

Wipe Out The Enemies

We have often heard it said that one bad apple will spoil the whole crop. We are also told never to keep bad company. That we must be careful with the people we mix with. Bad company has an adverse effect on us. They will often get us into trouble. We must stay away from them. While this may be true with people, the same cannot be said about our real enemies who are really the worse company that we can ever keep. We cannot just stay away from them. We must wipe them out from our lives. Last week we saw that our real enemies are not people. They are Satan and the demons. We must do all we can to get rid of them in our lives. We must wipe out our enemies.

This was what Joshua and the Israelites did. After defeating the 5 Amorites cities they began their campaigns against all the enemies in the Promised Land. The episode is contained in chapter 11 to 19. God had told them to wipe out all the inhabitants in the Promised Land. That not a single one should be spared. These people were idol worshippers. They are bad company to the Israelites. They would drag them into idolatry. They would influence them into sin. They would teach them to rebel against God. Whilst Joshua did this, there was one thing that he could never undo. There was the mistake with the Gibeonites. A mistake that he has to live with for the rest of his life. This mistake was the downfall of Israel. The Gibeonites and tribes living in Gibeon began to lead Israel into a downward spiral that led to their dispersion. They were punished. God allowed the Babylonians, Assyrians, Greeks and Romans to conquer them and disperse them right through the whole Roman empire. We cannot allow the same thing to happen to us. We must ensure that all our enemies are completely wiped out from our lives. Today, we will examine the strategies of our enemies and how we may get rid of them. We will see how they operate and how we should counter them. To do so until they have no effect on us. Till we can take the Promised Land.

3 significant enemies to wipe out

¹ John 2:16 For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world.

Firstly there is the cravings of sinful man. The King James version states this as the lust of the flesh. The devil operates from within the depths of our beings -- he entices us to satisfy some physical needs – this becomes cravings that come from the depths of our hearts. Gluttony and sex mania are the two common outcomes of such cravings. Have we ever felt some strange impulses to eat? – to eat some strange sort of food, maybe. All of a sudden we feel like eating. And we had probably just eaten about one hour ago. I can understand pregnant women behaving in such a way. Their systems get turned upside down. They hunger for food almost after they have finished a hearty meal. They crave for all sort of food.

So, I understand when pregnant women behave in such a way. But when it comes to men. I think some people are just like Professor Klumps – they nutty professor – they just allow the cravings to take the better of them.

Then, there is the strange liking of some food that we cannot resist – ice-cream, durians, chocolates. When we see them. When we smell them. We just don't seem able to resist them. They just seem to have a strong magnetic pull.

When we are at a buffet the craving also suddenly come alive. We eat more than normal.

When it comes to sex – it affects people of all age especially the young. When we are young – maybe teens to early 40s – sex seems to come to our minds on a frequent basis. We think of it. It becomes a craving. Am I wrong in saying this? if I am then I must have been abnormal. But I think I am fully normal. We think about sex wondering what it is. We talk about them among classmates. We watch movies and TV and see some scenes that portray them. We become curious – sometimes over curious. When we take a bite – there does not seem to be an end to it. The other day I was speaking at a men's fellowship. Then one man shared this – about the time he was in NS. He said that his whole platoon boast about visiting the prostitutes and going there together. He was innocent of it as he was then already a Christian. One day, one Christian came sobbing to him – the man asked to be prayed for -- he had visited a prostitute the previous evening – he wanted to be assured that God will forgive him. A few days later the same man came sobbing – with the same story again – he has fallen into the enemy's trap and found it difficult to get out. One bite and he was hooked. That is what we look for in fishing. Waiting for the fish to bite. If there is no bite we will end up with no fish that day. But when the fish starts biting we know that they will be hooked and we will reel in plenty. Satan is throwing baits of all kinds to entice us. Once we take the bite we will be hooked.

These then are the cravings of man. Having such cravings is not sinful. We have been created this way and for good reasons. Food is to keep us physically alive. Just imagine us without hunger or craving for food. We can physically die and know not why we die. Sex is so that couples can be intimate. So that the earth may be populated. If there is no craving for it, one will spend their time on it. So we are created with hunger for different things and it is not sin. It is the way that we handle such cravings that counts. What becomes the cravings of sinful man is when we allow such cravings to be sin in our lives. This is an enemy that we have to handle. An enemy that we have to wipe out. How do we do so?

Just as we cannot avoid the craving that comes from within we cannot avoid the temptations that come from without. The devil will always lead us into temptation. God allows us to go through temptation. God knows us and He will not allow any temptation that is stronger than what we can bear to come to us. He knows

everything about us. He knows us even before we were born. He knows us. So, when a temptation comes our way, God knows that we would be able to resist that temptation. We must know this too. Temptations are not sin. Cravings are not sin. But when the two comes together and we choose to flow along with them, it becomes sin. But we are human beings -- not animals. We have the free will to make a choice. Animals don't. So, when thoughts of sex comes to our minds we are not like the animals in heat. They are led by their instincts. We are led by our ability to make choices. If we are married well and good. This is why God give us this craving – so that we can come into intimacy with our spouse. If we are not married then we must know that it is not time yet for us to fulfill this craving. We can make the choice of resisting the devil. We are human beings. So we are able to choose between good and evil. We have the ability to pray and ask God to help us resist the devil. The Bible says that when we resist the devil he will flee. He will run away. He will know that you are stronger than what he can do to you. So, always remember this “stronger is he that is in you than he that is in the world”. The Holy Spirit is within you. You are stronger than the devil. God knows the limits that you can go to in being tempted. He knows that you can resist. Therefore continue to grow stronger by resisting the devil. Wipe this enemy out of your life.

The second enemy is the lust of the eyes. Eyes are not sinful. If they are, then we should go everywhere with our eyes tightly shut. Or pluck them out. Jesus said if your eyes cause you to sin, then pluck them out. It is what we do after we have seen that is the issue. If what we see causes a deep craving within us then we are in danger of sinning. Pornography is one clear example. What we see creates lust within us. It brings up the sinful craving from within us. It will play on our minds. Who we are or who we become is the way we think. So, be careful of what we see. Stay away from pornography. This enemy will also play on people who like to compare themselves with others. When we see others having more than us. When we see them doing better than us. When we compare we will become dissatisfied. We will begin to covet. To long for what they have. Then all sorts of things will take place – lying, cheating, stealing, spending more than what we have, becoming money-minded, being money-faced. The way to counter this is to look towards Jesus and be satisfied with what we have. Live simply. Rely on God more than anything else. When we see, when the cravings come up – resist the devil and look towards Jesus. Remember “greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.” Get rid of this enemy from your life.

The third enemy is pride. The boasting of what he has and does. This happens when God blesses us and we think our success is due to us. Wah! Look at my mansion. Look at my car. Look at the credit cards in my wallet. Look at my Armani shirts. Look at my Mount Blanc pen. Look at my office. The big table that I have. The position that I hold. I am a pastor – you know. I am a CEO of a big company. We forget that God is the one who has blessed us. We begin to think that we are gods. We treat ourselves like god in the process. We treat people as though they

are our creation and we are the creator. That is pride of life. Remember this always. Pride comes before a fall.

Many successful minister has fallen because of pride. They have a successful ministry and they become proud. They fell in different ways. Some because of money. Some because of sex. The trouble is that with money comes some power. But these people begin to think of themselves as all powerful – as omnipotent. They begin to write their own Bibles – about what is right and wrong. They become like gods. Ultimately this leads to their fall.

Always give God the glory. Testify about God's goodness whenever you can. This will direct you to know that we ever we have and whatever we are is due to God and not us. Pride is certainly an enemy to get rid of from our lives.

So, friends, remember these three enemies – sinful cravings, lust of the eyes and pride – get rid of them from our lives. How do we ensure that they do not ever surface in our lives? Much has to do with our minds. Our minds is the battlefield between us and the devil. What and how we think will be who we are. So, let us look at this.

Getting rid of the enemies from our thought life

God knows the way we as human beings think. He knows that the thoughts and ways of fallen man are diagonally opposed to his thoughts and ways. Paul calls it the futility of our thoughts and ways. They can never really bring success. When we become a Christian however, we have a renewed capacity to see things God's way, to think thoughts God's way – we have a new capacity of mind, heart and will. We can begin to choose God's way rather than the ways of the world.

Romans 8:6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace

As such, allow the Holy Spirit to speak to our thought life. A Christian once asked his pastor "how do I know the voice of the Holy Spirit?" The pastor smiled and looked at him and said "you will know". Indeed we will know as we cultivate a relationship with God. How do I know your voice over the telephone? If I have never heard of it before I would probably ask "who is that?" but if I have heard you enough over the telephone I would know. I will never say "hi, Jenny" when Derek calls. Once I phoned a person – I have hardly ever speak to him over the phone – straight away he answered "hi, Pastor Loh". I asked "how do you know that it is me". He said "you have a unique voice". Well, let me tell you something. The Holy Spirit has a unique voice. When you hear him enough, you will know – you will know when he speaks to you. Live by the leading of the Spirit – let him control your thought life. When the Holy Spirit is strongly present in your life, the enemies will flee – they will disappear – so, get rid of the enemies by filling your life with the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, take an inventory of your thoughts. At the end of every day, just before you close your eyes to sleep, have a self reflection – take a stock take – what had occupied your mind throughout the day? Was God present? Have you reflected upon God’s Word anytime throughout the day. The psalmist exhorts us to meditate upon the Word of God night and day. Did we? What were our concerns throughout the day? There must be something. Cannot be nothing. An idle mind is the devil’s workshop. the devil will fill it with what he wants you to think. The way to defeat him is to fill your minds with God’s thoughts. The apostle Paul tells us that whatever is pure, wholesome, beautiful and good – think of them. so, when a temptation to think of something negative comes to your minds, halt it there and then. Pick up the Bible and read something. Listen to a worship CD – occupy your mind with God’s thoughts – don’t give the devil a foothold – allow the Holy Spirit to control your life and thoughts.

So, develop a lifestyle of reading a portion of Scripture every morning. Pray and dedicate the day to the Lord. Meditate upon what you had read in the morning. Be careful of the thoughts that come into your mind during the day. Refuse to think of anything bad. Allow the Holy Spirit to occupy your minds with other things. And fellowship with spiritual friends. The company we keep will influence us more than we think. Don’t think we can evangelize a whole group by fellowshiping with them. In fact, we can’t fellowship with non-believers. Fellowship means that the relationship that we build up is among fellow brothers or sisters. So, fellowshiping is only among spiritual friends. However, we should never cut ties with the unbelievers. Know that numbers count. A minority will be influenced by the majority. Not the other way around. This is what Israel found out. They took possession of the Promised Land but the tribes in Gibeon far outnumbered the Israelites. As a result they back-slided. So, never think that we can be a spiritual Rambo. In fact Rambo is pure fiction. In real life battle, numbers count as well. So, if we want to evangelize a group, go in with a whole army – never alone. Fellowship among brothers and sisters. Do evangelism on a one to one basis.

There are indeed spiritual enemies in our lives. Israel realized this as they went in to take the Promised Land. They knew that these enemies had to be rid of if they are to enjoy God’s blessings in the Promised Land. If we too want to enjoy God’s blessings in the Promised Land we must get rid of the enemies of our lives. We must not allow cravings to become sinful craving. We must not allow temptations to take a hold of us. We must always maintain humility and never think that we have made it by ourselves. We must allow the Holy Spirit to control our thought life.