

Exposing the Enemy

-Intro Video: (*Wizard of Oz*)

- I love this scene,, the words from the “wizard” have become iconic
- “*pay no attention to the man behind the curtain*”

-What seemed to be going on was not REALLY going on.

- someone was behind a curtain, pulling levers and twisting knobs trying to distract from reality*

-We have an enemy bent on our destruction.

-Our enemy works from behind a curtain.

- from there he disguises what is really going on

-Sometimes because of our ignorance we end up playing right into his schemes.

-1 Peter 5:8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

The most significant step we can take in defeating our Enemy is to Pull Back the Curtain and Pay Attention.

-I want just briefly to dwell on the state of mind that Peter is promoting.

-sober minded and alert

- sober minded: just what it sounds like,,, clear, calm, collected, temperate

- YOU ARE IN CONTROL::: not a foreign substance,,, not anger or fear, suspicion

- alert : give strict attention to, be cautious, active,,,, to take heed lest through indifference some destructive calamity may suddenly overtake

-So the instruction is for us to be clear and in control of our faculties, actively watching for an enemy who is plotting our ruin.

-*Illustration : Self Driving Cars:*

- you can set it to stay a certain distance from traffic ahead of you,,, and in your lane
- so as long as that road continues, your car will continue on that road “safely”*

-Peter warns us to be Sober and Alert because we are tempted to be like that auto driving car: Passively Disengaged from our lives.

-DISENGAGED::: from our family, our job, our church,,,,,, to just *get moving in a direction and kick in AUTOPILOT*

-some of us **disengage chemically**: Drinking TOO MUCH,,, getting high (marijuana, or other drugs, even excessive use of prescriptions...)

(i am not here to debate how legalization impacts the morality of drug use)

-legality is a completely secondary issue. (plenty of things are LEGAL AND WRONG OR DAMAGING).... again,,, not the point,,, the point is....

-Peter is pleading with us to be sober minded and alert because we have an Enemy who is looking to devour us.

-the stakes are TOO HIGH for us to Live in a Disengaged way

-chemically or just through laziness and inattentiveness

-A self driving car can only protect you from the Risks ON THE ROAD.

-but, if a tree falls as you are driving by,, your car has no way to monitor that

-if a person drops a cinder block from an overpass , your car has no idea

-a volcano could be erupting right next to the road and your car wouldn't know

-Maybe you can keep up with the most basic demands of THIS PHYSICAL life WHILE DISENGAGED

-maybe you can:

-keep a job. -keep the kids dressed and fed. -get through most days

-Without being sober minded and alert you will never be able to respond to things that take place behind the curtain.

-Your enemy operates primarily behind the curtain.

-just like the self driving car cannot respond to threats from off the road way.....

-it takes an extra level of Alertness to respond to threats developing behind the curtain

-Ephesians 6:11-12 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

-If we are only living with the natural physical world in focus we are sitting ducks for satan's schemes.

-Paul is saying there are things that even though they play out on this side of the curtain, they originate in the Spiritual Realm.

-When we fail to see behind the curtain we treat attacks as if they are just coincidental parts of life.

-we fail to see the strategy mounted against us,,, so we wander blindly into danger
-Some of us live like *Blindfolded Fools stumbling around in an active Battlefield and we Marvel at the Coincidence when we get shot....*

Our Enemy's Strategy is Circumstance Exploitation.

-Our enemy actively Exploits Circumstances that appear to be coincidental; to hurt us and to distance us from people and God.

-One of the most powerful books written in the last hundred years is *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis. (*book studies,,, buy,,, read..... go*)

-in this book Lewis creates a fictional series of Letters from an Older Demon mentoring a younger demon

-the letters discuss ways for the younger tempter to EXPLOIT ordinary things in life,, to attack the person,,, and drive him away from faith

-even though this book is fictional,,, I have never read anything truer.....

-Examples:

*-in one scene the person is considering a question and line of thinking that would lead to him faith in Jesus (conversion....),,,,,, he is just a moment away from everything changing,,,,,, **when suddenly the demon reminds him how hungry he is,,,,,,his next thought is,,, "this is important" the demon suggest the next thought,,, "indeed, much to important to consider on an empty stomach". Then just keep him busy afterward till that thought passed***

-in another example it talks about when the person visits a church, the demon says,,,,, "distract him by how silly the people around him look or sound,,, keep him thinking about the wrong things

-normal situation exploited for negative spiritual purposes

-Another example the demon talks about trying to guide his patient into friendships with cynical people. To then use these friendships to help reinforce "how silly faith is"

-finally in another discussion the demons debate whether to make the man an Extreme Patriot or Ardent Pacifist,,, it isn't about the quality of either viewpoint,,, but it is all about which viewpoint they can better EXPLOIT to make their person : ARROGANT, ANGRY, or COMBATIVE,,,,, how they can best isolate him from other people with the PRIDE such rigid stances often create

-Satan doesn't have a warehouse full of Fundamentally Evil Weapons.

-Your enemy is always watching for an otherwise normal thing he can exploit to accomplish his agenda.

-certain friendships to pull you into behavior or thought patterns that move you away from faith and obedience to God. (just nudges in the wrong directions)

-activities and hobbies that take over all your time and focus causing you to drift out of Church Involvement, Devotional Habits, even relationships with Christians,,
-He is looking for things he can use to MOVE YOUR FAITH out of the center of your life and into the PERIPHERAL AREAS.

-Your Enemy's agenda is to Accomplish the 3 D's.

-Division -Distraction -Deception

*-Any time you see those things happening you know that no matter what the circumstances are or what he is specifically using,,,,, **he is at work***

-Division

-Sometimes it is not a question of whether an idea is right or wrong. Sometimes the real issue is the DIVISION we allow the issue to cause.

-Division inside the church and just among people are both damaging

-the gospel can only spread where there is relationship.....

-if our enemy succeeds in dividing us from others, he can halt the advancement of the Gospel,, and tear up the church,,

-everyone that you have argued politics with over the last couple years,, in all likelihood a lingering Divisiveness exists between you ,,,,,, You will most likely never be able to successfully introduce Jesus to them

-you are identified with too much negative baggage in their minds

-When Christians are duped into divisive behavior or divisive arguments, we are playing right into the hand of our Enemy.

-This is not just groups or politics. Division is hugely Exploited in Personal Relationships also.

-the enemy exploits misunderstandings, mistrust, and plays on insecurities

-causing and inflaming offense is a huge strategy

-Ephesians 4:26-27 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.

-paul is not even concerned with fault,, there is no mention of who's fault it was

-he simply says,, whatever happens don't let a day end with division still inflamed

-because then it goes from just being a normal part of life to THE DEVIL USING that as a WEAPON

-Paul's warning was that how we interact with other people can actually play into Satan's strategy and can give him an advantage against us.

-you know that my dumb argument with some person could actually be part of satins strategy to utterly destroy them spiritually.....

-If we are not super careful in this area we can continually be doing the Devils Work For Him!!!

-Distraction

-In our current age Distraction is one of the things most exploited against us.

-If you want to keep yourself from ever really hearing the Voice of God, distraction is a great way to do it.

-there are things we use to fill empty brain space: cell phone, tv, a computer, constant social media,,or other things

-If I put them all down and have silence for 2 minutes I don't notice anything

-But after 10-15 minutes something begins to change

-my mind is able to focus on things that really matter

-often I will have a moment of clarity about a situation in my life that I need to change

-often that is why we stay busy..... we don't want clarity.....

-I will have really novel and helpful ideas (God speaking). My life,,, my family,,, even the church

-clarity and connection comes with focus and silence

-all of that comes when I get UNDISTRACTED

-But Distraction suspends clarity.

-Illustration: I had a teacher once who when the class began to get unruly ,,,, RATHER THAN TALKING OVER US SHE WOULD FALL SILENT. She would just wait and watch us with a particular expression.

-That is how God is. **God will not compete with the distraction in your life**

-Your enemy knows that, so he will use any distraction we allow him to. He will keep our lives, our schedules, and our minds so busy that God simply falls silent waiting for us to again desire his voice.

-Side Note on Distraction: Over the years I have watched as countless people slowly drifted out of Relationship with the church. Because of business in their schedule, they inadvertently SHELF GOD without noticing it.

-Kids Sports. -working extra shifts -various other commitments

-going to the lake all the time,, or being on the boat every weekend.....

-for a while they really missed their involvement in the church,,, and they made it to church "whenever they could",,,,, but eventually even when they were able, they were doing other things,,,,,, eventually it just becomes something you used to do,, something you plan to "Get back into the habit of eventually"

-I can't tell you how many people I have watched slowly get distracted, busied, and out of a Vibrant Relationship with God.

-This is not intended to use guilt to reinforce church attendance.

-When the details of life are competing with your connection to the church and God; this is LIKELY NOT COINCIDENTAL.

-You have an enemy who exploits normal situations to accomplish his ends.

-Deception

-Deception tends to be a Secondary Attack after Division or Distraction does its part.

-once we have allowed Division with people or Groups we are Vulnerable for the Enemy to fill our heads with Lies about those we are divided from.

-we start thinking about people in darker and darker ways

-we want to believe OUTLANDISH THINGS about people we are divided from

-this steadily fills our hearts with ANGER <<<< PRIDE ,,,, even HATRED

-Once deception begins it becomes increasingly difficult to overcome because the image of people that lives in our Deceived Hearts is not Real,, it is a CARICATURE

-That is how Racism and other forms of Hatred continue, because we are responding to imaginary people in our heads.

-the real people around us are unable to rewrite that image, because we are deceived,,,, we are reacting more to the stereotype in our minds that we are to actual people now.....

-Its not just group dynamics. The enemy will deceive you about individuals also to make the division into something darker and more permanent.

-You have a falling out with someone and if it doesn't get fixed up quick you begin to "discover" other bad facts about them..... you become more and more colored against them ,,,,,, Making that division permanent

-The more we allow Distraction to bring Distance in our relationship to God, the more we are prone to real Deception in our beliefs about God.

-then as that happens it becomes easier and easier to accept broken Societal Ideologies and Patterns

-The process of Division and Distraction cuts the anchors holding us to the reality of who God is and what he really says.

-as distance and division creep in Satan can slowly replace the truth of Who God is with lies

-He can replace the truth about how God really feels toward you with lies

-He will replace the truth about what the church is,, with lies:

- He will exaggerate the behavior of judgmental people and hypocrites and
- he will try to erase from your memory the loving grace filled people

-When you are not distracted, or divided all of these lies seem obvious.

-because there is a clarity that comes from being well connected to people and to God

-As we move toward closing I want to point again to what Paul said:

-dont give a foothold to the enemy

-The analogy being used is that of a WALLED CITY

-in ancient times Walls were a FOOL PROOF DEFENSE

-if you lived in a walled city you were SAFE TO LIVE AND FLOURISH

-safe from raiders and robbers and the like

-Footholds ESSENTIALLY TURN A WALL INTO A LATTER

=Like those rock climbing things....

-When we allow Division, Distraction, and ultimately Deception we are allowing the formation of these little footholds that will enable our Enemy to SCALE OUR WALLS AND STEAL from us and maybe even DESTROY US.

-Some of you might be thinking,,, Come on Bob, isn't this a little dramatic

The battle against your Enemy is Won or Lost very slowly and in small increments.

-Our enemy is sly and slow as to not alert us to his presence.

-Our building here has a Motion Detector on the Burglar Alarm:

-if you move slowly enough you could do whatever you wanted

-it would take days but you could stage everything you wanted to steal right next the doors,,, if you moved slowly enough

-by the time you opened the door and set off the alarm you would have it all out before anybody had time to respond

-In the Screwtape Letters Lewis made this point:

"The safest road to hell is the gradual one - the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts."

-Our enemy is subtle.

-I dont say all of this to freak you out, because the truth is that Overwhelming Victory is available through Jesus.

-1 John 4:4 the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

-Your enemy is no match for the Spirit of God living in you.

-but we must ENGAGE IN THE FIGHT

-We must be Sober minded and Alert. We must recognize that we have an enemy who Exploits things around us to move us away from our Father in Heaven.

-it is easy to miss if we are not Alert

-But it is Easy to spot when we know his game!

-Your enemy would like nothing more for you to just shuffle through life paying no attention to the man behind the curtain.

-But once you peel it back and gain a real understanding of what is going on back there,,,,, you are most of the way there toward real change and victory

Pray