# Monsters: Fighting Enemies of the Faith - Part 2

Called According to His Purpose (1 Peter 2:11-21)

Today we’re continuing in part two of our series “Monsters”, and we’ve been looking at those spiritual monsters that we all face, those monsters that want to destroy our faith, and steal the victory that is ours in Christ Jesus. Now, for most of us who are Christians, who know the Word of God, we’re well aware that the world is a battleground. And this spiritual battle began the moment Jesus saved you and snatched you from the grasp of our spiritual enemy, Satan.

However, this battle really began long ago, at the dawn of time, as recorded in God’s word immediately after the creation account. Genesis chapter 3 records this conflict between Satan, identified as the serpent, and the woman, named Eve. Verse 15 prophetically states that there will be this conflict, this enmity, between Satan and the woman, between Satan’s offspring and hers; but he (Jesus Christ) will crush Satan’s head, and you will strike his heel. We find the culmination of this event on the cross where Satan struck Jesus’ heal, but the fulfillment is not yet complete, because though Jesus is prepared to come back and judge the heavens and the earth, God not wanting anyone to perish is patiently waiting for everyone to come to repentance. And so, this immense spiritual conflict, this unending battle, which began in the garden of Eden, continued through the book of Daniel where you find the demons engaged in warfare in heaven against the angels of God, and continues today as Ephesians chapter 6 advises us that,

“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12).

When Jesus came into the world he clearly identified the two sides of this spiritual battle. He acknowledged this spiritual conflict between heaven above and the earth below; a battle waged by the children of Satan against the children of God, and he warned his followers in John chapter 15,

"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you” (John 15:18-19).

It’s not that we hate the world or the people in the world, but they hate us because we’re associated with Jesus, we’re a threat to a world system that’s built on the premise of an earthly kingdom that’s in rebellion against God. And so, it’s nothing new and Satan wants nothing more than to resist the work of God, destroy the work of God, and discredit the people of God. He does this day in and day out through the lusts of the flesh and the people of this world who aren’t submitted to God and don’t acknowledge Jesus as Lord. His sole purpose, is to destroy the work of God, by wounding his kingdom, disabling the church, and crippling our message by accusing the people of God. In the book of Revelation, the apostle John writes that Satan is,

“The accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night” (Revelation 12:10).

And so, one of Satan’s favorite schemes is to dig up dirt, identifying the failures of those who say they know God, and then to parade them before the watching world. The thing is that he doesn’t just use the failures of real Christians, but he also uses the failures of those lukewarm Christians who are planted in the church as tares or weeds among the wheat to scandalize Christ’s Church. And the world loves this, it’s always front-page news, so they can justify their unbelief by saying that the church is just a sham, Christians are phonies, and we’re all corrupt.

This is what Peter addresses in chapter 2, recognizing the enemies of the faith, acknowledging that there’s a war waging, and that one of Satan’s great weapons is to discredit the church by the failure of God’s own people. And so, it’s for this reason that Peter says in verse 11,

“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

Number one, the first thing that Peter points out is that there’s a war waging on the inside, a war against your soul, a war against your very being.

## 1. The War Waging on The Inside

This is where it starts, it starts on the inside, but the Bible urges us in Philippians chapter 2,

“Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Philippians 2:12-13).

And so, it’s God who works in you, protecting you and helping you in this war that’s waging on the inside, this war against your very soul. It’s inward, it’s hidden, and it’s really about living for God in the world, while attempting to silence the critics on one hand and effectively sharing the good news about Jesus on the other. It begins by living a life of integrity, because our testimony on the outside is dependent on our integrity on the inside. That’s why Jesus called the teachers of the law and the Pharisees hypocrites, because they were so concerned with the outside appearance that they neglected the inside. He told them,

“On the outside you appear to people as righteous, but on the inside you’re full of hypocrisy and wickedness” (Matt 23:28).

And that’s why Peter said, “abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

The problem is that we often fall short, and it happens all the time, we do something that breaks the heart of God, and we’re wrestling with the guilt, we’re burdened under the weight of our sin like David who testifies in Psalm chapter 38:

“My bones have no soundness because of my sin. My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear” (Psalms 38:3-4).

And so, like David we’re overwhelmed, we don’t have the strength, and these monsters of guilt and shame are waging war on the inside. Sometimes it’s because of the secret sin that we’re carrying, when we’ve misrepresented ourselves, and that’s why the Bible says it’s always better to tell the truth. Proverbs chapter 28 says it this way,

“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

And so, if you hold onto it, if you conceal it, it’ll just wear you down. Your enemy will steal, kill, and destroy you through unconfessed sin. So, you’ve got to get it out, you’ve got to reject it, and that’s why we confess it to God. The Bible promises us,

“If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

As you cry out to Jesus, your sins are forgiven, and it’s a bit like an Etch-a-Sketch. You know, you can draw all over it, but the moment you shake it up everything disappears, it’s erased, and that’s exactly what God does through Jesus Christ when we come to him in confession. He forgets your sins, he casts them into the sea of forgetfulness, your sins are put away as far as the east is from the west, never to be remembered, revisited, or seen again. But there’s a war waging on the inside, the enemy is trying to keep us from living lives of integrity, and we need the grace of God, so that we can walk victoriously in the world.

Peter encourages these persecuted believers and us in verse 12 saying:

“Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Peter 2:12).

So, number one, as we’re waging war on the inside, as we stand firm against the enemies of the faith, number two, we’re battling the lies on the outside.

## 2. Battling the Lies on The Outside

Now, if you remember Peter began his plea saying, “I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world” and that’s because we don’t belong to this culture. You don’t belong in this society. You are an outsider and a foreigner. The apostle Paul reminds us in Philippians chapter 3,

“Our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20)

And so, we’re aliens and strangers in the world, you and I are just passing through. Therefore, as those who’ve been redeemed, we’ve been made citizens of heaven, we’ve been taken out of the kingdom of darkness and placed into the kingdom of God’s son, and the price of this privilege is separation from the things of this world. That’s why the apostle John tells us,

“Do not love the world or anything in the world” (1 John 2:15)

We’re just passing through, this world is not our home, and just like the Bible tells us in Hebrews chapter 13,

“We are looking for the city that is to come” (Hebrews 13:14)

And so, as Christians, we’re scattered among people of other beliefs, other values, other morals, but we’re just not part of this world. We’ve always had to live among unbelievers, people who live by a lower standard, but we must stay away from the desires of this world, not feeding our fleshly desires, because Satan is attempting to entice us and destroy us, but as the apostle Paul said,

“We’re not unaware of his schemes” (2 Corinthians 2:11)

You see, the only way that your enemy Satan can penetrate your defenses, waging war with your soul, is if he can get in through the gate of fleshly desires, through the gate of our fallen sinful nature.  You need to keep the gate closed, and the Bible tells us how to do that in Galatians chapter 5. Verse 16 says,

“Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Galatians 5:16).

And so, we keep that gate of fleshly desire closed, as we’re empowered by God’s grace, because “we do not wage war as the world does” (2 Cor 10:3). We’re living in the Spirit, walking in the Spirit’s power, and even though we’ve waged war on the inside and we’re battling the enemies lies on the outside; we know that the battle is the Lord’s, and we’re empowered by his grace, because the Bible tells us,

“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power (God’s power) to demolish strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:4)

And so, our weapons, the weapons of our warfare are spiritual, they’re not physical, and therefore the Bible tells us in Ephesians chapter 6 that if we’re going to stand,

“Put on the full armor of God …For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God… Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, the breastplate of righteousness in place, with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. Taking up the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:11-18)

We stand firm against the devil’s schemes, waging war on the inside, battling the lies on the outside, and then number three, enduring to achieve God’s favor.

## 3. Enduring to Achieve God’s Favor

We endure to achieve God’s favor, so that we would hear those words, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:23). You see, as Christians, as those who love God, our greatest desire is that our lives would be fruitful. And so, from the purity inside there must be a physical, tangible, visible outer fruitfulness; just like Jesus said,

“I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit…” (John 15:16)

And so, even though unbelievers may accuse you of doing wrong, they’ll see your good deeds (your fruit), and glorify God on the day he visits. In the very things that they attempt to use to discredit you, you’re going to turn the tables, you’re going to prove them wrong, and because of the purity of your life, you’re going to lead them to consider the truth of God. That’s the whole point of this section of Scripture; it’s an appeal urging us to live in such a way, with such purity on the inside as well as on the outside that we would “silence the ignorant talk of foolish men” who criticize our faith (1 Peter 2:15). And so, Peter is saying that it’s essential that we live our lives in such a way that the transforming power of Jesus is obvious; not only because of what we say, but also because of what we are. And he writes to these believers in Rome who are experiencing incredible injustices at the hands of the authorities, their employers, and their neighbors and he tells them in verse 20,

“If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God” (1 Peter 2:19-20).

In other words, when you accept that situation, that circumstance, never faltering in your witness, but you accept it with humility; conscious of God’s presence, trusting him, and knowing that he’s there, knowing that he’s watching, and being confident that he’s in total control, that pleases God.

When you’re immovable, when your faith is strong, and your courageous no matter what happens to you; when you stand in the presence of your accusers, quietly trusting God, wanting to be a faithful witness; the literal translation says,

“When you do what is right and suffer for it, you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God” (1 Peter 2:20, NASU).

And so, we achieve God’s favor by enduring persecution and great difficulty with complete faith in him. This is a gracious thing, this finds favor with God, and so we endure to achieve God’s favor. And it’s really a matter of perspective, of whether you see things with a heavenly view or with an earthly view. Of wanting things now, of wanting your rights now, or wanting them forever.

I’m going to close with this amazing statement in verse 21, Peter says,

“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

And basically, Peter is saying, that you’ve been called for this purpose. Just as God called you out of darkness into his wonderful light, just as you were called to belong to Jesus Christ when you were saved, you were saved for this purpose, to patiently endure suffering that you don’t deserve. You were called to that, because the moment you became a Christian you became the enemy of the world. James tells us,

“Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God” (James 4:4).

And so, therefore, the opposite is just as true, anyone who chooses to be a friend of God becomes an enemy of the world. As you live out your Christian life you’ll be unjustly and unfairly attacked, the world system will resent you and come against you, in fact the Bible says in second Timothy,

“Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).

Yet we have hope, knowing that in spite of the war raging on the inside, and the daily challenges of battling the lies on the outside, as we endure we’re achieving God’s favor. Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen” because it’s absolutely amazing what you can endure when you have the right perspective (2 Corinthians 4:18). You see, most of us are never going to see the type of persecution or difficulties that these Roman believers did, but there are those of you that are struggling to pay off a mountain of debt, working two jobs just to get by, and you do it because you’re looking ahead. Or maybe it’s a friend or family member that’s fighting cancer and going through chemo. It’s very difficult, but it’s amazing what a person will endure when they dream of a cancer free life on the other side. You know, my mother had seven kids and I could never imagine going through that seven times, but the moment you hold that little blessing, something inside of you tells you that every bit of pain and suffering was worth it. It’s amazing what you can endure when you have a reason.

I don’t know what it is, but there’s something that you want to quit on. Some of you, there’s a relationship hanging by a thread, maybe a dead-end job, or a dream that you’ve been working towards, and yet suddenly you’ve got some opposition. This morning, you feel like you’ve taken two steps forward and three steps back. Maybe you prayed and God didn’t do what you wanted him to do and so your like, “Forget it!” You’re not even sure why you’re here this morning, but you need to hold on, because we’re enduring to achieve God’s favor. And all things are possible with God. He is our Savior, our risen, conquering, soon returning King of kings and Lord of lords. And yet when everything within him wanted to quit, when Jesus was tempted to give up, the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 12,

“For the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame…” (Hebrews 12:2).

You see, Jesus knew that often the greatest blessings are on the other side of the greatest trials. He knew that sometimes you have to endure the worst to experience the best. And this morning we need to “fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith… considering him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that we too will not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:2-3).

If you’re ready to give up on something, I want you to remember that you were enough for Jesus. For you… for the joy set before him, Jesus endured the cross and as you seek him, he’ll give you whatever it takes to endure through the trial you’re facing so you can see the blessing on the other side. Because of his example and his faithfulness, you will not grow weary and lose heart. You’ll continue to love when it would be easier to hate, and you’ll continue to do the right thing, because you’ve been called according to his purpose.

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