

## Keeping Focus Amid Distractions

You may not know it, but you are in a battle: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12). These are the demonic armies Satan has mustered to implement his age-old agenda, “to steal, kill and destroy” any and all of the blessings promises and dreams God has spoken over all of his beloved children, us.

Certainly the most common weapon aimed at us daily is distraction. You may start your day with a determined purpose, but if your aim is to help someone, or do anything good, be assured distractions and interruptions will intrude to “put you off your aim.” See Frost’s poem, “Two Tramps in Mud Time” where two tramps put Frost “off his aim” in splitting wood, and that distraction led to one of Frost’s finest poems.

Once one is “put off his aim,” more often as not, that good task will be delayed or even forgotten completely.

Robert Frost in his most quoted poem, “The Road Not Taken,” speaks of being torn in choosing between two roads, and ends up taking “the one less traveled by.” He plans to someday take the other road “but, knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I ever would come back.”

Here are a few common “way” changers the devils use: coughs and squalling kids in church, spam phone calls, barking dogs, bathroom calls, soap operas, unruly students, fire drills, mice in the cupboard, bats in the bedroom, “tight-fitting jeans,” traffic jams, pandemics. The list is endless and the devils use them all. Right now I’m smelling coffee and fresh bread. I could just as well finish typing this later. After all “the flesh is weak.” Get the idea?

The Bible speaks of the big three enemies we face: “the world, the flesh, and the devil,” and, after making Adam “fall,” co-opted the control of the world Adam was supposed to “have dominion” over. Then, “the father of lies” uses his influence over our flesh and his lordship over our “world” to accomplish his “steal, kill and destroy” our attempts to do some good.

Our only true hope of regaining dominion over our world is through the gracious gift Jesus won for us by defeating the forces of evil through his sacrificial victory on the cross. As He tells us, “The thief (Satan) comes only to steal, kill and destroy, but I have come that you may have life, and have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

Today all the “end time” prophecies are being fulfilled right before our eyes. The good old days of looking forward to good things may well be behind us. But don’t give up hope. “The abundant life” Jesus won for us is still ours for the asking. But we’ve got to ask, and also arm ourselves against “the wiles of the devil:” the lies, and interruptions the enemy throws at us.

All “the weapons of our warfare” are listed in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of Ephesians. And two of the best are “the sword of the Spirit, which is the WORD of God,” and “the shield of Faith,” by which we deflect Satan’s lies and grow to believe that word. The more scriptures we ‘know’ the more truth we will have in our hearts to help us recognize the “fiery darts,” lies and accusations, when they are hurled at us.

Jesus made it clear in John 6:63: “The words I speak unto you are Spirit and they are Life.” And, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to The Father but by me.” (John 14:6)

Every day the news reports of a world being torn apart by factions believing the lies and accusations thrown at them constantly, even by once-trusted sources. Many respond to these lies with acts of violence --from school yard bullying to

Putinesque invasions, turning peace-loving nations into killing fields. If Satan can steal our peace, he can destroy our liberty.

“Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem” and the world. Good will still win out for those who “know the Truth that will make them free.” To proclaim our faith let us “Lift every voice and sing/ Till earth and Heaven ring/ Ring with the harmony of liberty. /Let our rejoicing rise/ High as the listening skies/ Let freedom ring, now and forever more.” “For where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” (II Cor. 3:17)

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