

## Ephesians 6:12

<sup>12</sup>For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

### Know Your Enemy

#### I.

I remember when email was a relatively new thing. The rule of thumb spoken about at the time stated that you shouldn't put anything in an email that you wouldn't want to see on the front page of the newspaper. How quaint! There aren't many newspapers any more. Besides that, most people tweet or put on Facebook things that used to be considered scandalous. Criminals are routinely caught because they have been bragging on social media.

However...

Did you know that there is much, much more to cyberspace than what you see? Of course, you realize that Google is out there cataloguing every piece of information in the known universe. Or—is it? Did you know that the Google search engines only examines about 4% of everything that is out there in cyberspace?

Something called the deep web has the other 96%—all of which is hidden to most people. There is technical stuff and military stuff and secret, forbidden communications—and more.

The really scary part is that there is another hidden part of the deep web. Perhaps you have heard of it. It's called the dark web. There you can find stolen credit card numbers for sale, mail order marijuana, killers for hire, sex trafficking, medical experimentation on people, illegal betting, and much, much more illegal activity. To read about it sends shivers up and down your spine.

#### II.

There is a vast evil out there in the world. It's one thing when there is a face to the evil. Thugs and murderers and gangs and thieves are constantly making life miserable for us. We can see them. We can take certain steps to prepare for them.

But there is a deeper and darker evil "out there." God speaks about the darkness of this world. There is a *someone* in that darkness. There is an enemy—invisible, and evil. We are in a struggle with this darkness. We need to know something about the enemy we face.

Before he speaks about the enemy, Paul tells believers to put on the full armor of God. The struggle we face in life is monumental. It lasts for your whole lifetime. Lose the battle, and you will find yourself in eternal damnation.

The enemy we face is dangerous. We aren't talking about ghostly cartoon characters. We aren't talking about the ghosts of horror movies. We are talking about the devil and his band of demons, or evil angels. They are real. They are 100% on the dark side. Their whole goal of their existence is to destroy you. Not just your life, but your hope—your soul—your *eternal* life. There is nothing fascinating or attractive or funny about Satan. His very name means "enemy."

Paul says: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12, EHV). The demons organize themselves in a military fashion. There are leaders and soldiers who all follow the ringleader—Satan. He is the head general.

We are speaking of them as demons here because there must be no confusion between them and the millions of angels still in heaven and around us here on earth who are always working for our good. Demons bring darkness with them—a spiritual darkness that can smother our souls.

The goal of all demons is to remove saving faith from the earth. They want to steal it from you and me, and prevent unbelievers who already are apart from God from ever hearing of God's grace for them. That's what spiritual darkness is—being separated from the Savior. It is walking and talking and appearing to do the normal things of life, but having a dead soul inside. It is being dead

to God; no desire for him, no love for him, no faith in him.

Satan *hates* you. He is actively waging war on you. The devil wants your soul to be dead so that you can end up dead for all eternity.

Peter wrote: “Have sound judgment. Be alert. Your adversary, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8, EHV). The dark world of evil is not a static thing. It doesn’t just sit there. Lions don’t stay in one place, they prowl around. Spiritual darkness is like a blackness creeping out of your bedroom to put out all the lights in your house and on your street and beyond. It’s an active darkness. It’s an evil darkness.

If you have friends or family caught up in this kind of darkness, look for opportunities to speak about the hope we have in Jesus. Pray for them. Pray for yourself, as well, because we are facing off against the ruler of darkness.

### III.

But wait, there’s more. Not only are we facing off against the ruler of darkness, he is a liar.

You have probably known some liars in your life. Once a person has been lied to a few times, one becomes wary. You are careful when people make promises. You are hesitant, perhaps, to believe them.

Jesus told the people who were plotting to kill him about the one behind their dark plot. He said: “You belong to your father, the Devil, and you want to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and did not remain standing in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he lies, he speaks from what is his, because he is a liar and the father of lying” (John 8:44, EHV). Jesus *knew* Satan. Satan has the blackest, vilest, most deceitful heart. Satan hates God, and he hates you and me. He wants to murder us eternally in hell, where the screaming will never stop.

Every person has a native language. For most of us living in the United States, our native language is English. Notice what Jesus said about *Satan’s* native language—it is lying. Satan uses his native language all the time—every day. All he wants is to hurt, damage, and destroy.

The name devil means: “slanderer; one who brings charges with hostile intent.” He is angry and jealous of what God has given us in Jesus. He works hardest at getting us to doubt or question God’s Word. He encourages us *not* to read it or to study it.

Here are Satan’s two favorite—and effective—lies. First, he tells you that you are such a good person that you don’t *need* Jesus; God could never damn *you* to hell. The second is just the opposite, but no less effective. He will tell you that you are so bad that not even *God* would want you—ever.

Both are lies. He wants us to believe that God is not fair and doesn’t care about you or me. He wants us to get deeper into his darkness. He wants us to be angry at God; to reject God’s promises; to hate God. He wants you to abandon God’s Word so that you will be spiritually dark and dead.

### III.

*That* is exactly why the Son of God went forth to war. It’s *not* hopeless. God has put a light in the darkness.

We turned on the lights for worship this evening. Light *always* defeats darkness.

Have you ever been in one of the big caves in our national parks? When you are on the tour they shut the lights off, and the darkness is complete. You can’t see your hand when you hold it right in front of your face. Just a little flashlight pushes back the darkness of that big cave.

There is a light that is much more important than a flashlight in a cave—more important than the lights lighting up our worship facility. That light led you to tune in to the livestream this evening. That light has pushed out the very darkness Satan has tried to shove into your heart. That light has given you hope and faith and a future in heaven.

The Evangelist John is talking about Jesus when he says: “In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. <sup>5</sup>The light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it”

(John 1:4-5, EHV). Did you catch the battle in that verse? “Darkness has not overcome it.” our hero, Jesus, fought against the dark enemy Satan many times. The Bible tells us about some of those times. Most of the time, Jesus used his Word to defeat him. Sometimes he used miracles to undo the damage of illness and death that Satan had caused.

Satan *thought* he had beaten Jesus when Jesus died on the cross. But the cross was actually the ultimate weapon to beat all the forces of darkness—the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh—and even death itself. Satan is defeated eternally. But, like a terrorist who is cornered, he wants to take as many of us as possible with him to hell.

You and I have been given the wonderful gift of faith in Jesus. Through that faith we see Jesus for who he really *is*—the Savior of the world who brings forgiveness and eternal life to those who believe in him. “In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind” (John 1:4, EHV).

When you are in a dark house or a dark campground, you want a flashlight to keep you from smashing in to something. It’s much worse for those who do not trust in Jesus, because they are existing in spiritual darkness. There is only *one* flashlight for that kind of darkness—Jesus. Jesus is life, and the source of all light and life.

Scripture talks about unbelief as spiritual blindness—being completely in the dark. It is wonderful to come out of spiritual darkness into the light of Jesus and gain spiritual sight. It means that I can be totally honest with myself and admit the mess of my life. I can see what sin is and how much damage it does to myself and others. I can see why God hates it so much—because it damns.

I confess my sin freely to the Lord and trust him to forgive every last evil thought, word, and action because I see *him*. *He* is the light of my life—the One who purchased and won me with his own life. He has opened my eyes to see all God has done for me because he loves me.

#### IV.

Having come to see the light, we can see our grand purpose in life. We live in gratitude to be the best we can be for the One who died for us. *Now* we live not for our *own* glory, but for *his*.

Your family members are precious blood-bought souls. Their spiritual lives are extremely important because you want to see them in eternity. If there is something you can do to help them grow in the Lord Jesus, you want to help them grow. The unbelievers you know are people you want to help come to an understanding of what Jesus has done for them. You look at work and life and social distancing—all—as things you can use to give God glory. I look at you—through the lens of a camera—as special friends in Jesus. I love you and appreciate you and pray for you—because you matter to me. I want to see you in eternity.

It will be awesome to be with Jesus in eternal life someday, surrounded by all believers—my family—and yours, too, surrounded by wonder and beauty and joy and love that is beyond our wildest dreams. That is a light that is amazing. Amen.