

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Overcoming the Enemy

by Dan Trygg

“And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; ...and his angels were thrown down with him. ¹⁰ 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 brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. ¹¹ And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death.’”

Revelation 12:9-11

“Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Ephesians 6:14-17

In Ephesians 6:10-13, Paul admonished the believers in Ephesus to get prepared for the spiritual struggle that we will face. **There are spiritual beings who are set against us, and we must learn to become strengthened in the Lord, and His mighty power, and be ready to deal with their schemes and strategies.** There is spiritual armor that God has provided for our protection. **We are to take up the tools and resources He has provided, so that we can weather the harassment and attacks of the enemy.** In Christ, we are able to not only stand firm, but we can resist and oppose these attacks. In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, the apostle revealed that **there are “weapons of our warfare” that can be used in powerful ways as we partner with God to tear down the “strongholds” that the enemy has established in the lives of people.** These are arguments, reasonings, false messages that are placed in our lives to keep us from experiencing God. **We “tear them down” as we expose these thoughts to the truth that is in Christ, and bring them into subjection to Him.** It is one thing to “see” or “recognize” a truth. What is required is more than simple knowledge or recognition. **We must choose to stand firm on the revealed truth of God, and bring every other thought or perception into “subjection to”, or “agreement-with” Christ.** Paul called this “taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ”.

In Revelation 12, we have a figurative description of Satan as a dragon, who was driven out of heaven, along with his “angels”, after Christ’s victorious ascension to God and His throne. The dragon is identified as the serpent from the Garden of Eden, the Devil, and Satan, who deceives the whole earth, and accuses (brings charges against) the believers before God day and night. It is clear, from vs. 17, that *the dragon is set on making war with the ones who hold to the testimony of Jesus.* But, from vs. 11 it is possible to defeat him, because of the blood of the Lamb, and the word of our testimony, especially when we choose to prefer to love God over our own lives.

Deception and accusation are at the core of what the enemy does *to attack us, to block our experiential perception of God, and to render us ineffective in our walk and our ministry.* **Note the three areas of attack: Who God is toward us, ...Who we are, ...and What we are to do.** Satan does not want us to clearly see ourselves as new creatures in Christ, born from above with a new nature, and indwelt by the Spirit of God. He wants to accuse us to ourselves, so that all we see is our sin and failures. **If our perception of ourselves is that we are only incorrigible sinners, then we will be defrauded, discouraged and defeated before we even get started.** These self-judgments come from a fundamental misunderstanding of God’s love and grace, and a misperception of the nature and adequacy of the salvation purchased for us by Christ. We may even think that God is angry and judgmental toward us. And, of course, **if we can only see ourselves as hopeless, defeated wrongdoers, then we will have no expectation of significant growth, transformation or victory in our lives.** Furthermore, ***we would not expect that God would, or could, use us for anything significant.*** This is a cycle of “stinking thinking” that is sponsored and supported by the enemy, and keeps many, many people in bondage. Sadly, some pastors and churches are actually feeding their people this poison.

The truth is that God loved us enough to come among us as a human being, to take our sin upon Himself, and redeem us out of bondage to sin, death and the power of the devil. He offers us a full salvation by His grace (what He has done) as a gift to be received and activated by faith. When we trust in Him, we are born from above, made new, and His Spirit comes to dwell within us. We *have* peace with God, ...and we *have* access to Him and His grace (Rom. 5:1,2). **As we received Christ (by faith), in the same way we are to walk out our relationship with Him (by faith)** (Col. 2:6,7). **He put us (our old selves) to death with Him, so that we might live from a new life, by a new life, to a new life** (2 Cor. 5:14-17). We live *from* our *new selves*, by the *new life of the Holy Spirit* in us, to a *new life lived for God’s purposes.* It is a life born *out of* grace, lived *by* grace, and overflowing in the fruits and deeds that come *from* grace. **It is a life that comes from Jesus, lived in the power of Jesus working in us, and a life that looks like, talks like and acts like Jesus.**

The enemy will come at us with false gospels, and false teachers. In 2 Corinthians 11:4, Paul warns of people who will come preaching “*another Jesus*”, or that we may be tricked into receiving a “*different spirit*” or a “*different gospel*” that was not consistent with the truth that is in Jesus. In the original language, the word for “another” means “one of a similar kind”, but the word for “different” means “one of a totally dissimilar kind”. In other words, the Jesus that these false teachers preach will incorporate many of the same stories and characteristics that we read about the genuine Christ, ...however, *there are minor, but significant, differences*. At first, it might sound the same, but when you examine this teaching more closely, you can see *they are not preaching the same Jesus, at all!* The “gospel” they are preaching has to do with “How do I get saved?”, or “What does salvation entail?” Most errant gospels are about *adding something to Jesus*. They are preaching “Jesus +”, ...Jesus + keeping the Law, ...Jesus + doing good works, ...Jesus + some certain spiritual experience (tongues, baptism of the Spirit, visions, etc., as defined by them), ...Jesus + attending our church, ...Jesus + obeying the pastor or leaders of the group, ...or Jesus + giving money to the church, or the leaders. **Then, what is the outcome or focus of their teaching? Are they teaching people to become active followers of Jesus, teaching them to obey all that HE said**, as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20? Or, are they just preaching a “get out of hell” message? Are they saying that those who obey them will get rich, ...or not get sick? Are they advocating how to gain deeper, esoteric knowledge or experiences? There may indeed be spiritual and emotional experiences associated with these “gospels”, but not every miraculous sign or “spiritual gift” is legitimate. We are to “test the spirits” to see if they are of God (1 Jn. 4:1; Deut. 13:1-3). ***If the message is not the same, the spirit is not the Holy Spirit.*** The Holy Spirit will produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23). *That looks like Jesus!*

What did Jesus say regarding false prophets? “Watch the fruit of their teaching, and their lives. You will know them by their fruit” (Matt. 7:15-20). False teachers tend to be power hungry. They boast in their credentials, or their supposed deep spirituality (2 Cor. 3:1; Col. 2:16-19). **Though they may appear as servants of righteousness at first, over time it will become apparent that they take advantage of people, exalt themselves over others, and make themselves to be the arbiters of truth.** They enslave and devour people by lording it over them, and by manipulating or demanding their financial support (2 Cor. 11:13-20; Gal. 4:17; Matt. 23:1-14;). ***They are preaching something that does not look like Jesus, or what He taught.*** *They are not making disciples that look like the followers of Jesus we see in the NT.* Where is the love?

The devil is the slanderer. He is our adversary, ...the one opposed to us, ...to deceive us, defraud us, discourage us, and to destroy our impact. **God has given us all we need to expose, resist and defeat His strategies in our lives. Our strength is in the Lord and the power of His might.** We need, first of all, to be strengthened in Him, and in the assurance of His love. ***A vibrant personal relationship with Him is key to our readiness, and our defense.***

Then, we must be on the alert, always prepared for action. The image of “girding your loins with truth” means that we are to be prepared and ready for this “faith-fight”. We are to be circumspect, watchful for the attacks or false messages that come against us. ***We are not to be caught off guard, or get entangled in arguments, reasonings, speculations, or conspiracies that would lure us into distraction, and away from the things that matter.***

We are to be confident of our righteousness in Christ. It is like a breastplate that protects us. **It is not about our righteousness, ...it is His righteousness, given to us as a gift by His grace** (Rom. 3:21-24). When the enemy comes to accuse us, we are to point to the cross. Every charge and accusation has been nailed there, and removed (Col. 2:13-15).

We are to be ready to share the Good News wherever we go. The enemy is trying to distract us, make us feel inadequate, and shut us up. **Part of the “faith-fight” is to step into the opportunities to share that God gives us to talk about Him.** He will open those opportunities. We need to see ourselves as His messengers. Wherever we go, we can bring a testimony. **We don’t have to convince anyone. The Holy Spirit will give us what to say.**

The image of the door-sized shield of faith seems to indicate that a lot of the warfare will be attacks against us. These door-shields had a leather covering, stuffed with wet moss, so that when a flaming arrow would strike the shield, it would penetrate the leather and be extinguished by the moss. Otherwise, these flaming arrows would hit a target and spread oil and flame, and quickly start fires. ***These burning arrows seem to be attacks designed to have an “afterburn”, ...an ongoing hurt, offense or bitterness..., that could spread not only within ourselves, but also to poison or inflame other people, if we share that offense with them*** (cf. Heb. 12:13,14). ***It is trust in Jesus that can extinguish these burning attacks and keep them from spreading.*** Stand firm in your faith in Christ to be your Savior, Advocate and Defender. Don’t look for revenge or retaliation. Give it to God. Trust in Him, and the flame will soon go out.

Keep your mind protected by the helmet of salvation. Note that it is not just *any* salvation, but *the* salvation, ...*the* salvation accomplished by Christ. ***Bring any attacks in your thoughts to the sufficiency of what Christ accomplished for us on the cross.*** We are to “welcome” this thought-protection, ...eagerly take it to ourselves.

We are to “welcome” the short-sword of the Spirit, ...the *rhēma*-word of God. We are to anticipate a message or direction from God, and readily respond to it. He will show us what is needful; we must act on that.

We will overcome the enemy, as we focus on the sufficiency of what Jesus did for us on the cross, and that we are now in and of Him. He will challenge and oppose us, and even attack us, ...but in the end, we will prevail.