

THE BOOK YOU CAN TRUST: CLOSE THE DOOR TO THE DEVIL

EPHESIANS 4-5

When Jesus faced off with the Devil His weapons were simple—three carefully chosen verses from God’s Holy Word. As we open to Revelation 2, we find that same Jesus writing to a church that had learned the same lesson—how to use God's Word to overcome and resist the devil, his demons, and their own flesh.

As we open to these verses we are reading Christ's 1st personal letter to a church. In this letter He commends a group of believers who followed Paul’s teaching and Christ's example of how to resist the devil at every level in life. We need to pause and ask about what kind of people were these Jesus wrote to at:

Ephesus in the First Century

Ephesus was second among the cities of the empire; only Rome exceeded her in wealth and power. If you were arriving in Ephesus, the center of Greek mythological worship, there was only one sight that would catch your eyes.

It would not be the bustling harbor teeming with boats; nor the roads lined with the exotic spices and goods from the East. It would be the lustrous golden gleam of the Seventh Wonder of the Ancient World: the Temple of Diana (Artemis to the Greeks).

Before your eyes would sit the largest building of the Roman Empire—four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens—the size of a city block, ten stories high, and covered in gold. Cities across the Empire that wanted to be “rained on” by the gods with health and prosperity, sent a gold-covered column for this temple.

- **Ephesus was famous for its beauty:** The Temple of Artemis stood as one of the seven wonders of the world until its destruction by the Goths in AD 263. It was 425 feet long, 225 feet wide, with a forest of over 125 columns, each standing 60 feet high, weighing easily 30,000 pounds, and all being gifts from kings of the ancient world. Each column around the altar to Artemis (Diana Romans), had life size figures all covered with pure gold.

- **Ephesus was famous for its religion:** This Temple contained an image of the goddess which, it was claimed, had fallen from heaven (*cf.* Acts 19:35). Indeed, it may well have been a meteorite originally. Silver coins from many places show the validity of the claim that the goddess of Ephesus was revered all over the world (Acts 19:27).
- **Ephesus was famous for its position:** Ephesus was second among the cities of the Empire. Only Rome exceeded her in wealth and power. The church in Ephesus is addressed first of the seven (Rev. 2:1-7), as being the most important church, and standing at the head of a circular road joining the seven cities in order.

But, alongside all of that beauty and grandeur, gross immorality existed in Ephesus due to the Temple of Diana's presence. All day long, in the confines of this magnificent golden palace, thousands of male and female prostitutes gave themselves in the sordid worship of the pagan fertility deities. At dusk, they would then go into the city to earn a living in the bustling atmosphere of travelers from both land and sea.

Now listen to Christ's voice of approval and commendation to these Ephesians believers in Revelation 2: 1-3, 6

*"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and **you have persevered** and have patience, **and have labored for My name's sake** and have not become weary. ... But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate"*
(Revelation 2:2-3, 6, emphasis added).

Pray

The truth of Christ's example, resisting Satan with God's Word is the lesson the Ephesians learned; and they are a prime example to follow for us to be:

Learning to Live in An Evil World

In the midst of all this debauchery, Jesus Christ had planted a church at Ephesus, one that was well-pleasing to God; and the Ephesian believers were honored by receiving the first of Christ's personal letters to His seven churches (Revelation 2:1-7).

Here we see reflected the best part of that city: Jesus was shining through the saints at Ephesus! When we first hear of this church at Ephesus, noted in the book of Acts, it

was a vibrant church. Jesus Christ was preeminent: ... *Fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified* (Acts 19:17). It wasn't the denomination, the buildings, or the leaders that drew the attention of these saints—it was the presence of the Lord!

The Ephesian church was started by believers whose lives had been deeply changed by the Gospel: ... *Many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them ...* (Acts 19:18–19). The Ephesian Christians made public renunciation of their old lives because God's Word was prominent in their church: *So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed* (Acts 19:20).

We could describe this church by what Christ's Word within had produced in their lives. First, they were commended because:

Christ's Word in them: Resisted Immorality

The Culture of Ephesus was overtly wicked. They were saved and living every day in what could be described as Sin City, so vividly portrayed by the magnificent palace to gross immorality called the temple of Diana. There was in Ephesian culture a very **strong tug of immorality**. All day long in the confines of this glittering structure, thousands of prostitutes, male and female, gave themselves in the sordid worship of the pagan fertility deities. At dusk, they would go into the city to earn a living in the bustling atmosphere of travelers from both land and sea. Now turn to the record of what had been taught to these early believers in Ephesians 2.

Do you see why Paul's ministry had been so foundational to them 40 years earlier? By choosing to believe and obey God's Word:

- ***They had repented of their past lives of sin.*** Ephesians 2:3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (KJV)
- ***They believed and saw their calling in Christ.*** Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (KJV)
- ***They learned the spiritual secret of putting off and putting on.*** Ephesians 4:22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. (KJV)

- ***They allowed Christ to deeply penetrate their lives.*** Ephesians 5:3-5 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; 4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (KJV)
- ***They renounced all touch with their old ways.*** Ephesians 5:12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. (KJV)

Secondly:

Christ's Word in them: Resisted Evil

But not only was their strong immorality, there was also a pervasive evil that surrounded every part of the culture of this massive cosmopolitan area. They had Resisted **strong evil influence**. Because this Temple was the most revered site in the ancient world to literally millions of worshipers, a custom had arisen that anyone was free within a 200 yard security zone. Thus, criminals came from far and wide to find a haven. And, their presence only permeated the city with evil. Again, we can see how much Paul's teachings had been used by these believers to navigate this self-centered minefield of a culture.

- ***They followed Christ's example and were committed to truth.*** Ephesians 4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.
- ***They followed Christ's example of meekness and released their hurts to God.*** Ephesians 4:26-32 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 Neither give place to the devil. 28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with [his] hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. 29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (KJV)

Christ's Word in them:

Resisted Materialism

Another amazing temptation these Ephesian saints learned to resist was the incredible tug of their strongly materialistic culture. The banking industry and the entire financial sector thrived in Ephesus. Commercial ventures flourished, financial splendors glistened, and the often mostly blue-collar church members had to live all day long surrounded by this **strong materialism**. Because of the nearly universal worship of Diana, no one would ever dare to rob her temple area, thus behind the altar was a world bank, for the safe keeping of gold and silver currencies and many other treasures. Again, Paul had spent three years systematically teaching them, and those truths took root in the daily lives of the saints.

- ***They learned that true riches are what is to come in Christ.*** Ephesians 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:
- ***They learned the secret of laying up treasures in Heaven.*** Ephesians 1:14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.
- ***They believed that what Christ offered was greater than anything this world had to offer.*** Ephesians 1:18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,
- ***They began to think about the eternal more than the temporal.*** Ephesians 2:7 That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in [his] kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.
- ***They started dreaming about winning the ultimate prize of Christ's well done, as their goal in life.*** Ephesians 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; (KJV)

Christ's Word in them: Resisted False Worship

The Ephesian believers also were very careful to protect the true worship of God they had entered into through Christ. Because they had grown up around such **strong false worship** they knew how tempting the whole worship of Diana could be. There were the silver 'letters' as the images made and sold there were called, using these images and following the priesthood, led to very alluring, sordid and ecstatic worship. Paul had anchored them firmly in the Scriptures.

- ***The believers knew that the church is a building made by God of individual living stones, that will never be destroyed.*** As Paul had taught them in Ephesians 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together grows into an holy temple in the Lord
- ***The believers were convinced that genuine worship of God must always be spiritual, never carnal, fleshly, or sensuous.*** Paul taught them in Ephesians 5:18-21 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; 19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; 21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. (KJV)

Christ's Word in them: Resisted Satanism

Another way that the saints had been discipled by Paul was how to resist the **strong Satanic, occult, witchcraft** world that had grown up around pagan Ephesus. The only way a believer could last in Ephesus was to learn the Biblical truths of how to stand against and resist all the ways that Satan and his demons were at work. As Acts 19 records, there were many who used and followed occultic books and practiced the witchcraft powers of Satan.

- ***Believers who resist the devil know and believe that Jesus is supreme above all other powers.*** Ephesians 1:20-22 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set [him] at his own right hand in the heavenly [places], 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 And hath put all [things] under his feet, and gave him [to be] the head over all [things] to the church,
- ***Believers who resist the devil never forget that he used to be their old master.*** Ephesians 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience
- ***Believers who resist the devil have learned the practice of closing the entry doors to demonic influence.*** Ephesians 4:27 Neither give place to the devil.
- ***Believers who resist the devil never get relaxed around any of the tools Satan uses to poison the minds of this world.*** Ephesians 5:11 And have **no**

fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove [them]. Ephesians 6:10-16 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against **the wiles of the devil**. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places]. 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. (KJV)

The Choices Christ Seeks

As we saw last time, Jesus trusted and used God's Word as He met and defeated Satan. We also must use this Book we can Trust to resist the Devil in our lives. Paul wrote to the Ephesians the simple truth—close the entry points to the Devil, don't grant him access.

How can gross immorality, such as existed at Ephesus, be overcome? The Ephesian Christians learned how to be overcomers through Paul's letter to them forty years earlier. Let's look at the principles he taught so that we can apply them to our own lives.

1. **By God's grace: I will follow my calling in Christ:** ... *We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them* (Ephesians 2:10). Have you truly comprehended what a special calling God has given to you?
2. **By God's grace: I will Learn the spiritual secret of putting off and putting on:** ... *Put off ... your former conduct [lifestyle], ... be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and ... put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness* (Ephesians 4:22–24). Have you learned their spiritual secret of putting off the old habits and putting on the new in Christ? Are you being renewed by getting God's Word deep within your heart?
3. **By God's grace: I Commit to truth and kindness:** ... *Putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor" Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you* (Ephesians 4:25, 32). Are you committed to honesty and kindness? Are you willing to humbly forgive—even when ill treated?

4. **By God's grace: I Release anger and hurt to God:** *"Be angry, and do not sin" ... nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor ... that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice (Ephesians 4:26-31). Have you released your anger and pride to God?*

5. **By God's grace: I Repent of my past:** *... But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks (Ephesians 5:3-4).*

6. **By God's grace: I will Resist evil influences:** *... Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them (Ephesians 5:11). Do you seek to turn away from all evil influences?*

But before we go today, we can't remain mere hearers of the Word. From all that God's Word has said today, choose something you will begin or renew with Christ.

Decide to start a holy habit and seal it with your pledge, aloud to God by singing # 372 **"Living for Jesus"** not as just a hymn, but as your own consecration to the Lord.

Living for Jesus a life that is true;
 striving to please him in all that I do,
 yielding allegiance, glad hearted and free,
 this is the pathway of blessing for me.

Refrain:

Jesus, Lord and Savior,
 I give myself to thee;
 for thou, in thy atonement,
 didst give thyself for me;
 I own no other master,
 my heart shall be thy throne,
 My life I give, henceforth to live,
 Christ for thee alone.

Living for Jesus who died in my place,
 bearing on Calvary my sin and disgrace,
 such love constrains me to answer his call,
 follow his leading and give him my all.
 Living for Jesus wherever I am,

doing each duty in his holy hame,
willing to suffer affliction or loss,
deeming each trial a part of my cross.

Living for Jesus through earth's little while,
my dearest treasure, the light of his smile,
seeking the lost ones he died to redeem,
bringing the weary to find rest in him.

Appendix:

Paul gets down to the basics when he wrote to the Ephesians. Warfare is our daily lot as good soldiers of Christ. We must wear our armor as Ephesians 6 explains, but in chapter 4 there is another, sometimes overlooked reality. There are activities that “give place” or open the door to the devil (Eph. 4:27) and those must be constantly avoided if we want to not get devoured by our adversary the devil.

Sin that is allowed to stay on our lives without the spiritual removal that confessing and repenting brings is much like an open window or door—it allows the pests to enter and bother us. Unforsaken sins breed the places that the devil can launch relentless attacks upon our lives. Paul mentions so many of them: lying (Satan is a liar), wrath, stealing, corrupt talk. Paul even says “get rid of” all of them as the NIV renders the imperative that starts v. 31:

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

It is very interesting that right in context with what grieves the Spirit’s holy influence in our lives (v.30), is what opens our lives to the devil’s evil influence (v. 27). Start a habit of closing the door to the devil in your life by opening the door to the Holy Spirit’s control.

Get rid of all the garbage that draws the filthy demon “flies” in life. Paul goes on to explain in Ephesians 5, even more clearly what we need to avoid, get rid of and stay away from.

NKJV	NIV	NASB
<p>1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. 3 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; 4 neither filthiness, nor</p>	<p>1Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 3But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.</p>	<p>1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. 3But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; 4and there must be no</p>

<p>foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them.</p> <p>8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.</p> <p>11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. 14 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."</p>	<p>4Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7Therefore do not be partners with them.</p> <p>8For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10and find out what pleases the Lord.</p> <p>11Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."</p>	<p>filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.6Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7Therefore do not be partakers with them; 8for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light 9(for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.</p> <p>11 Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;12for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. 13But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. 14For this reason it says, Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."</p>
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