

## Christianity Is A Fight! (Part 3)

Combating The World And Satan

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We are going to begin this sermon by turning to I Corinthians 10. This is a section of Scripture that we go over very frequently, but I just want to pick out one thing that is applicable to the beginning of this sermon in reference to the things that were given in previous sermons.

**I Corinthians 10:6** Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

This is the third part in my series on the Christian Fight, and I want to concentrate right here at the beginning for a short period of time on the word "examples" in verse 6. It is derived from the Greek word *tupos*. It is helpful for us to know that it is translated elsewhere in the Bible into a variety of English words, and in other places the same word besides "example" is translated into "pattern, fashion, manner, figure, or form."

These kinds of uses indicate something shaping or forming by some measure of pressure, whether small or great. They can also be understood to mean something that can be accepted, copied, imitated, or followed. That is the most common use, and that is why it is used as the word "example." We are looking, of course, at the example of the Israelites under the Old Covenant around the time that they were in the wilderness. In this particular case, in I Corinthians 10, Paul makes it very clear that one must **not** accept, copy, imitate, or follow what those who went before did. They set a very bad pattern, but one that is easily accepted.

If we would go on a little bit further, we would see this a little bit more clearly. One of the things Paul is saying in this verse and this context is that God had us in mind when He had those things recorded in the Old Testament. They did it, but, in this case, we are not to copy what they did.

In the previous sermon we explored the parallel between Israel's responsibilities in taking over the Promised Land. I showed that a careless assumption drawn from a mere surface evaluation of Exodus 23:20-30 could lead to a wrong conclusion. That conclusion is that if Israel had just obeyed God they would have marched into the land and had taken it over without a fight.

No, that is not the way we should understand it. What other scriptures show is that God tests His people because He is preparing His people for future responsibilities, and the march through the wilderness and the taking of the land was a school—a vast almost 50-years-long training ground—for appreciating, using, and governing the Promised Land. God wanted to have those people ready before they went in to take over.

We saw then that God's promises in Exodus 23 were indeed conditional. They were conditioned upon obedience, and that part of that obedience was confronting the enemy—the people of the land—in warfare. They would not have God's wrath and, as we saw, they knew that. Their responsibility was to drive them out in *cooperation* with God. God would indeed be with them, enabling them to do the driving out—something that they would have been totally incapable of doing without His involvement.

Of special importance was the episode recorded in Numbers 13 and Numbers 14, because it clearly shows that the Israelite spies fully expected to have to fight the Canaanites, the Hivites, the Perizites, and so forth. That is why they were so frightened. They knew God intended that they go to war against those people. They did not understand Exodus 23 as a free pass. They were to drive out the inhabitants, even as we are to confront and drive out old habits, attitudes, and loyalties in cooperation with God. In other words, we are to fight and to drive out and to confront things left over from our pre-conversion days.

Christian living parallels the Old Testament instruction. This is why the New Testament has so many illustrations and exhortations regarding Christian warfare. "Onward Christian Soldiers" is a right principle. There is much to make war against in our life, but our warfare does not involve bloody engagement featuring swords and rifles or bayonets. It is a spiritual warfare. It is a warfare that primarily takes place within the self. Nevertheless, to fight that warfare requires qualities such as loyalty, patriotism, courage, self-denial, wisdom, understanding, and sacrifice to be a victorious overcomer of human nature.

The next line of warfare after human nature that we have to make war against is the world. I personally do not consider it as effective an enemy as the heart that we bear with us at all times. We can never get away from that heart. It is always there under every circumstance, under every situation. All the time that heart is there. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," so it is an enemy that must be confronted and we have to be aware of it at all times.

The influences of the world are often tangible and sometimes very easily perceived (obvious), but at the same time, unless one is aware of the deceptive nature and the

powers of the world and has taken steps to protect one's self, the subtle influences are easily passed over as being of no consequence whatever. "That's not going to bother me," is a dangerous position to take because this is where much of its danger lies. Now why? A simple principle: Familiarity breeds contempt. It is very easy to take the world for granted, lightly and carelessly as being of little consequence.

I want you to remember something. Do you remember how easily Israel was attracted to and began the practices of the ways of the world that was around them as they went into the land? They had a hard battle with that. God makes it clear that it is something to be very wary of and carefully evaluated as to its dangers, because the world has been, in the past, before conversion, the primary shaper of our sinful attitudes and character. It is very easy for one to go back to the same old ways, and very difficult to overcome them. They are ingrained into our character.

Let us get this understood right at the beginning. The world is the whole package of attitudes, perspectives, values, and conduct that is un-Christian and anti-God, practiced by those who are unconverted, who have no loyalty to God, and who have little or no fear of God. The world is a general term. That is all it is. It is the full package of attitudes, perspectives, values, and conduct.

Are you aware that a baby is not really born evil? Babies are so sweet, are they not? They are. But a baby is most certainly born with a measure of self-centeredness which God pronounced as "very good." I want you to look at that. This is why the world says that humanity excels, because they recognize, from what God says, that what He created was something with a very high standard. It was something to try to live up to.

**Genesis 1:31** And God saw everything He had made, and behold, it was very good; and the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

One of the major reasons I wanted to go back to this is that this is stated at the end of the sixth day. Adam and Eve had already been created, and they had been created with a nature that God gave them. It was part of their creation, and God says that what He gave them was "very good." In fact, one researcher I looked into said that the word "very" is really closer to our English word "exceedingly" good.

As a baby is born, we know that within this human nature is a measure of self-centeredness. Why is it very good? Well, the first and the obvious reason is that this measure of self-centeredness allows us to take care of ourselves. If there was none of that, what would we do? But God has given us a measure that is sufficient to take care

of ourselves so that we can continue our life, but it has a future benefit over and above this very obvious one. The real problem with self-centeredness is the *greed* of self-centeredness that each person has.

**Ephesians 5:28-33** So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

The right amount of self-love, understood and controlled, provides a good foundation for the love of others, and that love of others proves to be a benefit for the one who is giving it. This is especially true in marriage because the husband and wife *become* one flesh. Therefore, to love your spouse, since you are one flesh, is also loving yourself. That is just a logical conclusion that has to be reached.

This is true also in our relationship with Christ. As a matter of fact, He is our example. Because of our spiritual oneness with Him, and because we are His body, as Paul explains, *His* loving service to us is the same as loving Himself. You can see right there that God allows us to love ourselves, but how does He want that love expressed? We can express that love by giving it to somebody else, especially to those who are the closest to us—to God Himself and our mate. His loving sacrifice *for her* gave Him a life. He gave His life; she became His body. So He loved Himself. This thing keeps working out. He profits Himself by giving His love to those who become His wife.

Let me give you another simple illustration. If a person loves himself to the right degree, and he *cares* for his body—eating the right food, getting a measure of exercise, getting sleep as he should, and so on—whom does he benefit? Himself. There is nothing wrong with that. His body thus pays him back by giving him good service, and he is benefited in every way. If a man or a woman cares for his or her spouse, that care is reciprocated back.

Do you know what principle we are talking about here? "Whatever you sow, you shall reap." God's law is beautifully simple. When we were born He gave us a measure of love by which we can be motivated to take care of ourselves; and if we really catch on we can begin giving it to others, and His law will cause it to be reciprocated back to us in

the benefiting of ourselves. It is a beautiful, simple system. So, loving service of Him is the same as loving ourselves.

What we see here in two intimate relationships is a practical application and benefit of another principle: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." It is the Golden Rule in operation. And so we learn from our own self-love the measure of the kind of love that we should be giving to others. But are we willing to do it? That is the catch. Are we willing to make the choice to do it? Self-love, then, instructs us as to how deeply we are to love others. We can begin to understand why God gave us this self-centeredness that we have.

What is the problem here? The problem is the same as with self-love, that without contact with God through one's life, innate self-centeredness easily develops into an extreme, and sharply hones evil that gives little thought to loving others as a way of life, and consciously caring with forethought, looking for ways to consistently serve others. So we see the missing dimension.

The missing dimension is that man needs contact with God, a relationship with God to make this self-love work in the right way. Without that contact with God, life becomes all about the self, and—(we are getting back to the world here now)—the world feeds the self its inclinations and cravings. This is where the danger from the world comes in, and the world includes our parents, spouses, siblings, and extended family. It includes the general area we grew up in. Just as surely as we did not have to be formally taught our native language in the same manner as we do a second or third language where we have to be schooled in it, we absorbed the characteristics and peculiarities of the environments in which we circulated.

I had a vivid demonstration of this just this week. I think that most of you know Evelyn's and my brother-in-law died. We went to the funeral in Columbus, Georgia and we had contact there with members of the family we have not seen for maybe fifteen or eighteen years. When we last saw these members, they were just little kids, four, five, and six years old. The one I am thinking of particularly is now about twenty-two or twenty-three years old. He has a master's degree in architecture. He is a really smart young man. He has a nice pleasant personality, but the minute I began talking with him I could hear his father. His father has a peculiarity in that he stutters. The boy has exactly the same stutter as his father. I said, "Wow! That fits right into this sermon." He did not have to learn that. He just picked it up from his father.

That is what I mean what happens to human nature and the world that is around us. It begins very early in life. From the time the baby is born it begins to absorb the attitudes,

the conduct, the inclinations, and the perspectives, first, of that entire household. But as he grows up, the world begins to expand. He goes to kindergarten. He goes to elementary school, and the world keeps getting wider and wider. There are more and more things impacting on that nature. It is absorbing characteristics until that person gets to be an adult, and that peculiar world in which that person grew up in is impressed on him.

I think I mentioned to you before something I read in a book by a woman by the name of Muriel Beadle. The name of the book was *How Children Learn*. She said in the preface of that book that early childhood training is so important, that if it were up to her she would change Proverbs 22:6 to read, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will be *unable* to depart from it." That is how deep of an impact she saw on the children she was trying help, to give help to the parents to make them realize that their little sponge over there is sucking it in and [they were] paying no attention to what was going right in. That is what shapes us.

All these characteristics in the environment, in combination with our own experiences and choices within it, suddenly shape our beliefs and perspectives as we age and leave us with what we feel comfortable, because it is us. And we feel comfortable, in many cases, with the judgments we make because they are executed through the environment in which we have been shaped—the world.

I want you to turn to Galatians 1:4. I am going to read verse 3 so I can just go into it with a little bit more understanding.

**Galatians 1:3-4** Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.

We feel comfortable with the world we were reared in. I am not saying that we love it perfectly, but it is like a magnet, that we feel comfortable with it, and we operate within it. What I want you to see is what God thinks about that world. We may feel comfortable with it. There are things about it we may not like, but God right flat out says it is evil. He does not pull a punch. He does not turn it down. He says it is evil.

The word translated "world" there is *aion*, and it generally means age: "This present evil age." What we need to understand is, regardless of the age in which we live, as God looks at it, it is evil. Whether it is the 1800s, the 1900s, the year 2000, or the first century AAD, or 500 years before that, it is evil.

I want you to look at another scripture in Matthew 7:11 that adds to that. This is getting right to the end of the Sermon on the Mount. It is one of the last things recorded in that message.

**Matthew 7:11** If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

God not only says the world is evil, He says that those who live within it are evil too. Again, He is judging from *His* perspective. We may not have the same judgment as He does, but it is His judgment that counts, and so we need to be warned.

These two scriptures succinctly state that the entire world and its inhabitants, regardless of the circumstances and the environments in which they grew up, look to God's perception. There is no indication from this Matthew 7:11 verse that these people are what we would consider to be *particularly* evil. It does not say they were whoremongers or drug dealers, bank robbers, or anything. They were just common ordinary citizens Jesus was talking to—normal people—but from God's perspective, and by His standard, these people had the self-centeredness that had been honed by their circumstances, and to Him it was destructive, calamitous, stress-producing, and not beneficial to all concerned.

What Paul and Jesus both did was give comparative statements. These people, especially here in Matthew 11, were just normal worldly people. I am sure they did not consider themselves evil as Jesus was speaking to them, but they were evil as God judged them. Unless we are under the blood of Jesus Christ and have been justified, we too would be considered evil, but by God's mercy we carry the righteousness of Christ with us.

Here we live in an evil world, and we are not too good ourselves. We are just a little bit out of all of the muck and mire due to God's mercy. Now pay particular attention to these next several scriptures because they are concerned with doing something about it. We are involved in a war with this world.

**James 4:1** From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

Remember, this is being addressed to Christians. I think the word "wars" in the first part

of verse 1 would be better translated "conflicts" or "strife." It is more applicable to a Christian congregation. These people were not entering services with knives drawn, or with rifles or pistols, or with anything of that nature. That is usually what we think of when we think of war. These people still had human nature working within them, and there were conflicts within the congregation. People were getting offended. Those things took place because there was strife within the congregation.

**James 4:4** You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

James undoubtedly went on to that verse because he wanted to make sure the people understood where the strife had its roots and what was generating it. It was being generated through church members. They were showing their worldliness. What James was saying here was that these people were not as far out of the world as they might have *thought* they were, and the evidence was in the fact that they were getting offended over nothing, and they were retaliating against one another and offending others. They were doing things that the worldly people do without thinking. It was part of their nature, but that should not be part of the nature of a converted person.

All you have to do to understand is to look at Christ. It says that when He was accused, or somebody hurt Him, He opened not His mouth. There is the standard. He was not worldly one bit. He did not react the way the world would. "When your enemy hungers, you feed him." That is why James put this in here. He wanted to show those people where the strife and conflicts were being generated from. They were being generated within the church members, and that these were hangovers from the world, and that they should not be getting themselves into these situations.

James says, "You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" Why would James say something like that? I will give a simple illustration as to why he would say that. First of all, it will reflect on the way Israel was in the Old Testament. That is another example.

What did God call them? He called them adulterers. Their real sin was idolatry, but remember, they were married through the Old Covenant, and the practices they were doing were to God a form of adultery. Now why would God attach that kind of reasoning to this? It is actually very simple. God looks upon the world as a competitor for your affection.

Are we not preparing to marry Christ? We are. But, on the other hand, here is this other gal over here (we will call her "the world") and she has things going on that are attractive to human nature. So rather than dating Christ and conforming to what He wants His bride to be, they were showing the efforts of the world to win the church back through her (the world's) persuasion.

We are going to go now to Proverbs 7:5-11. The first four verses at the beginning of the chapter talk about getting wisdom, and then in verse 5 he says:

**Proverbs 7:5-11** That they may keep you from the strange woman, from the stranger which flatters with her words. For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths a young man void of understanding passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of a harlot, and subtle of heart. (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house).

This illustration in Proverbs 7 can be applied to the false church, but it can also be applied to the world. I think it is interesting that in chapter 7 he called the young man who is being attracted by this woman as "simple"—somebody who lacked understanding, somebody who was wasting his life chasing something, a relationship, that could not possibly last.

In the Old Testament, Israel is shown as being a spiritual adulterer to God, following the making of the Old Covenant. In the New Testament, in the book of James, we find that when we are unfaithful through disobedience as part of the bride of Christ following our making of the New Covenant, we are a spiritual adulteress in relation to Christ. A competitor is coming between Christ and His chosen bride and trying to lure her away.

James is not saying that these people are lost, but they are being sorely tested. He is saying that their striving against one another is proof of their worldliness, and he is warning them that they are on track to become lost because they were backsliding and had already been unfaithful to some degree. The unstated warning is that being drawn back to the world is the cause of the strife within the congregation.

So, how is God looking at the world? This is why I said that the problem with the world is that it is so subtle. It is deceptively tricky and crafty in terms of what we have been called to, because God's view of the world is as a seductive temptress, and His counsel

is that we cannot straddle the fence between God and the world. That is what verse 4 is saying. We cannot have both. We are going to have one lover. It is either God, or the world. Which is it going to be? We might also say that this is also a very short brief expounding of the "no man can serve two masters" principle. It is either going to be Christ, or the world.

These two relationships—the church and Christ, or the church and the world—are black and white issues. There is no neutral ground whatever. It is either going to be God, or it is going to be the world.

It takes us a good while to come out of the world, and God is patient with us, but the "willingly-and-willfully turn back to the world" is not good. That was what was happening to these people James was writing to. They were backsliding toward the world and away from God.

It is very interesting that James used the word *philos*. That is the word that is translated into "friend." This word denotes affectionate, emotional attachment. It is the kind of love people have within their families. It is affectionate and emotional. This is interesting: The first translation renders the warning as "You are like unfaithful wives flirting with the glamour of this world." That is pretty rich. It is easy to understand. To paraphrase the way James was looking at it is that James perceived them as silly immature kids, thoughtlessly gambling away their future on somebody who was nothing but a whore. Pardon my French, but we have got to see it the way God does. To God, the world is evil.

Let us go to some companion scriptures in I John 2.

**I John 2:15** Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

This does not just merely parallel what James said, it is a refinement of what James wrote. When we understand it, it is actually far more serious, because John uses the Greek term *agapao*. That is the word that is translated "love." "Love not the world." There is a difference between *philos* and *agapao*. *Philos* indicates affection. Its warmth of spirit arises automatically, unbidden within a person. You see your girlfriend, and "Wow!" that quick that warm affectionate feeling rises. That is *philos*. However, *agapao* is a reasoned, determined love. So when John said "Love not the world," he was stressing *willfulness* rather than mere affectionate attachment.

*Philos* can even be described as an unbidden puppy love, but *agapao*—never! That is the love of God. It is reasoned. It may have some affection with it, but the affection is not dominant. It is the *reason* that dominates. When John used that, he was on his high-horse. "You people are really in trouble," he was saying, "because you are deliberately putting yourselves in a position of not being drawn out of weakness. You are deliberately allowing yourselves to be attracted to the world." So he is saying to you and me, "Do not have intimate fellowship or loyal devotion to the world." The relationship with the world has to be distant and hands off.

We must certainly live and do business within the world, but we must fight not to allow it to be the determined center of our lifestyle, because the spiritual reality is, as one might say in our time, "The world stands ready to eat us alive." Another way we might say it is that the world chews up Christians and spits them out in little bits and pieces, and it does it so gently, so craftily. It grabs our minds and bends them in the wrong direction. It does not beat us over the head. It attracts us through things that our eyes find appealing, that our ears find appealing, that our tongues find appealing, that our nose finds appealing, that our touch finds appealing—things that are God-given and good. If we can think of the world as being personalized, it does what it does with the hope that it might be able to get a foot in the door, a wedge-type there, so that it can come in full-bore and dominate our lives once again. But I think you understand that there are very evil living beings who are generating the course of this world.

Turn now to Galatians 6:14 and we will get an indication of the apostle Paul's maturity on how he felt personally about the world.

**Galatians 6:14** But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

There Paul stated his relationship with the world. He was saying that as far as any relationship between him and the world was concerned, the world was dead, crucified, and so was he. That is vivid imagery. How much worth of devotion can one have to a relationship that is going nowhere? That is the way Paul looked at it. "The world is there. I have to pass through it. I have to use things within it, but that is it. It is 'hands off' otherwise." That is pretty stringent, but it is something that is so crafty in its approach to human nature that it can very easily grab our attention and run off with it.

Let us go to another place in John 15. I want you to think about what I just said that the world stands ready to eat Christians alive and spit them out in little pieces. Listen to

what Jesus said here.

**John 15:18** If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.

How can you have a relationship with something like that? He is laying it right out there. He said, "Hey! The world may look attractive, it may sound attractive, it may feel attractive, but it hates you." Where do we get the proof of that?

**John 15:19-25** If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. *He* that hates me hates my Father also. [It is interesting that He narrows it down to one person, one being—"He."] If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this comes to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

What we see in the world is the spin-off, the fruit of the attitude that is shown in Romans 8:7—"The carnal mind is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." So that indicates it is going to be turned against God at any point of time. Any individual who truly loves God is going to eventually receive that enmity because the world cannot leave it alone. It will go after it.

It is almost as if the world is a beast that is going to devour those that it hates. Did it devour Christ's life? Of course it did, because He was the epitome of one who was righteous. That is why, because of what they did with Him, we can understand the rest of this is true, that if we are becoming like Christ, the world is going to come after us. How? I do not know, because it has many tricks up its sleeve, but it is there and it has to be considered for what it is. It is an enemy.

The whole worldly system is anti-God and, even though the Christian world patronizes Christ, in reality it *hates* Him. How does the world show that it hates Christ? It does not

do what He says. It does not follow His example. The people may be socially nice, but they will not keep the Sabbath like Christ did. They will not keep the Holy Days like Christ did, and on and on it goes. Those are obvious things.

The world keeps Christmas and Easter—you name it, because that is what it loves. It does not love the ways of God, and so it rejects them, and it may reject them with very persuasive arguments. "Oh! It really does not matter. God gives us the liberty to choose for ourselves what it is we want to do, and how we want to obey Him. If I give Him my time on Sunday, that is as every bit as good as the Sabbath, but now I keep that day to Him," and yet they claim that Christ is their Lord and Master, and it is a lie.

Here we are in this season that illustrates how far this world is from Christ. They are singing songs and praising Him, and putting up decorations that they feel praises Him. But do they listen to what you can see in any newspaper in any major city in the United States of America? They will have stories about the origin of Christmas, and they will say right in it that it is pagan. It means not only nothing to most of the people who read that article, it does not mean anything to the person who wrote it.

I do not mean to make fun of them, but what I am really getting at is the miracle that has been done in our mind. It is something we need to thank God for, that He has opened our mind to understanding, and it becomes serious enough to us that we will make the change because we believe it.

We are going to go to another very well-known scripture in Romans 12:2.

**Romans 12:2** And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Paul had renounced the whole worldly system. It had no appeal to him any longer. He used vivid language by saying, "As far as I am concerned, it is dead, and I am dead, and you cannot have a relationship between two dead people. " That is pretty vivid.

The Greek more correctly says here in Romans 12:2: "Stop *allowing* yourself to be fashioned to the pattern of this age." What Paul is saying there is that in order for the world to get to us we have to give it its cooperation. "Stop allowing the world to fashion you according to the pattern of this age." There is that word "pattern"—the example. It is the same word.

The *Phillips Translation* says: "Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold." What this should mean to you and me is this, that the world's persuasions must be recognized and strongly resisted. Romans 12:2 states the danger that we face when the world is allowed to become too important, and to be forewarned is to be forearmed. The world subtly, but inexorably, manipulates one into conformity with its thinking, with its value system, and therefore its attitudes and its conduct. And so the first thing one knows, one is falling in the course of the world once again if one is not resisting it.

Think of it this way. The world is Satan's media, and it is broadcasting attractive-to-human-nature propaganda and misinformation intended to manipulate humanity through confusion of what to believe. Satan's pitch to mankind is aimed directly at exciting human nature's self-indulgent craving.

God gave us this nature that has a pull toward the self, a pull toward self-centeredness, but as long as one is in contact with God and is developing that relationship with God, then the world is no real problem. It is when we give into its pitch, which is always going to come through the senses—eyes, ears, nose, mouth, sexual organs, feelings, whatever. When we give in to those things, we then become vulnerable to being conformed to what *it* wants us to be, and so it is always going to work on these self-indulging cravings.

Do you wonder where I got that? James told me. He said, the lusts "that war in your members." That is what the world is taking advantage of. Now because of this, even though we are converted, we are apt to become misinformed. Satan's media is coming at us all the time. We heard some of that last week in Martin's sermon, if you were listening ["Are You Being Brainwashed? (Part 1)"]. He was talking about the manipulation of humankind through marketing of products, and we become misinformed. We become lackadaisical, disinterested, discouraged, and having feelings of hopelessness. These things we must be aware of, and absolutely resist.

I do not know whether you thought of it this way, but the advice of Romans 12:2 is a form of the "evil communications corrupts good manners" principle. I want you to turn to I Corinthians 15 where that appears in the context.

**I Corinthians 15:32-34** If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage to me if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die. [There is the world's persuasive propaganda. "Gotta live for the moment!," see, but Paul says:] Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. [And so he exhorts:] Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak

this to your shame.

Did you notice this context appears right in the chapter about the resurrection of the dead? In verse 32 Paul is reminding the Greek Corinthians of the immoral morass that they have been called from as compared to the liberating and noble calling they have graciously been given. They lived in a kind of society where people in great arenas, like you associate with the Roman Empire, fought against beasts; so apparently Paul may have been put in that kind of situation where he had to fight for his life against animals. I do not know. That is one way that can be interpreted.

Paul was reminding those people, "What kind of a world is this that you grew up in and that shaped your ideas about whether this is entertainment?" He wanted them to think. Then he goes on. He verbally punches them right in the nose by telling them that the company they are keeping is destroying them. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." He then charges them in verse 34 to wake up, because where they are sliding they stand to lose from being close to the world.

This is even more interesting, because one of the commentators I looked at, said that it was entirely possible, knowing what we know about the character of the Corinthian church from other parts, that those people—the evil company—were right in the church. But Paul says, "Shame on you!" possibly for two things: from them even being in the congregation, and for them associating with them and putting up with it. That just happened to be a time when the world was overtly right within a congregation of God. The worldly influences are familiar things to us, and at one time in our lives we were quite comfortable with them, and it is not difficult at all for a converted person to slide back into them once again.

I have been communicating with a man who has apparently a very strong urge to commit fornication. He is not in the church, but he is interested. He has gotten interested to the place where he realizes this is a terrible sin that he has been committing willy-nilly all over the place, very possibly with prostitutes. He has not gone into it that deeply, but he at least has come to the place where he sees this is wrong and that he needs to change his life.

It has made him really uncomfortable because he still has the powerful urge to satisfy himself, to indulge in his craving to do this. He is fighting to come out of a worldly activity he knows is wrong. but every once in awhile he gives in, and he is almost getting mentally ill with the depression and anger and guilt that he feels within himself for allowing himself to do that again.

Everybody is not affected in this way, but everybody *is* affected by the world or Paul and Jesus would not be talking about what an attraction there is within us for it, and to have the attitudes and the perspectives and the conduct that it has. The issue for us is to recognize that it is a major enemy, and it has to be fought tooth-and-toenail. It is because of our experience it has had with us in the past that it is such a danger.

Now what about the Devil? He is the third in this triumvirate of wars that we have to fight, and he is a formidable enemy to be sure. But, I think that in a personal sense with me, he is not as directly dangerous as either human nature or the world. Our chances of being confronted by him are small by comparison with our own heart that is always with us, and the world which is a constant magnet to us because we have to live and move within it, and so having no contact with it is impossible.

It is certainly true that Satan is our adversary who walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; but remember this: He is not omniscient as God is. He can only be in one place at one time; however, he does have a lot of assistants who are helping him in his project of destroying the earth and us with it.

It is *they* who have constructed the course of this world—its attitudes, its institutions, its systems and entertainment. They have very effectively used them against us even when *they* personally are absent from the scene. Most of their evil influence is coming from that system. They are its generators. We are far more likely to be confronted by one of Satan's demon-assistants than the adversary himself. That is plenty bad enough in itself, but always remember that God has put a wall of protection around us. They can only go as far in their attempts to corrupt and destroy us and our loyalty to God as He will permit, and God is awfully careful with His kids.

He sicced Satan right on Job. That gives us an idea, an insight, in understanding how God uses demons and Satan. It is to provide tests for you and me to work our way through.

Let us look at some scriptures.

**I Peter 5:8-9** Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

Putting this into more modern English, Peter says, "Be self-controlled, alert, and resist."

The first term, being sober or self-controlled, calls for us to not let fear get the better of us so that we are flustered. God is saying we have to think with a clear mind. The second one there is a call to be fully awake. Be aware of what is going on, and set ourselves in a state of watchfulness and readiness. The third term there is, "Do not turn and run. Fight him!" If he gets us on the run, he has got us. We are to stand.

**James 4:7** Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Again, the charge is to resist. That is directly tied to submission to God. Submission is the voluntary act of placing one's self under the authority of another in order to show respect and to give obedience. Therefore, James is saying that if we do this, the promise is that Satan will flee.

**Ephesians 6:11** Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

"From the mouth of two or three witnesses let a thing be established." Three times now we are commanded by God to resist, to stand, do not flee, do not run. Stand your ground. When He says to stand, it is another way of saying resist. Incidentally, the word that is used in Ephesians 6:11 has a military flavor to it, which is interesting. If one were in the army, the captain or lieutenant would say to you, "I want you to stand here. It is a critical position." This is not a passive term. It is not like, "I want you to stand here and be a brick wall." Rather, it is an aggressive *attacking* term. He is saying, "Do not give an inch. Attack!" If you give in, you will not be attacking, and so standing is an aggressive attacking term.

I want to take you back again to I Peter 5 because this verse is actually saying, "Resist him, standing firm in the faith." We are beginning to put the pieces together as to how we fight him.

**I Peter 5:9** Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

When we put this verse with what it says in Ephesians 6:11 in military terms, a literal soldier would be told, "Do not surrender. Do not give any ground. Do not back down. Move forward with all your being. Reinforcements are right behind you." That is

encouraging. Of course that reinforcement is God. That is pretty stern reinforcement that is coming up behind you when you think you are alone. You are not really alone. Someone is watching over you. He says, "I do not want to see your turn tail. I want to see you stand up and move forward, and I will be right there."

We have God's promise that Satan will flee. The key words in I Peter 5:9 are the words "solid" and "faith." The word "solid" or "standing firm" is used in the sense of "unmovable." In other words, from that context, we know that we know, and this means that there is firm conviction.

One thing that God does not say is that Satan will flee immediately, but flee he will. And while he has not fled, faith is going to have to be used in trusting God. Faith in that verse can be understood as either a personal trust in God, or confidence in Christian doctrine. It matters not which one. Either one fits the context. Ultimately it is the relationship with God, and if it is used properly with confidence in Christian doctrine it becomes trust in God Himself as a personality. It is right here that Ephesians 6:12-17 comes to the fore: "Put on the whole armor of God." That is our defense. It will enable us to stand, catch our breath, and then go forward; to think something through, and then make the decision. Satan is not going to make us high-tail it out of there. We are going to move forward with faith in God.

I might add here that this is where the sermon on "Power Belongs To God" fits right in. We have to have faith in that. David wrote that God has the power, and God is willing to give it to those who will trust Him.

All these things—the antagonism between good and evil, right and wrong, wisdom and foolishness, hate and love, sacrifice and self-indulgence—create choices that must be taken. They are tests that must be taken in order for God to have a clear means of judging us and for godly character and attitudes to become ingrained in our way of life.

Now what is it that we really fear? I think what we really fear is the sacrifice required to make the right choice. Sacrificing is costly, and there is a resistance in us because our nature has been grown in the world to want to overprotect the self. If we open ourselves up in love, what is dangerous in one sense? It is hard, because it tests our willingness to sacrifice all the time, because the essence—the very heart and core of love—is sacrifice. "Greater love has no man than to lay his life down for his friend." That is what we fear. We fear having to make the sacrifice, and so we will allow human nature to rule over us, or we will allow the world to draw us in, or we will flee from Satan because we fear making the sacrifice that might be necessary to follow through with what God says.

There is a solution to this, and to those of you who heard the sermons that I gave at the Feast, they fit right here. Power belongs to God. So we cannot stand there just *believing* that God has power that He is willing to give. We have to *seek* after it. Amos said, "Seek God, and live!" God calls us, and then Christian life becomes a project of seeking God, because when we are converted we know almost nothing. We know enough to become converted. We know enough about Christ to know that He died for our sins. We know enough to know that there is a relationship established, but that has to be taken advantage of. That is what the Bible calls "seeking God." We really do not know Him until we have had a relationship with Him.

That is the way it is in human life, is it not? You may know the person who lives down the block, but you really do not know the person until you have spent a great deal of time with that person, sharing life with him. That is why "seeking God" is so important. That ultimately is the answer to what I have given here. The ability to fight the war comes from God who has the power to give, but He gives it to those who are seeking Him out and conforming themselves to what He is. That is the answer. Then we can be dead to the world just like Paul.

Satan is a problem, but he is not a big problem because you are going to resist him. When he attacks, you are not going to flee, because God is right behind you and He will give you what you need, and Satan will flee.

And with human nature, we actually begin to have a bit of control over it, but none of this is given to us until we are seeking God and really working on the relationship with Him through prayer, Bible study, obedience, and really meditating on His word and coming to understand what He is, why we are the way we are, and what we need to become like Him. That is the answer to that and, God willing, I will go into another aspect of this the next time. So that is all for today.