

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, December 5, 2012 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

VICTORY IN JESUS OVER ENEMIES THAT DEFEAT US “My Enemy, Me”

1 John 5:4-5, Genesis 2-3, Mark 10:35-45, Romans 7:15-25, Matthew 16:24, James 3:13-18

“⁴For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.” -1 John 5:4-5

The song, “Victory in Jesus” written by Eugene Bartlett, a prolific hymn writer, having composed several hundred hymns. Bartlett was born in Christmas Eve in 1885. He dedicated his life to Jesus Christ at an early age. He is considered by many to be the founding father of Southern Gospel Music, and he was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 1979. Throughout his 56 years of life, he composed more than 800 hymns and gospel songs. He was the founder of the Hartford Music Company and Music Institute. The school attracted many talented artist and became known for publishing great Christian songs and hymnbooks, many of which he wrote himself. He gave many very famous hymn writers their first opportunities to publish their music. Among them was Alfred E. Brumley who wrote “I’ll Fly Away” and “Turn your Radio On.”

Bartlett had a massive stroke that ended his career and he became confined to one room in 1939, unable to communicate. Dying, he spent almost a month writing his very last song, when most of his hymns were written in just a few simple minutes. Although broken in health, and unable to speak, he wanted to demonstrate that his great faith in Jesus Christ had not cracked under suffering and his great victory over doubt and despair. That last hymn was “Victory in Jesus.” Bartlett died in 1941,

VICTORY IN JESUS

By E.M. Bartlett

(Hymn #426)

I heard an old, old story, how a Savior came from glory
How He gave His life on Calvary to save a wretch like me
I heard about His groaning, of His precious blood's atoning
Then I repented of my sins, and won the victory

I heard about His healing, of His cleansing pow'r revealing
How He made the lame to walk again, and caused the blind to see
And then I cried, "Dear Jesus, come and heal my broken spirit,"
And somehow Jesus came and brought to me the victory

I heard about a mansion He has built for me in glory
 And I heard about the streets of gold beyond the crystal sea
 About the angels singing, and the old redemption story
 And some sweet day I'll sing up there the song of victory

(Chorus) O victory in Jesus, my Savior, forever
 He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood
 He loved me ere I knew Him, and all my love is due Him
 He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood

Christians are overcomers and truly are to live victorious Christian lives every day, but let's be honest, there are many enemies along that way that daily steal our victory and sometimes defeat us. We know the saying we may win the war, yet lose the battle. We ultimately know that we win and will be victorious in the end, but it's the daily battles that defeat us and keep us from living the victorious and abundant life that Christ came to give us daily. This study is about finding victory in Jesus over those enemies that so often defeat us. They can be numerous and varied. They can make an insidious assault on our lives as believers, stealing our joy, dashing our hopes, creating disillusionment and despair in our lives, and keeping us from the abundant life that Jesus desires for us.

We started off in this study looking at the enemy of "fear" and its paralyzing effect on our lives as believers. You may remember that we read a quote from the famous American essayist, lecturer and poet, **Ralph Waldo Emerson** who said, **"Fear defeats more people than any other one thing in the world."** We talked about what the Bible has to say about fear and more particularly about overcoming our fears in order that our faith can flourish and grow. Then we turned our attention to another enemy the enemy of "doubt." Remember the great preacher, **Charles Haddon Spurgeon** said about doubt, **"Doubt discovers difficulties which it never solves; it creates hesitancy, despondency, despair. Its progress is the decay of comfort, the death of peace. "Believe!" is the word which speaks life into a man, but doubt nails down his coffin."** Doubt defeats and disillusiones the lives of many professing believer and keep them from enjoying the full benefits of their faith and the victorious Christian life that Christ died to give them. So we've talked about how to defeat and overcome fear and doubt in our lives as believers in order that we might be able to live victorious Christian lives and not be held captive by these deadly enemies that can often plague our lives even as believers.

You know, fear and doubt, really aren't your worst enemies... not really. Those two things, fear and doubt, can defeat us as believers and take a terrible toll on our spiritual and even physical life, yet then may in fact, actually be alerting us to something deeper going on with us... warning signs of a greater enemy at work within. As strange as it may seem, your worst enemy is with you wherever you go. Even when you go to church, your worst enemy follows. Your worst enemy has sung hymns, read the Scriptures – even bowed his/her head and prayed right along with you. Interestingly, this enemy doesn't sit in front, behind you or beside you... instead, this enemy has sat in your very seat! Your worst enemy is named "Self," and "Self" can become the greatest enemy that a believer will face. The Apostle Paul called him the "old man." Sometimes Scripture refers to this enemy as the "flesh"... it talking about me, us, our self. I have to admit that my worst enemy is...well, ME... my enemy, me. Chances are you have probably cursed and hated him often, while at other times you have sought to please, exalt, and even protect him. This enemy is afflicted with a disease called "selfishness," which demands to be

satisfied and is the opposite of “selflessness”... a more accurate picture of what should be coming from the life of a genuine believer. Let’s be honest, most of us would say and perhaps correctly “I am not a selfish person.” Yet, given the human propensity and right opportunity each one of us has the potential to act selfishly and probably will. Now the enemy of self, is a powerful, controlling enemy, that blinds us, hardens us, and holds us captive... this enemy clouds our judgment and even deceives us, but this enemy is absolutely not undefeatable fortunately. Scripture give us hope and help in the dealing with the enemy of self. We truly can find victory in Jesus over this enemy that tags along with us wherever we go, but in order to find it we need to understand this enemy deeply and honestly and be prepared to do daily battle. Let’s look at what Scripture has to say about my enemy me.

I. RELATIONSHIP OF ADAM AND EVE: A Picture of Selflessness (Genesis 2:15-25)

In Genesis 2 we find the first picture of human life devoid of selfishness given in Scripture. There we read about the Garden of Eden – a place of unimaginable beauty and perfect innocence. In such an environment, God created a man and a woman and brought them together in an ideal marriage. The relationship they enjoyed is simply expressed in **verse 25**, *“The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.”* The Hebrew word for “naked” in this context means “to be laid bare” or “poured out completely.” Their relationship with one another was fully transparent; they were open and unguarded in every way toward each other. The Hebrew term translated “no shame” or “not ashamed” carries a reciprocal idea here which means “they were not ashamed before one another” or not “self-conscious.” Adam and Eve experienced an innocent, non-defensive relationship. Between them there were no hidden areas; all forms of resistance were lacking. Selfishness was not yet born into human life. They were selfless and other-conscious rather than selfish and self-conscious... each was completely engrossed in the other rather than in themselves... how beautiful that God created us that way... to be other-conscious rather than self-conscious. So where did “self-consciousness” come from? Hum!

3 Observations on Selflessness:

- 1. God cares about our needs, there is no need for us to be selfish** – Becoming self-concerned and self-conscious can come on us when we think “no one cares,” “no one understand,” but that is simply not true according to the overwhelming record we have in God’s Word. The one who created it all and created it all by His mere spoken word does care and He sees. **1 Peter 5:7**... great verse, *“Cast all your care upon him because He cares for you.”* Every care... He really does!
- 2. God provides for our needs, there is no need for us to be self-consumed** – God will provide all that we need. We don’t really have to look out for our own best interested. God already that that in mind. **Philippians 4:19** says, *“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”*
- 3. We are free to focus others, because God cares about our needs and provides for our needs** - Being used by God to care for and provide for their needs through us and to His glory because He is taking care of and providing for us.

II. RESULTS OF SIN: A Preoccupation with Self (Genesis 3:1-12)

Then came sin, an event that radically affected all of human history. In direct opposition to God’s command, Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree (Genesis 3:1-6, see Gen. 2:16-

17). And when they did according to verse 7, *“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.”*

3 Results of Sin in Man:

1. **Preoccupation with self** - The first result of their sin was not rebellion or hostility but a sudden preoccupation with themselves, as shown by their shame over their nakedness. Each immediately began to look out for number one... for “themselves.” verse 7, *“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.”* Put another way, they became self-conscious... self-centered rather than other-centered. Consequently, they tried to cover up their unclothed bodies.
2. **Pulling-away of self** – Particularly a “pulling-away of self” from God and from others. If Adam and Eve’s sudden preoccupation with self was not enough, they also tried to hide themselves from God. Verse 8 says, *“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.”* The very garden that was created by God for their good pleasure, they turned into a sinner’s hideout! Then the all-knowing God called out to Adam *“Where are you?”* (v.9), that is *“Why are you trying to conceal yourself?”* And Adam responded in verse 10 by saying, *“I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.”* God’s penetrating reply/question to Adam was, *“Who told you that you were naked?”* (v.11a). Until sin shattered paradise, Adam and Eve were so other-conscious that they were completely unaware of their own physical condition. But now that had changed. That led to the third result of sin.
3. **Preservation/Protection of self** - When God confronted Adam about his newly acquired self-centeredness, Adam hurled the blame toward Eve and even the Lord Himself in verse 12, *“The man (Adam) said, ‘The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it.’”*

What we see in this account of the first human sin has since been reenacted in countless ways throughout human history. Sin bring with it a preoccupation with “self”... my enemy, me and a withdrawal from a concern for others and from God. Self-centeredness, self-protection, and self-exaltation pervade a life characterized by sin. We all exhibit these traits because we are all sinners. But God has provided a path for change.

III. REALM OF SELF VS SELFLESS: Selflessness Restored (Mark 10:35-45, Philippians 2:3-4)

(READ: Mark 10:35-45) After innumerable generations of sinners, a virgin named Mary miraculously conceived and gave birth to a unique individual – Jesus Christ. He was entirely without sin, thus, completely unselfish... selfless in fact. He gathered around Himself twelve sinners whom He chose to personally disciple. Two of these followers, James and John, were brothers and former fishermen.

3 Contrasts Between Self and Selflessness:

1. **Self will demand its own way (agenda)... selflessness restored has no agenda but living for and honoring Him** - One day James and John came to Jesus in all of their self-

centeredness and made a request of Him, found in Mark 10:37, “*They (James and John) replied, ‘Let one of us sit at your right and the other are your life in your glory.’*” Jesus first told them that they did not know what they were asking for (v.38a). They came with a “selfish agenda.” Give us a place of prominence and authority over others. Make us look good and more important than all the others. We want success, power, prestige, prominence. Does self and our own pride ever require prominence? Yes, we want to be noticed, patted on the back, given prominence for who we are and want we do. Even within the church, the body of Christ, my enemy me can reek havoc when the “me”... “I” don’t get the recognition, the praise, the thanks, the pat on the back, to notice “I” think “I” deserve.. I love the heart and prayer of John the Baptist in John 3:30 when he said of Jesus said of Jesus, “*He must increase, but I must decrease.*” (John 3:30) (NIV “*He must become greater; I must become less.*”)

2. **Self will come with a faulty, skewed vision... selflessness restored has an accurate perspective and vision of God and who He is** – Selfishness always has a skewed vision because it’s motive is based on self and what will promote self. A genuine Christ-like spirit operates with no motive but His with the understanding that it’s all about Him. Jesus directly answered the request of James and John by saying in verse 40, “*But to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.*” In other words, “Guy, you aren’t seeing clearly here! God owes us nothing and what He does in His Kingdom is His Sovereign business not ours. Listen, as believers, Christians, we much live, and breath and operate with God in mind... the one we serve and live for, and have give our “self” to.
3. **Self will create disharmony and division... selflessness restored creates unity and harmony** – Selfishness and looking out for our own self-interest will almost always create division and disharmony... jealousy and envy follow. It has at its core the creation of such, because self wants to be exalted above others. A genuine Christ-like spirit should always promote and open the doors of unity, harmony, brotherly love, fellowship and service to others... not close them. When the other disciples heard this dialogue between Jesus and James and John it created a divisive problem verse 41 says they “*became indignant with James and John.*”

So Jesus called the twelve disciples to come closer to Him, and he began to give them some illuminating counsel on defeating the enemy that warred within them and what it really meant to follow Him and be one of his disciples... it all had to do with putting the enemy of self to death and living for another... namely Him. Listen close to his instruction in Mark 10:42-45, “*Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be first must be slave (bond servant) of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for man.’*”

The world system works through intimidation, abusive power, and self-centered drive. But God people are not to operate this way. They are to live the lives of selfless servants, sacrificing themselves and their possessions for others just as Christ, the Son of God who became the son of Man, did. The Apostle summarized this timeless teaching well when he wrote in Philippians 2:3-4, “*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in*

humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

IV. REALIZING VICTORY OVER THE ENEMY OF SELF: Scriptural reminders and helps for dealing with my enemy, me (Various Scripture)

3 Practical Helps for Living Victoriously Over the Enemy of Self:

1. **Honestly admit and engage the battle raging in you (Romans 7:15-25)** – Paul honestly and I might add transparently acknowledges the battle within in **Romans 7:15-25**, ¹⁵ *I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.* ¹⁶ *And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.* ¹⁷ *As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.* ¹⁸ *I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.^[a] For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.* ¹⁹ *For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.* ²⁰ *Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.* ²¹ *So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.* ²² *For in my inner being I delight in God’s law;* ²³ *but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.* ²⁴ *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?* ²⁵ *Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.”* Paul is essentially saying, “Listen, fellas, I am my own worst enemy here and there is this constant enemy raging within.” I believe that is the first step in defeat the enemy of self... call his (or you own) hand on it. Don’t let yourself get away with it. There is an old Native American India tale, often quoted by George Bernard Shaw that says, *“There are two dogs inside me. One of the dog is mean and evil. The other dog is good. The mean dog fights the good dog all the time. And the one that usually wins is the one I feed the most. A story told by a Native American tribal leader describing his own inner struggles.”* (Harold S. Kushner, *Living A Life That Matters*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2001, pg. 58-59).
2. **Practically resist and deny your inclination toward self (Matthew 16:24)** – Isn’t that essentially what Jesus said was the cost of discipleship... of really, truly, genuinely following Him. He said it like this in **Matthew 16:24**, ²⁴ *Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’”* The theme of “self-denial” was a common thread in Christ’s teaching to his disciples. The kind of self-denial He sought was not a reclusive asceticism (see notes on 7:34), but a willingness to obey His commandments, serve one another, and even suffer – perhaps even die – for His (Christ’s) sake. The great Biblical scholar/theologian, **William Barclay** says about “self-denial,” *“Ordinarily we use the word ‘self-denial’ in a restricted sense. We use it to mean doing without something, giving up something. For instance, a week of self-denial is a week when we do without certain pleasures or luxuries, usually in order to contribute to some good cause. But that is only a very small part of what Jesus meant by ‘self-denial’ here. To deny oneself means in every moment of life to say no to self, and to say yes to God. To deny oneself means once, finally and for all to dethrone self and to enthrone God. To deny self means to obliterate self as the dominant principle*

of life, and to make God the ruling principle, more, the ruling passion, of life. The life of constant self-denial is the life of constant assent (agreement, approval, consent) to God.” From Barclay’s definition and understand of “self-denial” we can glean 3 practical life applications for winning this battle.

3 Practical Helps for Winning the Battle of Self-denial: (William Barclay)

- (1) **To deny oneself means in every moment of life to say no to self, and to say yes to God -**
- (2) **To deny oneself means once, finally and for all to dethrone self and to enthrone God -**
- (3) **To deny self means to obliterate self as the dominant principle of life, and to make God the ruling principle, more, the ruling passion, of life -**

Barclay, remember, goes on to say, “... *The life of constant self-denial is the life of constant assent (agreement, approval, consent) to God.*” In other words, if I will do this it will change the way I live, it will change my walk and relationship with God, it will grant to me victory in my step.

3. **Humbly seek and live with Godly wisdom (James 3:13-18)**– James, the half-brother, of Jesus, who obviously was not only saved and transformed by Jesus, but learned to live by a great deal of His divine wisdom said this in James 3:13-18, just listen to it... very practical, ¹³ *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.* ¹⁴ *But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.* ¹⁵ *Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil.* ¹⁶ *For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.* ¹⁷ *But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.* ¹⁸ *Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.”*

4 Active Ways to Seek to Live It:

- (1) **Acknowledge the struggle with self (v.14)** – “... *do not... deny the truth.*” Don’t try to hide it, or cover it up, or pretend it’s not there. It is!
- (2) **Recognize the beginnings of the struggle (v.15)** – “*Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil.*” We have already that our struggle with this enemy of self, began in the garden in our Genesis account. The ultimate enemy of God and man, Satan, introduced us to the struggle with this new enemy that has plagued mankind ever sense.
- (3) **Realize the problems this enemy will ultimately introduce in your life (v.16)** – “*For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.*”
- (4) **Experience the wonderful benefits for your life and others that a life of self-denial will produce (v.17)** - ¹⁷ *But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.*” Wow! What a list? This is what we need in the church, in this church, in our families. Mediate on these things and you will find that they just

simply are not possible in a life controlled by the enemy of self. On the other hand, in the life of a genuine believer, who is daily denying self and taking up his or her cross and following after Jesus they are not only possible, but they are inevitable. What James is picturing there for us is victory in Jesus over this enemy that is our to defeat us. It is only possible through Jesus Christ and a life focused on Him alone.