**DELIVER US FROM EVIL (#3)**

***Know Your Enemy***

Erwin Rommel, the German Field Marshal for Hitler’s tank divisions during World War 2, had previously written a book about military strategies he had learned in World War 1 called *Infantry Tactics*. In the North African campaign in 1942 the American tank commander was General George Patton. In a classic pitched battle between the two great generals, Patton’s Third Army defeated Rommel’s Panzer division in a bloody fight in Tunisia. As his army began overwhelming Rommel’s division General Patton was heard to say, “Rommel… I read your book!” In other words, he had so studied the mind of the man known as “The Desert Fox” that he could anticipate his every move and counter it with enough firepower to defeat him.

Knowing your enemy is half the battle won. Whether you are a coach, a military leader, a politician, or a corporate executive, knowing your competition is key to success. In the business world you must “know and grow” in order to get ahead of your rivals. In athletics games are often won or lost in the film room more than on the playing field. But nowhere is it more critical to know your enemy then in the battle for your soul.

When Paul wrote his second letter to the church at Corinth he was obviously worried about their faithfulness to Christ. It was a church filled with worldly-minded people. For example, in his first epistle he had rebuked them severely for continued fellowship with a man who had committed adultery with his father’s wife (I Cor. 5:1-5). He told them point-blank that they should “*deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord*” (vs. 5). It seems obvious from his second epistle that they had done just that and it had led him to repentance. But the problem was that they had refused to forgive him, leaving him to wallow in his shame without any spiritual support. Paul hears about this and writes these words:

“Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. … Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, ***lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices***.” (2 Cor. 2:8-11)

If you are on a bomb squad and are ignorant of whether to cut the blue or red wire to defuse the bomb, that could be lethal. Ignorance of Satan’s devices is even more lethal! With the former you lose your life. With the latter you lose your soul. We simply cannot take any chances with our eternal destiny by remaining ignorant of how our arch enemy thinks. The Corinthians had withheld their forgiveness of this penitent brother and it showed their ignorance of how Satan operated. In the devil’s scheme of things isolation kills the spirit, while fellowship strengthens the soul. These brethren were playing right into their enemy’s hands. This man’s eternal fate was in serious jeopardy.

The Greek word for Satan’s “*devices*” is translated “*schemes*” in many translations (CSB, NIV, NAS). It means “how Satan thinks.” Paul said we can get into our enemy’s head and know what he is up to in his quest to destroy us. Like Patton, we can, in the heat of battle, yell out: “Satan … I read your book!” Like Patton, we can defeat our enemy. “*Resist the devil and he will flee from you*” (Jam. 4:7).

Peter had learned about Satan’s wily ways the hard way. Twice he was brought to his knees in shame for having played right into the schemes of Satan. Once he had rebuked the very One he had just confessed as “*the Christ, the Son of God*” by telling Jesus he would not let Him die in Jerusalem (Matt. 16:16-22). Jesus turned on him with these hard words: “*Get behind me Satan, for you are an offense to Me*!” (16:23).

A second time, hours before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus tells Peter “*Simon, Simon, Indeed Satan has asked for you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren*.” (Luke 22:31-32). Ignorant of how Satan could deceive him Peter again fell by denying Christ three times before the rooster crowed twice. With that in his memory Peter now reminds us of Satan’s schemes and commands us to “*Resist him steadfast in the faith*” (I Pet. 5:8-9).

The great enemy of God and His people is called the devil 33 times in the New Testament. It is the Greek word *DIABOLOS*, from where we get our word diabolical. It literally means liar or slanderer. He is called Satan 36 times. This word means *adversary* or *enemy*. Other names for him in the Bible include Beelzebub (Matt. 12:24) and Belial (2 Cor. 6:15). He is called “*the god of this world*” (2 Cor. 4:4), “*the ruler of this world*” (Jn. 12:31) and “*the prince of the power of the air*” (Eph. 2:2). He is rightly called “*the father of lies*” (Jn. 8:44). In Revelation John called him “*the angel of the bottomless pit*” and gave him the names Abaddon (Hebrew) and Apollyon (Greek) which appropriately means “destroyer, destruction” (Rev. 9:11). But the best description of him is given in this verse: *“So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”* (Rev. 12:9)

That terrifying description of our enemy should make the hairs on our head stand up. In heaven he had opposed God and was cast out. One day he is destined to hell, “*into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt. 25:41). Those who failed to know their enemy will join him “*in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*” (Rev. 21:8).

But those who have learned Satan’s schemes and resisted him shall become God’s “Untouchables” for eternity! With our adversary confined to hell he will never again be able to touch us or tempt us. Free at last. Free at last. Thank God we’re free at last.

“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:38-39)

Brethren, know your enemy!

I love you. – Rick