



September 1, 2023

Who's our enemy?

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

We will soon be observing the Day of Atonement. As I study and reflect once again on the meaning of this upcoming Holy day, several thoughts continue to come to mind.

Recently, one of the news sources made another statement that caught my attention because it related directly to what I have been meditating on.

It stated "that our recent previous President of the United States had and has more enemies than any previous president." I had to wonder, as with many statements from the media, where they come up with their statistics or facts?

But, it made me stop and think, "How many enemies do you and I have?"

What or who are some of our most significant enemies?

Some of you may remember the comic strip "Pogo". One of his famous statements was, "*We have seen the enemy and the enemy is us!*"

In sermon messages over the years I've identified our main challenges and opponents as Christians as the "3 S's - Self, Satan, Society."

The Scriptures inform us, "*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, nor indeed can be.*" (Rom 8:6-7) That's a powerful and sobering statement. Even the apostle Paul declared "*I am carnal, sold under sin.*" (Rom 7:14) He was human, like we all are, and had to struggle daily with his carnal human nature.

The apostle addressed the congregation at Corinth and said he spoke to them "*as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.*" (1 Cor. 3:1) Interestingly, the several Greek words translated "carnal" have similar meanings and applications such as "having the nature of flesh, the physical nature of man, the earthly nature of man, the sensuous nature of man, etc."

We humans have physical drives and desires. Humans are innately and normally concerned with self and seeking to make the self "feel good". The normal human, fleshy mind, is described "*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh...*" (Rom. 8:5).

Setting our minds on the flesh comes naturally and easily. We enjoy food and beverages. We enjoy events and places. Those things by themselves are not wrong or sin. The problems arise when we seek to satisfy our physical and sensual desires outside of God's instructions and selfishly are inconsiderate of others.

We have to learn to monitor our desires and inclinations and reign in our fleshy pulls and desires. The mind led by the spirit is one that is informed and committed to disciplining itself and to practicing self-control.

I've spent decades studying addictions. What I have found is when I point these out or mention them I have to be ever so careful as most are sensitive and become quickly defensive.

Speaking openly, much of the addictions suffered in the world today clearly stem around the inability to do what God describes in His Word.

The apostle Paul put it this way, "*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*" (2 Cor. 10:4-5)

So yes, we are in a battle with our enemy – our greatest enemy, our own carnal human mind.

Jeremiah made a sobering assessment. "*The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?*" (Jer. 17:9) The Hebrew word translated "heart is *leb*". The Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon comments on *leb*: inner man, mind, will, heart, inclination, seat of appetites, etc."

We can deceive ourselves about ourselves. We can *think* "we're just fine, it's everyone else's fault" We can be blind to our faults, prejudices, habits, etc.

Jesus warned, "*For out of the heart come evil thoughts, the taking of life, broken faith between the married, unclean desires of the flesh, taking of property, false witness, bitter words.*" (Matt. 15:19 BBE)

It takes the process of repentance, honesty, and seeking the influence of God's Spirit to turn ourselves from being one of our worst enemies, to being a friend of God as we discussed last time.

I can still hear a comedian of the past who had an often repeated line, "The Devil made me do it!" Usually however it is we ourselves who are to blame for the problems we bring upon ourselves. The Devil can have his part, yes he can, and does, but all too often we quickly dismiss our own thoughts and actions and ignore the obvious.

The apostle Paul warned about the conditions that would color the events of the end of the age. "*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers* (2 Tim. 3:1-2).

He later said, "*But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.*" (v.13)

The apostle Paul also warned about deceivers. "*Let no one deceive you by any means. . .*" (2 Thess. 2:3)

There were false teachers in his time as well that claimed "*the Day of Christ is at hand.*" (v.2) These were individuals that were present in the congregations but not promoting the unity and health of the group.

How many individuals have come down the road claiming they have figured out the day (or year or even the decade) when Christ would return! There were those in his day that claimed that "*there is no resurrection of the dead*" and it seems they included Christ in this deceptive claim. (1 Cor. 15:12)

Yes, as Paul wrote, there are carnal humans who are "*deceiving and being deceived.*" Such were we all, before God called us to repentance.

The apostle John also warned about deceivers. "*These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.*" (1 John 2:26) The stark reality is that many of those who spread deception are first deceived themselves.

John also wrote "*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God.*" (1 John 4:1)

One must have the Spirit of God and judge by the truth to discern the carnal deceptions that come one's way. We must prove all things and not rely on deceptive human emotions or be taken in by clever teachings or allegations. We must be careful to not blindly follow men or groups of men or people who certainly sound fine, but in reality may not be.

Pride is one facet of the carnal mind that can block our seeing ourselves and how we *are our own enemy*. We must repent of pride and ask for and put on humility. Then we can see ourselves and determine to battle and overcome our human nature. Few will talk about "Who's our enemy?" We'll look closer at our enemies next time...

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Hoefker', with a stylized, scribbled end.

Scott Hoefker

Pastor, CGM

Church of God Ministries (CGM)

(Ministerios de la Iglesia de Dios)

tshoefker@cogministries.org / www.cogministries.org

P.O. Box 983, Daphne, AL, 36526-0983 / 251-930-1797 Office