

Set Free: Knowing Our Enemy, Part 2

In addition to knowing who is our enemy, we need to know our enemy. That is we need to know how he works and attacks. We cannot possibly win the battle if we close our eyes to what the enemy does and how he attacks.

Napoleon Bonaparte is reported to have said, “You must not fight too often with one enemy, or you will teach him all your art of war.” Our enemy has fought too often with us for us to be ignorant of his schemes. Paul himself told us we know them in **II Corinthians 2:11**.

We can certainly look in the Scripture and learn that Satan lies, he disguises himself, he uses our own desires against us, he uses our emotions, he uses others, he even attacks us smack in the middle of the church’s assembly. Satan will stop at nothing to take us captive.

But what I am really talking about here is taking a rigorously honest look at how Satan attacked when we sinned. Did you lie this week? Did you gossip? . . . cheat? . . . lust? . . . drink alcohol? . . . gamble? . . . have an outburst of wrath? . . . commit sexual immorality? . . . steal? On this list could go.

Too often when we sin, we simply gang up on ourselves with rebuke to stop sinning. However, we already know it is sin. We already want to quit. Just hearing that we need to stop over and over again doesn’t seem to help much. Consider again Paul’s own experience in **Romans 7:14-23**.

If we were in a physical war and the enemy won a battle, we wouldn’t just say, “You have to stop losing battles.” We would examine the enemy’s patterns of attack, looking for reoccurring themes. We would look for weaknesses of which the enemy took advantage. We would deal with these issues first to win the war.

We should do no less with Satan. What led to the sin? Was there a conversation that led to the sin? Is there a relationship that seems to repeatedly provoke sin? Did you see something that started you thinking about the sin? Hear something? Where did that happen? Did it happen some place you can avoid? If not, is there something you can do to mitigate the bad influence? What is causing the weakness Satan keeps exploiting? Is there some kind of “ritual” you go through that almost always leads to sin? (For instance, many recovering alcoholics learn that going to the ATM to get money their spouse doesn’t know about begins a “ritual” that ends in a bender.) How can you strengthen your spiritual muscles?

We need to be brutally honest with ourselves and the attacks we have faced. Start by looking at the sin. Ask what led to the sin. Back all the way up to where the process began. For instance, you may have blown up at your spouse, but figure out the whole thing began with procrastinating a responsibility at work. Having that responsibility hanging over your head made you nervous and set you on edge when you got home. The key to overcoming the enemy in this scenario is not to tell yourself over and over again not to yell at your spouse, but to go the extra mile to fulfill your job responsibilities in a timely manner so you aren’t on edge with your spouse.

If we really want to overcome our bondage to sin, we have to examine Satan’s patterns of attack and our weaknesses of which he is taking advantage. We must erect defenses against Satan and allow God’s Word to guide us in mounting our own attacks.

Know your enemy. Through God’s grace you will overcome.

More on this to come.

—Edwin L. Crozier