means that we are daily reminding ourselves of the truth of the Gospel. We are grasping and holding onto our identity in Christ. This means that we should

remind ourselves and one another who we are in Christ (1 Peter 2:9-10 & Romans 8:14-17). Especially during the times where we may stare temptation in the face.

6. **Vs 13 (Lead-in)** We are to put on the full armor of God. Not most. Not some. All!

Is there a piece of the armor of God that is easy to forget or neglect? Why do you think this?

7. **Vs 18-20 (Lead-in)** - Many people stop reading about the full armor of God at verse 17. But Paul's command to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests," while not listed as part of the Armor of God, is still meant to be viewed as part of the plan by which we stand against the Enemy.

Why should prayer, specifically praying on all occasions, need to be part of our plan to stand against the enemy?