

"Our Adversary"

Did you know that you have an enemy who is only interested in seeing you lost eternally. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Yes, the devil schemes continually to find ways to separate you from God. And today, we'll talk about how our adversary works.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We're living in spiritually challenging times. There are struggles in every aspect of our lives. And we need the truth of God's word to teach us and to protect us from the schemes of the devil. We're fighting a strong adversary who wants to separate us from God for an eternity, and we must put on the armor of God to protect ourselves. Thanks for taking time with us today. We would love to hear from you and want to be a part of your life each week.

Ephesians 6:10 to 12 both encourages and warns us, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the might of His strength. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." Our adversary, the devil, wants to get us involved with the evil that he practices and promotes. And he is a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

Now we're fighting our adversary for our souls and the souls over whom we have influence. If we lose to him, to the adversary, others may lose also. We're fighting for our children and our grandchildren. If we give up on God, the devil can win. Whether we fight for our faith or give in to the adversary, the devil, is the difference between eternity with God or eternity without God. We're going to explore how the devil schemes and works against us, and we'll also see what we can do to fight him and win. We have the Lord Jesus on our side; we can conquer our adversary.

Now we offer this study on our adversary free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have many free programs and materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. You can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, we'll read from 1 Peter 5:8 to 10, and explore how our adversary has some treacherous schemes.

Our reading today comes from 1 Peter chapter 5 verses 8 to 10 and they are a bit of a warning but they're also a bit of encouragement toward the end.

"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

Oh what a wonderful promise. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that You love us and watch over us and can help us even in the toughest of times. Help us Father to stand strong against our adversary. And to do Your will and to love You always. In Jesus name, Amen.

The Scriptures teach much about the schemes of the devil, and we need to know those schemes! When Paul wrote to 2 Corinthians the book of 2 Corinthians, he noted that he forgave a sinful man in the presence of Christ, "so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes." I find many people fall to the schemes of the devil. They believe a lie and don't know the

devil has lied to them. They justify some hindrance that keeps them from growing spiritually. They fall for an enticing temptation, not realizing how damaging sin is. They may even fall prey to the adversary's wicked ways.

First, we need to know the devil is a liar. The Lord Jesus explained to those who opposed him in John 8:44 that, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." We often follow what we want to hear rather than follow the truth that we need to hear. The Lord Jesus told this same group that, "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."

The Lord Jesus told those who believed in Him in John 8:31 and 2 that, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly My disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." When you stay in the Scriptures, you'll know the truth that sets you free. If you change the Scriptures, listen to men, buy into human traditions, or follow worldly culture, you will surely believe a lie that will cost you your soul. In John 18:37 the Lord Jesus told Pilate, "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. (and) Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." When you listen to the Lord first, foremost, and last about everything, you can be sure you will know the truth. And so don't settle for anything less, and don't buy into anything more. Listen to the Lord Jesus and to His apostles.

2 Corinthians 4 and verse 4 says that, "the god of this world (that is Satan) has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." Surely there are many false gospels today, and the naïve who do not study the word can easily fall for popular falsehoods. The noble-minded Bereans "received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."

You see they learned the truth by careful study, evaluating what they heard, and judging whether it was true! They searched for truth. Proverbs 23:23 says, "Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding." I tell ya it costs to know the truth, and that means that one must be a disciple, a learner, or student of the word of God. Paul admonished Timothy in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 15, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."

The Lord Jesus wants you to come to the knowledge of the truth, but the devil wants you to buy into a lie. Now people who don't know the Lord are alienated from Him. Ephesians 2 and verse 12 describes people before they come to Christ this way: "remember that you were at that time without Christ, alienated from the citizenship of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Oh I tell ya, this is a very sad condition; it's without hope and without God.

Now second the devil is the tempter. He will make you think giving in to his schemes is the very best thing for you. It never is. You remember Matthew 4:1 to 4 says: Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He (that is Jesus) answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'" You see the Lord Jesus knew how to answer the devil. He used the word of God. And we must follow His example.

Now the devil often uses our emotions to draw us away from the things that God has taught. People are often deceived into thinking that if something feels right, that it must be right to do. That's such a lie. The serpent tempted Eve into eating the forbidden fruit in Genesis 3 by appealing to the beauty of the fruit, that it was good for food, and how it would make her wise. And she let her emotions, her feelings, get in the way of obedience to God. She even led her husband into sin. We have all had to face the consequences of sin, because of what Adam and Eve did in the beginning. Eve following her feelings. Sadly, we fall for the same emotional appeals and we lose sight of what God commands.

1 John 2:15 to 17 says, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts, but the one who does the will of God abides forever." I tell you if you follow your feelings after worldly things, you're following something that will perish. Look to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father in heaven! Doing the will of the Father is the only way to eternal life. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." And that's still true, my friend. Don't let your feelings overrule your judgment! Do the will of God.

Third, the devil loves to hinder our spiritual growth and service. Oh, he'll do everything He can to get in the way of our serving the Lord. The apostle Paul describes the devil's behavior in 1Thessalonians 2:17 to 18, "But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan hindered us."

The devil loves to distract us from the things that lead to spiritual growth. The devil doesn't want us to read Scripture or to know the truth. He spreads many lies about the Bible. He'll tell you the Bible isn't inspired but the work of men. And if he fails at that, he'll claim the Bible is full of errors and mistakes, but that claim is also very much false. He will claim the Bible is full of myths and legends; but I tell ya the more you know about the Bible, the more you will see how historically accurate the word of God truly is. Archaeology and ancient literature have repeatedly shown that many of the people referred to in Scripture lived where and when the Bible says. The 27th chapter of the book of Acts tells of Paul's journey from Caesarea to Rome. Did you know that this recorded voyage is the most accurate maritime journey ever recorded in ancient literature. Yes.

Now if you wish to be spiritually strong, read the Bible. If you wish to know the truth, read the Bible. If you wish to know how to be a better person, read the Bible. If you want to know how to avoid the pitfalls of life, read the Bible. No other book will give you what the Bible can give you. And don't let the distractions of life keep you from the precious book divine. Psalm 19:10 and 11 says of the Scriptures that, "They are more desirable than gold, even more than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your slave is warned; In keeping them there is great reward."

The devil would like to keep you from praying just like the bible stated; your adversary doesn't want you to rely on God. The Lord Jesus warned His disciples of being caught off guard in Luke 21:34 to 36. He said, "But be on guard, so that your hearts will not be overcome with dissipation (that's a big word that means unrestrained behavior. You be careful that you're not filled with that dissipation) and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; (you know cause you've been distracted you won't be watching for it) for it will come upon all those who inhabit

the face of all the earth. But (you) keep on the alert at all times, praying earnestly that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” Oh I tell you it’s easy to let anything and everything interfere with serving the Lord, prayer and building a strong relationship with Him.

Fourth, the devil will oppose the people of God. Revelation 12 is an interesting chapter. When the devil failed to overcome the Messiah, the birth of the Messiah, he went off “to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12 and verse 17). While this apocalyptic passage is difficult to understand, the fact the devil opposes Christianity is not hard to understand! He hates Christians, he persecutes them, and causes the people who follow him to imprison and kill Christians. Revelation 12 and verse 10 reminds us, “And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.’” I tell you the devil wants to tell you all the things he thinks are wrong with the church, but remember: the devil is a liar!

When the apostles in the first century said they were eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, yes they faced persecutions from the Jews and the Romans. They suffered imprisonment, exile, and death. The stories of martyrs facing terrible torture is not a myth. The Roman historian, Tacitus, says this in his Annals chapter 15 or book 15.44 about the persecution: he said that they were “Covered with the skins of beasts, [that is the Christians] were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.” Yes according to Tacitus, Nero blamed Christians for the fire in Rome in July, 64 AD that destroyed much of the city. The accuser of the people of God caused this terrible pain on many innocent souls. I tell ya the devil is your adversary too.

Don’t imagine if you follow Christ that the devil is your friend. He never has been and never will be. He will accuse and oppose you at every step, because you follow Christ. He will lie about you, persecute you, cause others to hate you, call you names, and hinder your efforts. Oh take heart! Because Peter encourages us in 1 Peter 5:8 to 10, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” Oh what a promise, what a blessing.

Let’s pray together. Father we’re thankful that Your love continues with us even when our adversary tries to torture and oppose us and persecute us in many ways. Help us to stand firm in our faith. To love You always and to do Your will. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Ephesians 6:13 to 18 says, “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.”

When we wear the armor of God and take on the strength God gives us, we can win in our fight against the adversary. Sadly some try to fight the devil on their own strength and without the armor of

God, and they lose. You don't have to lose. You can be strengthened in the Lord and in the power of His might, when you deny yourself and take up your cross daily to follow Him. You have the armor of God!

Now to have access, to have access to that armor, you must totally commit yourself to the Lord. You cannot stand unless you have given your all! To become a follower of Christ, you must believe in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ, that is immersed in water, for the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism according to the Scriptures is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ. And in baptism we're crucified, buried, and raised with Christ to walk in newness of life and freed from sin according to Romans 6:3 to 7. Won't you come to Lord humbly, lovingly and obediently? Do it today!

We hope that today's study about our adversary has helped you see the challenges that we face and our need for God. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now there's a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. You can watch SEARCH on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and like the programs. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

Show God your love by worshiping at church. You need a church family. And if you can attend, don't neglect worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us. Tell a friend about this program. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.