

Call to Obedience #483
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Know Your Adversary

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It is the devil's job to make you feel miserable every day of your life. Will you let him do that? By "every day," I mean every day and every night. He goes to work with you, to church with you and to bed with you. That is his job, his singular preoccupation. He does not take any days off. You take Sundays off, but he does not. You go on vacation, but he does not. He knows a lot. He has been around for thousands of years and could teach a course on the history of civilization. Let us take a few moments to discover how it all got started.

Devils were not created—angels were. There was a day when the chief angel, Lucifer, decided to rebel against God and one third of the angels joined him, and the result was that he and his rebels were expelled from heaven. From then on, Lucifer has been called Satan or the devil, and the fallen angels are also called devils or demons. Then, since Adam yielded to sin, the devil and his followers have taken control of the world. Jesus Himself called Satan the Prince or the ruler of the world (John 12:31; 14:30; Matt. 4:9). Jesus has no plan to retake the world, but He has a plan to replace it with a new heaven and a new earth.

God operates out of heaven and the devil operates out of hell. Every man since Adam and Eve has to face the forbidden tree that they faced over and over again. You must decide every day whether you will eat of the forbidden fruits or not. Hence, there is a great war between heaven and hell and it is all about you. Both heaven and hell want to have you. **You are the battlefield.** And you must decide who is going to win. To help you, God has assigned angels to camp about you: *Because you have made the LORD, who is [your] refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place, No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone* (Ps. 91:9-12).

Notice here the following three key words: *your dwelling place*. The promise for victory is to those who make God their dwelling place. So, that is what you need to focus on. It is when He dwells in you and you dwell in Him that you are invincible. It is only from this position that you overcome by the

blood of the Lamb and by the word of your testimony (Rev. 12:11). How could it be otherwise? And who is this God who is dwelling within you? It is the One who flung the stars into space in the twinkling of an eye; it is the One who separated land from the sea by a simple command; it is the One who breaks the bars of iron asunder and sets the prisoner free! It is God and you, you and Him and it also includes angels surrounding you. Be assured that He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world! If that is not enough, remember that God has given you an armor, plus the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword (Eph. 6:10-18). If that is not enough, He ever lives to make intercession for you (Heb. 7:25). But the bottom line is you must abide in Him. If you do not abide in Him, His wonderful house of protection collapses like a deck of cards and the devil can lead you around like a bull is led around by a ring through his nose. And you do not even know it. Let us go on from here.

Getting back to our angels and demons, they are real persons because they have key attributes of personhood: intelligence, will and conscience. Our intelligence gives us the ability to create and process thoughts. Our will gives us power to choose what thoughts to entertain and which to reject, and then our conscience allows us to know what is right or wrong. Now, there are three sources for thoughts: God, man and the devil. Most of our thoughts are created in our brain and most of them are truly ours. But God can also put His thoughts into our minds—and so can the devil. Consequently, one key to victorious living for us is that we must bring: *...every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ* (2 Cor. 10:5). At the end, God will judge us by our thoughts, for the Bible says: *For as [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he...* (Prov. 23:7). From this, we must make the distinction between head thoughts and heart thoughts. We have limited control as to what thoughts land in our head, but we have full control over what thoughts settle into our heart. It is like we have no control over what goes into our mailbox, but we have full control over what mail we read.

The way you can limit unwanted thoughts from coming in is by stuffing your head with: *...whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things* (Phil. 4:8). Another thing you can do to drive away unwanted thoughts is to praise God, preferably out loud, praying: *O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise* (Ps. 51:15). The devil cannot stand praise. Another way you can guard your heart is by staying

away from everything that has the slightest appearance of evil (1 Thes. 5:22). And of course, be sure that you put on the armor of God in the morning before the battle of the day begins. Just saying hello to Jesus in the morning is not enough; you must get spiritually dressed to conquer the day.

The thoughts that God gives us are insights and revelations. The thoughts given to us by the devil are accusations, lies and distortions. It is often difficult to distinguish who is talking to us, because the devil comes to us as an angel of light. When he came to Eve, he looked beautiful, he was well-mannered and spoke convincingly, letting Eve believe that he had her best interests in mind (one of his choice lines). When it is not obvious who is speaking to us, we must begin with self-examination (2 Cor. 13:5).

The first step is this: you must not let your feelings be your judge. God never asked anybody how they felt. This does not mean that He does not care. But feelings have to take a backseat to facts. So, in this regard, it does not matter how you feel. Look for the facts; look at where your heart is residing and look at the Word of God. Again, as to your feelings, have a cold disregard for them. Instead, ask yourself: “Do I love God with all my heart?” If you can answer that with a “yes” and if doing God’s will is your daily pursuit, those are the facts and you have reason to be cheerful. You are in a position of strength. From this position, as you wait on Him, He will be able to do the minor pruning that you need daily.

But God will never judge anyone by their performance but always by what is in their hearts—*For as [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he*. He is our Father and good fathers do not judge their children by their performance but by their love for their fathers. Jesus’ performance looked terrible to the Pharisees, terrible enough for them to kill Him. Paul’s performance looked so bad even to other Christians that he had to make tents, and all in Asia forsook him. But God was immensely proud of him. Your performance may be immature, clumsy and lacking wisdom. Again, God does not judge you by that but by your heart. Therefore you have to: *Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life* (Prov. 4:23). Do not complicate things. For the most part, your self-examination should last no more than a few minutes. God does not want you to waste your time looking down at the dust but up into His glory. Glance at your weaknesses and failures, but gaze at the cross—glory in the cross and then exult in the resurrection power of your Lord. He wants you to get busy doing His will. In general, the longer you examine yourself the deeper you get into the mud, the more you waste God’s precious time and the

happier you make the devil. So do not keep rolling around in dust and ashes like Joshua at Ai. That does not give you any victories. God pruned Joshua and His people and told him to get back into the fight. You belong in the battlefield.

As God has a plan for you on a daily basis, so does the devil. The devil sets up traps for you every day trying to entangle you, impoverish you, ruin you and cause you to lose the joy of the Lord. Again, God works through facts, the devil specializes in feelings. He is an expert at knowing how to make you feel guilty, ashamed, unworthy, unfit, defeated, etc. If you are easily influenced by feelings, you are a great target for the devil. He will have fun with you. I suggest you destroy his fun and stand on the facts: the promises of God's Word. As I said before, focus on the things which are honest, pure, lovely, of good report, and praiseworthy and then you will be building a protective wall around your soul. But do not live under the illusion that someday you will be holy enough, no longer to be tempted by the devil. Not so, the opposite is the case. The closer you are to the throne, the more harassments you will have to endure. This is why, when the Apostle Paul said: "pray for me," it was an earnest cry from the depths of his heart. But in all circumstances those who are in Christ are more than conquerors. God is our refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms and He is well able: *...to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy* (Jude 24).

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