

Strongholds

The ancient Chinese general Sun Tzu author of The Art of War once said: "Know thy enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles, you will never be defeated."

There is so much truth in this, when in Africa I saw fear of the enemy confusion caused by lots of superstition, but at least there was a recognition that there is an enemy and there was a stand against his schemes.

Whereas often in the West there is no recognition that we even have an enemy, there is little belief in the supernatural. It surprises some when we talk about Satan, about demons, about oppression, about footholds and strongholds. In other cases of course there is an over fascination.

I think Satan wants it this way, either being made greater by fear than he actually is or being completely ignored, in both cases it enables him to get on with dragging people down and stopping them either knowing God's love or finding their God given potential and purpose!

Today I want us to get to know who we are facing, who our enemy really is.

And I want us to get to know who we are and what there may be in us which could be exploited by our enemy.

Today together I want us to prepare for battle and know how we can be victorious - AMEN

Know thy enemy:

Ephesians 6:12 NIV

¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

1 Peter 5:8-9 NLT

⁸ Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are.

Satan (adversary), the devil, the serpent, Beelzebul, the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the evil one, father of lies,

The bible teaches that he was once an angel serving God and due to pride and wanting to have the place of God was removed from his position along with other angels who rebelled. These are now the demons who work with Satan.

The bible is clear - they were all created by God

They can only be in one location at any one time - God can be everywhere.

They can lie deceive and manipulate situations but they have no control over the future - only God has that.

Their knowledge is limited - they have been around a long time so are clever, but only God knows everything.

Their power is limited, Satan had to ask God's permission before doing anything against Job, Jesus only had to command with a single word and they had to obey.

Matthew 8:16 NIV

¹⁶ When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick.

Words Jesus used were commands - COME OUT, BE QUIET GET OUT, in one case he commanded a whole legion of demons to leave a man by simply commanding GO!

Jesus was not very polite in his dealings with demons.

In the bible when Jesus or his disciples speak about demons the words they use are mainly in the diminutive form. So rather than δαιμόν they say δαιμόνιον, basically little insignificant pesky demons - when compared to the the power authority of Jesus Christ, the demons are powerless and insignificant. AMEN

Finally on Satan and demons, "we know where they're going"!

The bible tells us clearly the war has been won on the Cross, they are on the retreat and are trying to take as many people down with them, but there is only eternal punishment remaining for them.

"The devil will try to upset you by accusing you of being unworthy of the blessings that you have received. Simply remain cheerful and do your best to ignore the devil's nagging. If need be even laugh at the absurdity of the situation. Satan, the epitome of sin itself, accuses you of unworthiness! When the devil reminds you of your past, remind him of his future" Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

Know thyself:

In warfare the enemy will seek chinks in the armour, will seek areas of vulnerability to exploit. We have an enemy Satan and his little demons who seek to lie, to deceive and to manipulate to bring influence and control, to bring fear and separation from God's love.

Jesus declared in

John 14:30 NASB95

³⁰ "I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me;

Can we say the same? That there is nothing in us that Satan can use. No hidden fear, no secret sin, no insecurity, no pride, no area of weakness or shame?

Footholds are small incursions made by the enemy into our lives. Think about a door that isn't fully shut and a person sticks their foot in the gap. This is a foothold, because of the person's foot in the gap it's very difficult to shut and lock and the person on the other side has a good opportunity to lever the door open and get in. If a foothold is not dealt with it can quickly become a stronghold.

Ephesians 4:26-27 NIV

²⁶ "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.

Areas of weakness, areas we are tempted in and wrong beliefs about God can grow and lead into sin.

James 1:14-15 NIV

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.

Own Evil desire - desire of itself may not be evil but what we want apart from God's will becomes evil -

Enticement - bait- enemy can position bait, but also we can position ourselves in a position of vulnerability, when we move from hearing the enemies lies to entertaining them, when we isolate ourselves from brothers and sisters who would pray for us, encourage us and speak God's truth to us.

Just think about a sealed bar of galaxy chocolate in the cupboard

it simply being there won't make you put on weight, even opening the wrapper and having a smell doesn't cause you to put on weight, even having a small chunk to just sample it may not lead to putting on weight, but at each step the desire increases and before you know it there is nothing but the wrapper left.

Maybe it's best not to have the first piece, maybe it's best to not open the wrapper, or maybe it's best not to have a chocolate bar in your cupboard to begin with!!

Strongholds are like fortified structures: places which have strong foundations which may go deep, and thick walls of protection. Before we accept Jesus into our lives, the enemy is in control and establishes these strongholds, through such things as pain, shame and lies. It becomes a place where an entrenched satanic power exerts control over a person, a generational family, or a territory, in opposition to the knowledge of God.

When Jesus comes into our lives He takes over control of the land, but sometimes enemy strongholds remain. Our enemy Satan does not want us to live successful spiritual lives so tries to maintain these strongholds as they are places from which he can attack at will. His will is to keep us defeated, Jesus wants us to live victoriously, it is therefore essential that through the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit that these strongholds are pulled down. Strongholds can also be established even after we have accepted Jesus when we go through experiences which may cause pain and unforgiveness and leave space for the enemy to gain a foothold, an access point which may grow to become a stronghold.

[2 Corinthians 10:3-4](#) “3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.”

2 Corinthians 10:5 NKJV

⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

“Casting down arguments”: The word argument, means logic or understanding. We are to pull down false ways of thinking or reasoning that are in contention with what God says.

“Every high thing that exalts itself”: These were the images the idols which were erected in high places and worshipped. These were placed above the worship of God. In modern culture these idols are things which absorb our time, our energy, our finance, our worship; homes, jobs, relationships, possessions, or interests. If something is moving from a normal interest to stopping you from having total devotion to God, it has become an idol.

“Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”: Victory over strongholds is achieved first by recognising what the wrong thinking or idol is, confessing it as wrong, then making the decision to bring our thoughts into subjection to God’s will, according to His truth found in the Bible. Then we commit ourselves to keep on doing this until Satan has no hold over this area.

To Conclude:

Let’s know who our enemy is, what he’s capable of but also what is lies and deception.

Let’s also know ourselves, know our own weaknesses and vulnerabilities and start working through these with Jesus, He has already paid the price, the war has already been won, we just need to start applying God’s truth, getting rid of stuff that’s getting in the way and bringing all areas and also our thinking and beliefs into line and under the reign of Jesus. Jesus wants us to live in victory, to reach our full potential, to have hope and purpose. This may mean asking for help, meeting up with brothers and sisters and walking this through together, we’re stronger together!