



September 22, 2023

### **The Third "S" We Battle**

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.

This week's Friday night letter will be the last one for a couple weeks as I will be having eye surgery this coming Thursday, and then the next week headed to Orange Beach for the upcoming Feast of Tabernacles.

We've been discussing "the forces of evil that you and I battle against". Although it may appear as a somewhat negative subject, it's important to never forget that we are indeed in a very real spiritual battle for our lives! A good soldier of Christ never lets his or her guard down, and remains vigilant even as Luke 21:36 reminds us. Our spiritual condition is the most important.

Not only is the world, (or society) becoming more and more unstable and volatile, we too must constantly be alert to our own lives to not reflect such.

We have so far evaluated two of the "S" enemies in our discussion or studies. Those first two were "Self" and "Satan".

The next "S" enemy is this present "Society" or world in which you and I live.

It is a world and system that is cut off from God for the most part, and under the influence of the enemy and adversary of God, Satan. The apostle Paul reminds us that we all "*walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves.*" (Eph. 2:2-3)

The apostle John in the book of Revelation tells us about this enemy: "*that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world.*" (Rev. 12:9) This concept can be hard for people to accept. "Surely, I have not been

deceived!" some would claim. But, we all have been deceived and accepted error as part of the rest of human beings "*whose minds the god of this age has blinded.*" (2 Cor. 4:4) That's simply a Biblical fact.

There are two mind sets that we must constantly evaluate and then choose. God desires that we each have a choice, as that is all part of becoming like Him, (Phil. 2:5). We must indeed choose. God always wants it that way with those beings He has created.

One choice is the mind of the carnal nature and the mind set on satisfying the pulls of the flesh and sensual desires.

The other is the mind that dwells on the things of the Spirit of God. The apostle Paul tells us: "*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*" (Rom. 8:5)

There is a very real ongoing battle for the control of our minds, thoughts, and our desires. "*For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would.*" (Gal. 5:17 RSV)

Most of human kind is focused on the things of the flesh. That is normal for us. We want to feel good, and satisfying urges and drives seems to accomplish that. You'll notice in movies, books, activities, humans have to keep pushing the limit to achieve enjoyment. Bigger, better, faster, more thrilling! But when the actions and desires are not lawful, then the results of giving in to those fleshly desires will be destructive. Peer pressure is also very powerful, and when society and a world cut off from God exerts its influence it is challenging to resist and counteract.

It's a difficult struggle for us all. Paul himself writes of struggling against that what he would do, and would not do.

The apostle John writes about the "world" and human society with its customs and characteristics that are not godly. "*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is*

*in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:15-17)*

It is indeed interesting that these are the same pulls that Adam's wife Eve herself gave in to. The Greek word translated "world" is kosmos. The Online Bible Greek Lexicon presents several applications of this word kosmos, "the inhabitants of the earth, men, the human family; world affairs, the aggregate of things earthly." We could simply and easily label it "society".

The apostle Peter refers to this world, "*by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*" (2 Pet. 1:4) Even the "norms" of today's society and world are becoming more and more ungodly and perverted. If we are not connected to God we will more easily succumb to its pulls and not even realize it.

Think of the negative effects on all of us and even more so on our children! This society and system under the influence of the god of this world can be described as toxic and we need to resist its influence and also be healed from its effects.

The principle of the instruction found in Isaiah 52:11 is also found in II Cor. 6:17 and Revelation 18:4. "*Depart! Depart! Go out from there, Touch no unclean thing; Go out from the midst of her, Be clean, You who bear the vessels of the LORD.*" (Isaiah 52:11)

Friends, we are now in the midst of several very important Holy Days. The Festival of Trumpets, Atonement, first day of The Feast of Tabernacles, and Last Great Day.

What a stark contrast these are to what the world observes! We've a choice as to whether we will observe the days God has created and commanded, or the traditions of men. As time marches on, it will become even more difficult to distinguish right from wrong, evil from good. The confusion will continue to the point where even some of the elect will be deceived. Some will even mix Holy Days with man's days and call them equal or okay.

We've discussed the "3 - S's" these last several letters. Always be aware of these enemies, and stay focused and in tune with our Creator who will indeed help us to overcome these formidable foes or evil. Self, Satan, and Society.

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 'S. Hoefker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Scott Hoefker

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