

## THE WORLD THE FLESH AND THE DEVIL

### **TEXT: EPHESIANS 2:1-10**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. The Bible teaches that there are three forces -- the world, the flesh and the devil -- which are constantly waging war against the Christian.
2. Dr. Walter Wilson said, "These words, 'world, flesh, devil, Satan' remind us that we are weak and subject to their evil influence. We need somebody to trust in and to walk with in order to make us strong enough to resist the weakness of the flesh, the allurements of the world and the attacks of the devil. We must be in Christ or we will be overcome by them" (*Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*).
3. Notice also in Ephesians 2 -- "heavenly places" (2:6), the Holy Spirit (2:18), and Christ Jesus (2:6b).
4. Notice God's mercy, God's great love (2:4), God's grace, God's kindness, and God's gift of salvation (2:7, 8).
5. Satan uses the world and the flesh to deceive, deter, and to destroy. But Satan is a defeated foe. This fact should be a permanent reality in the life of every believer.
6. The fact that Satan is a defeated foe must be appropriated. The Lord Jesus Christ has potentially delivered every soul from Satan's power, but that fact needs to be proclaimed and put into exercise by faith.

#### **I. THE WORLD**

1. In the Bible, the word "world" is used in different ways. For example, one of the most well-known verses in the Bible is John 3:16 -- "For God so loved the world..."
2. Here the word "world" means a world full of people for whom Jesus died.
3. Oftentimes the word refers to the physical earth. John 1:10 says, "He (Jesus) was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not."
4. John 21:25 says, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."
5. But when we say the Christian has three enemies -- the world, the flesh, and the devil, we are referring to the world system controlled by Satan, which is hostile and antagonistic to the Bible, hostile to the Gospel, and hostile to Christ and His Church.

6. The devil is referred to as "the prince of this world" and the "god of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; II Cor. 4:3, 4).
7. Galatians 1:4 says, Christ "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."
8. The world pulls people away from God. When I was a child, I was swimming out in the ocean one day and my dad warned me of the "undertow," a very strong underwater current flowing away from the shore. It didn't take long for me to understand what he meant!
9. James 4:4 says, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye 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."
10. First John 2:15-17 says, "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. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."
11. The Lord Jesus said in John 15:19, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."
12. Therefore, Christians are in the world, but not part of it. Our Lord prayed to God the Father in John 17:18, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."
13. So we are in the world, but not part of it. Thank God for that, otherwise we would be partakers in the judgment that is upon it.
14. Walter Wilson said there are six worlds:
  - The world of finance.
  - The world of society.
  - The world of pleasure.
  - The world of education.
  - The world of business.
  - The world of religion.
15. He said these six worlds are all described in Ephesians 2:3, "Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind."
16. It is not difficult to understand the term, "the desires of the flesh" because there are many warnings in Scripture.
17. Eve yielded to the desires of the flesh when she ate the forbidden fruit.

18. Lot's wife yielded to the desires of the flesh when she looked back to Sodom.
19. Achan yielded to the desires of the flesh when he coveted and then took the goodly Babylonish garment, and the silver and gold.
20. Samson yielded to the desires of the flesh when he lusted after heathen women, especially the deceitful Delilah.
21. David yielded to the desires of the flesh when he lusted after Bathsheba.
22. There are many, many warnings about of the desires of the flesh, but what does Ephesians 2:3 mean by the desires of the mind?
23. The carnal mind gives its instructions to the weak, undisciplined flesh.
24. The Bible says, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:6-8).
25. The solution is to walk in the Spirit (Romans 8:5, 9).
26. The carnal mind has a tendency to shut out God. The reprobate mind tries to shut out God. The corrupt mind wants to shut out God.
27. A doubtful mind questions the things of God.
28. Ephesians 4:17 says the "Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind" (cf. 4:17-20).
29. What we need is the mind of Christ. Philippians 2:5 says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

*May the mind of Christ, my Savior,  
Live in me from day to day,  
By His love and power controlling  
All I do and say. -- Kate Wilkinson*

## **II. THE FLESH**

1. H.A. Ironside said the flesh is "that lawless principle within man's breast that wars against the new nature."
2. Romans 7:18 says, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."
3. I have already referred to "the lusts of our flesh" and "the desires of the flesh" (Eph. 2:3). There is no remedy for the flesh.
4. Romans 8:8 says, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

5. There is no such thing as holy, consecrated flesh. There isn't any help for the flesh found in the Scripture.
6. Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:6, 7).
7. By the way, a Christian in the flesh is just as bad as an unsaved man in the flesh. Perhaps even worse! Being born again is just the beginning. Now we are to walk in the Spirit.
8. Galatians 5:16 says, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."
9. It has been said that God never tries to do anything with the flesh, except to nail it to the cross.
10. In Ephesians 2:3, we read, "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."
11. The desires of the flesh spoken of here in Ephesians 2 are always based on selfishness. FB Meyer said, "Spell 'flesh' backwards, drop the *h*, as we are apt to do in London, and you get s-e-l-f; 'flesh' is 'self,' and 'self' is 'flesh.'"
12. Selfishness and all selfism is nothing but carnality. Selfishness is behind all fleshly lusts. Why would a man abandon his wife and children, and run off with another woman? Selfishness.
13. Let us follow Christ, and quit living for self, and fleshly lusts.
14. First Peter 2:11 says, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."
15. Fleshly lusts are the desires to satisfy and gratify our own personal wants. Men will pay any price to have the thing they want. A man will throw away his marriage vows, his wife and children, his honor, his reputation, even his own soul for fleshly lusts.
16. Walter Wilson said, "Men will pay any price to have the thing they want. They will spend more for liquor in one day than most Christians give to the church in one month, because they want to satisfy and gratify the body. In application, we may consider the verse, 'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.' The flesh when filled with wine is insensitive to values, insensitive to heat or cold, insensitive to time, or to the way people treat it, or even react to it. The Lord wants us to be filled with the Spirit so that we will be insensitive to the things of earth. The Spirit changes the whole outlook of the Christian."

### III. THE DEVIL

1. Before I continue, let me emphasize that Satan uses the world and the flesh to control people. Satan can take a man or a woman and turn them into disgusting animals. Worse than animals.
2. I read an article about the MTV Video Music Awards held in Brooklyn last Sunday. It was very filthy and offensive, and to me it is significant that they performed this wicked debauchery on the Lord's Day.
3. It was Satanic from beginning to end. A slutty singer named Miley Cyrus (at one time a child star called "Hannah Montana") did a raunchy, provocative X-rated dance ("quirking"). I saw pictures of it. How could parents allow their children to watch such filth?
4. Satan has dragged multitudes of sinners through the gutters and sewers of this world into hell, but his specialty is religion.
5. Satan is a master counterfeiter. He is always trying to counterfeit the things of God.
6. Second Corinthians 11:4 warns us that there is "another Jesus, whom we have not preached," and "another spirit, which ye have not received," or another gospel, which ye have not accepted."
7. Revelation 17 describes Satan's counterfeit church.
8. The antichrist will be Satan's counterfeit christ. Jesus said to the Jews, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5:43).
9. Revelation 13:8 says, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."
10. Our Lord dwells in "light which no man can approach unto." Satan is called an "angel of light" and he is. God gives us the true light and the devil tries to counterfeit this true light with his false light.
11. Satan directs sinners into hell, and he causes believers to backslide. Our Lord warned Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31).
12. Satan has various ways to sift Christians and get them to backslide.
13. Sometimes he gets them to live in open sin, such as adultery, stealing, drinking, gambling, etc.
14. Some Christians would never commit such wicked sins, so the devil has other schemes. Remember, Satan is crafty. We are warned against "the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11).

15. The devil gets some people to believe some false doctrine or join some unscriptural church or cult. Even a believer can be deceived and led astray and get entangled in error. Look at all the Christians who were deceived by Harold Camping!
16. He gets some Christians to magnify some truth out of its proper place, such as the Bible translation issue or prophecy, etc.
17. I am for the King James Bible, and I preach Bible prophecy, but in my opinion some Christians have gone overboard.
18. Dr. Wilson said, "When a Christian takes any truth in the Bible and magnifies it out of its proportion, he ceases to be a useful Christian. Too much sunshine is a curse. Too much breeze becomes a cyclone. Too much rain becomes a flood. Wreck and ruin follow. So the Christian wrecks his usefulness when he takes the truth of Scripture out of its place. The Lord wants us to be well balanced Christians."
19. The devil often gets Christians interested in the pleasures of this world. The devil gets men a better job with more pay, more prestige, more opportunity for advancement, but with no time to read the Bible, no time to pray, no time for church.
20. Some people do not think the devil does that. Remember, Matthew 4:3 says, "And when the tempter came to him..."
21. Then we read, "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Matt. 4:8, 9).
22. If the devil can offer "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," he is capable of giving men good jobs and promotions.
23. If it will keep them out of church.
24. If it will mean moving their families away from church and away from God.
25. In Ephesians 2:2, Satan is called "the prince of the power of the air." The air is represented as the seat of Satan's kingdom. Satan is the lord and master of the powers of the air; that is, of the demons who dwell and rule in the atmosphere.
26. In the apostle Paul's day it was the opinion of both Jews and heathens that the air is full of demons.
27. Albert Barnes said, "It is evident to my mind that Paul does not speak of this as a mere tradition, opinion, or vagary...or as a superstitious belief: but that he refers to it as a thing which he regarded as true."

28. As "the prince of the power of the air," the devil does have some power (by God's permission) to tempt men, and to do as much mischief to the world as he can.
29. We know from Job 1 & 2 that the devil can only operate with God's permission. James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
30. We know from Revelation 20:10, that there is coming a day when the devil will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where he shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.
31. Furthermore, Revelation 20:15 says all lost sinners will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.
32. How sad that multitudes of sinners are deceived by Satan, and they are following him right into hell!
33. In Ephesians 2:2, Satan is called is also called "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." The "children of disobedience" are those who disobey God. Satan wants us to disobey God. He wants us to refuse to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit
34. "The children of disobedience" choose to disobey God; they choose to serve the devil. Our Lord says, "read your Bible" or "pray," but the devil says, "That's not fun. That is not important."
35. Let us not disobey God because God certainly deals with disobedience (Eph. 5:6, 7).

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. To sinners: salvation is by God's grace (Eph. 2:8, 9).
2. To Christians: God has a work for you to do (2:10).