

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 8



FACING THE ENEMY

Scripture Texts: Mark 3:1-6; Acts 13:6-12; Matthew 10:16-36

The work of the church is to seek and to save the lost. Christ instructs those He sends and tells them that all will meet persecution. He tells us this so that we will know what to expect.

First of all, we must know who our enemy really is. Spiritual discernment is very needful. The devil may attack as a roaring lion, or come as a wolf in sheep's clothing. He is spoken of as an angel of light. We can recognize the moves of Satan only with the understanding of the Word of God and the guiding of the Holy Spirit.

MEMORY VERSE:

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. – Matthew 10:34

Jesus Is Our Example

Mark 3:1-6 Jesus, our example, went into the synagogue in Capernaum and was about to heal the man with a withered hand. Immediately the battle lines were set between good and evil. The faultfinders, the Pharisees, were already decided against Jesus. They wanted Him to heal the man so they could accuse Him of breaking the Sabbath.

Beaten at their own scheme, the Pharisees sought the Herodians and with them plotted ways to kill Jesus. Satan's forces, which cannot get along among themselves, will come together in false unity to fight against the truth. How easily we all—even saints—can fall into the sin of an accusing spirit. Let us watch our hearts, examining as to whether discovery of a fault in another gives us pain or pleasure. Watch and pray.

Jesus showed courage. He did not turn from His plan because of opposition. He did not fight His enemies with carnal weapons. We can learn from Him in our own meeting of opposition from the enemy's forces.

Holy Boldness

Acts 13:6-12 Paul looked the enemy right straight in the face and named Elymas out as a false prophet, a child of the devil, and an enemy of all righteousness. Satan yet today transforms his false prophets into angels of so-called light (**2 Corinthians 11:14-15**). This severe rebuke was from the Holy Spirit speaking through Paul. As Elymas was smote with blindness for propagating a perverted doctrine, so people yet today grope in darkness and blindness when they resist the truth. The deputy was astonished at the clear doctrine of the Lord, and he believed. The straight, clear Gospel of Christ will still cast Satan out and cause honest hearts to believe and be won over to God.

When the serpent's head is bruised, be assured he will strike back; he will bruise our heel. When those in high places see a prosperous work being done, they will become envious. They will contradict and blaspheme the message. To agree or to disagree is each individual's privilege, but the good seed has been sown.

The Threefold Secret of Victory

Matthew 10:16-28 Jesus did not tell His followers of any generation that the Christian way would be easy. The fact that Christians are in warfare lets one know that life will be filled with conflict. Paul told Timothy to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Being sent out among wolves is not an easy way for sheep to go. The only thing they have to protect them is a good shepherd. Let us look into the threefold secret of victory: (1) Wisdom and guilelessness . . . **wise as serpents, and harmless as doves**. The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field. Hence, the serpent's

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association with wisdom (**Genesis 3:1**). Christians were also to be harmless. The Greek version says "guilelessness," a character in which there is no alloy. (2) Absolute confidence in the Director . . . **take no thought** . . . These words indicate Jesus' tender sympathy with the feelings of the unlearned disciples, while standing before those who were counted so superior to them in power and knowledge. Christ promised He would tell them **what** they should say and also **how** they should say it. (3) Steadfast and final perseverance. We must endure as long as the trial lasts; if necessary, to the end of our lives. God is greater than our enemies. One joined to Him need not fear them. As we share with Christ in suffering, we will share with Him in victory.

Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Who is this? God does not destroy souls and bodies. Christ will turn some away, but He only makes final the separation the sinner has already made (**Revelation 2:23**). God has life not death (**John 10:10**). It is Satan who destroys souls and bodies. Therefore we must avoid with great fear any sin or denial of Christ or compromise with His enemies. The Lord has deliverance for the godly (**2 Peter 2:9**). The saint's business is to boldly speak the Gospel message of God.

Our Greatest Enemies

One of the greatest battlefields we will face is in our own minds. Here we have the great battle with self, our greatest enemy. Self is constantly coming on the scene, exalting itself against the knowledge of God. We must bring every thought into captivity to be able to obey Christ (**2 Corinthians 10:5**).

Matthew 10:36 One's own loved ones may betray one to the enemies of Christ, through fear or false teaching. This is happening many times. Choose Christ first. We must neither abandon Christ to please them or deny Christ for fear of them. If we do not love Christ above all, we are not worthy of Him and will be cast out. **Matthew 10:39** brings a very pointed message: He that lives shall die and he that dies shall live. Every person is either dead to Christ and joined to self or dead to self and joined to Christ.

Souls cannot be won over to God without battling the forces which oppose Christ. We must **earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 1:3)**.

JUST A THOUGHT

The only way to settle a disagreement is on the basis of what's right—not who's right.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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