

WAR FOR ONE

Hey everyone, and welcome back to our brand new series, *War for One* where we are talking about the spiritual battle taking place all around us. This weekend we celebrate Independence Day. On July 4, 1776, 56 representatives from all 13 colonies signed the Declaration of Independence, seeking to free themselves from the dominion of England and the tyrannical rule of her king. But the true fight for freedom had only just begun. This event led to a bloody war, and though victory did come, it came at great cost.

The same is true for every believer. Jesus has given us freedom from the dominion of the devil and his reign of tyranny over our lives, but it came at great cost – His very life. So as we celebrate those who pledged their honor, their fortune, and even their very lives to the cause of freedom, let us also celebrate the freedom we have in Jesus Christ and His victory over the darkness!

Since its release over 20 years ago, it has become a tradition in the Palompo household to watch Mel Gibson's, *The Patriot* every 4 of July. And while the movie is largely fiction, it is based on many historical figures and events. For example, Mel Gibson portrays Benjamin Martin, a fictional character based on a number of different American heroes. And who could forget one of the biggest baddies to ever grace the big screen – Colonel Tavington! Tavington is loosely based on British Colonel Banastre Tarelton. Tarelton, Tavington – See the connection? The actual Colonel Tarelton was just as bad as his movie counterpart and was given several nicknames including "The Butcher" and "Bloody Ban" because of his brutal tactics.

In the climactic finale of the movie, Benjamin Martin faces off against his nemesis Colonel Tavington in one of the most epic showdowns in cinema history! The inspiration for this scene actually came from the historic Battle of Cowpens, which was a turning point in the Revolutionary War. In the actual battle, U.S. forces under Brigadier General Daniel Morgan fought against British forces under, you guessed it, Lieutenant Colonel Tavington—I mean Tarelton, "The Butcher" himself.

How would Daniel Morgan and his army of mostly untrained militia be able to withstand the onslaught of the highly trained British Legion, her canons and dragoons? Well, two key factors were necessary for victory. First, Daniel Morgan knew himself. He knew that his untrained militia were generally unreliable in battle and would often retreat at the first hint of defeat. The Battle of Camden, for instance, ended in disaster when American militia broke and ran as soon as the fighting started leaving the American flank exposed. So to eliminate that possibility, Morgan did the unthinkable and placed his own men against the Broad River cutting off any possible retreat. In other words, it was go big or go home! All-in! No sked um, go gettum! Or as Pastor Earl likes to say, "No Pan** out!"

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But not only did Daniel Morgan know himself. He also knew his enemy. The British troops had been marching rapidly across difficult terrain in pursuit of the U.S. forces and were malnourished and fatigued. Still, Morgan surmised that Trelton would be highly confident and attack him head on, without pausing to devise a more subtle plan. He used the early morning light and a low hill to obscure most of his forces sending only militia sharpshooters into view. As the battle ensued, the militia began to withdraw, signaling to the British yet another retreat. Trelton immediately ordered an infantry charge and advanced headlong after the sharpshooters only to be met by the disciplined Maryland and Delaware regulars awaiting on the hill.

Confused and exhausted, the British legion was overwhelmed and Daniel Morgan took the field in a battle that would become a turning point in the war and set in motion a series of events leading to British surrender.

How was Daniel Morgan and his army of mostly untrained militia able to emerge victorious over the British Legion? Well perhaps he was familiar with the military strategies of Sun Tzu who writes,

"If you know your enemy and yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles."
- Sun Tzu, The Art of War

The sobering reality is that many Christians in the West today, know neither their true identity in Christ nor the enemy that seeks their destruction. A recent study reported a diminishing belief in the devil among Americans. Two-thirds of Americans do not believe in the existence of the devil with the majority of Americans believing that Satan has no real influence but is rather just a symbol of evil. Charles Baudelaire said, "The greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist." See, our enemy isn't after fame or recognition. In fact, he would much rather you didn't believe in his existence at all. But this week we are going to introduce you to your greatest enemy and expose his strategies so that you need not fear a hundred battles. Today's message is called, New Level, Old Devil.

1. How well do you know your identity in Christ? How well do you know your spiritual enemy? Why are these important to victory in the War for One?

C.S. Lewis writes, *"There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them."*

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So don't fall into these two extremes when it comes to the devil's influence. Don't negate or inflate. To negate means 'to deny the existence of'. The Bible tells us that the devil is real and that we should be watchful and stand firm against his schemes. So don't negate, but also don't inflate – that is to give the devil too much influence or power. Some people blame everything on the devil giving him too much power. So we don't want to negate or inflate. Instead we want to be aware and prepared. Tell your neighbor, "Be aware and prepared!" So here we go,

In the Bible, the devil is given a number of different titles and descriptions. He is called, "The prince of demons," (Luke 11:15); "The prince of this world," (John 16:11); "The god of this world," (2 Corinthians 4:4); "The prince of the power of the air," (Ephesians 2:2); and is described as a great dragon, a roaring lion, the vile one, the tempter, and the accuser.

Amongst his numerous titles, he's probably known best as Satan or the devil but interestingly, neither of these are his name. The word Satan, or 'Satan' in the Hebrew, simply means 'adversary' and is used in numerous different Biblical contexts not referring to the devil. For example, in 1 Kings, God stirs up an enemy king who becomes an adversary [Satan] to King Solomon. And in the story of Balaam and his donkey it says, "*And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary [Satan] against him,*" (Num. 22:22). So Satan can refer to any adversary, even an angel of the Lord. When referring to the devil, the Bible sometimes uses HaSatan, which means 'The Adversary'. So Satan is our adversary and opposes the things of God.

But what about the word 'devil'? Where does that come from? In the New Testament, the word 'devil' in the Greek is diabolos. Sound familiar? It's where we get the word Diablo and it simply means 'slanderer'. When writing to those in the Church, Paul warns them not to be slanderers or false accusers and the word he uses is diabolos. So again, 'devil' isn't so much a name as a title.

You see, throughout Church history, a lot of lore and mythology has existed surrounding the devil but what we need to remember is that the devil is not a central character to the story of God. He doesn't even have a name, only titles describing his nature – he's an adversary, he's a slanderer. Don't think of him as God's equal or even God's opposite. There is no one like our God – not even close! God is omnipotent, which means all-powerful. The devil has to submit to God's authority. God is omniscient – He is all-knowing. The devil is extremely crafty and has had thousands of years to study mankind and even scripture but he isn't all-knowing. God is omnipresent – He is everywhere. Satan is an individual and can only be in one place at a time. So God and the devil are not in the same ballpark, not even the same stadium, not even the same sport!

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2. What have you heard about the Devil? Where did you get your information? (A sermon, a book, conversation, scripture?)

Because of this huge disparity in power, the devil has to rely on cunning and trickery to get his way. In his letter to the Church, Paul writes, *"In order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes,"* (2 Corinthians 2:11 NIV). Paul says not to be unaware of Satan's schemes so turn to your neighbor again and say, "Be aware and prepared!"

Throughout our series we are going to uncover the schemes of the enemy and how to prepare for his attacks but let us quickly cover 3 of Satan's strategies. Here are 3 of the Devil's D-vices:

1. Deception

When speaking of the devil, Jesus says,

"He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies," (John 8:44a).

Remember, Satan is not omnipotent – he's not all-powerful. He doesn't have the power to make you fall away from God, he doesn't have the power to make you leave your spouse, he doesn't have the power to keep you addicted to sin. He has to rely on trickery and deception.

He is the father of lies. The very first lie ever recorded in scripture came from him! In Genesis 3, his very first words were a lie! It says,

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"
(Genesis 3:1 NIV).

For those of you who remember the story, were those God's words? That they must not eat from any tree in the garden? No! God said they could eat from every tree in the garden but one! You see, this is Satan's strategy. He wants you to believe that God is unreasonable – that you're being treated unfairly, that you're a victim! "Wow, did God really say you couldn't do all of those things? Wow, don't you ever get tired of living by all of those rules? Don't you wish you could be free to live however you want? Can't eat from any tree in the garden? Seems unreasonable if you ask me, just saying." What is he doing? He's trying to make you doubt God's goodness! He doesn't want you to believe that God has your best in mind! You see, the devil knows that if he can get you to stop trusting in God's goodness, you will trust in your own goodness.

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⁴ "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil," (vv. 4-5).

The devil can't make you walk away from God, so instead he'll trick you into believing God isn't good and you'll walk away from Him on your own. In week 4 of our series, Pastor Lori is going to teach us how to take back everything the devil stole from us and walk in our God-given authority. You're not going to want to miss it!

So the devil uses deception in order to achieve this second d-vice,

3. In what ways has the Devil tried to deceive you into doubting God's goodness?

2. Division

Once Eve bought into the lie that God was holding out on her and didn't have her best interest in mind, she decided to take matters into her own hands and determine good and evil for herself. But remember, Satan gives you the reward up front but you spend eternity reaping the cost. Whatever temporary pleasure Adam and Eve experienced was soon replaced by fear and shame. The freedom and intimacy they shared with each other was now replaced by guilt and blame. How many of us know, sin separates? Think about any fight you've ever been in, any argument, any separation – what was at the center of it? Sin. Your sin, their sin, selfishness, pride, you name it. But not only does sin separate us from the ones we love most, more importantly, it separates us from God.

"It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, He has turned away and will not listen anymore," (Isaiah 59:2 NLT).

And this is what the devil wants. You see God desires oneness! What is our theme for 2021? One! It's what we've been talking about all year long! How do we know we've won? We're one! I love you and there's nothing you can do about it! Jesus is The Way to the Father so we can be one! One family! One, one, one, one! All of God's commandments and decrees are so that we can remain one! And in this series we're talking about the War for One because the devil's greatest desire is to divide and conquer. The enemy wants to isolate you from God and other believers. In week 6 Pastor Earl is going to teach us how to fight alongside our brothers in sisters and remain one in Christ, so don't miss it!

Once we are divided, the Devil brings in his third d-vice,

4. In what ways has the Devil used sin to divide you from others or God?

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3. Disgrace

Remember what devil means? It means slanderer or accuser. Isn't it so true that when we buy into the lie of the enemy and find ourselves divided from God, Satan changes his tune? Before it was, "You deserve better!" Now it's, "You should've known better." Before it was, "Just do it!" Now it's "How could you?" Before it was, "You're worth it!" Now it's, "You're worthless."

5. In what ways has the Devil used disgrace to make you feel unworthy?

And if we're honest, all of us have fallen prey to the Devil's d-vices. We've all bought into the devil's deception and done things our own way. We've all allowed sin to divide us from one another and from God. We all know the feeling of disgrace because we've fallen short. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

That is why we needed a savior. Like Adam and Eve, Jesus came into the world without sin. Like all of us, Jesus was tempted by the Devil to doubt the goodness of God. "Would a good God let His son starve? Turn this stone into bread! Would a good God allow harm to come to His Son? Jump from this roof that He may save you! Would a good God allow His Son to suffer? Bow to me and I will give you the kingdoms of this world!" But Jesus didn't succumb to the Devil's d-vices! He didn't buy into the deception but instead kept trusting in God's goodness. He didn't allow sin to divide Him from His heavenly Father even to the point of death. And yet, even though He was sinless, He still suffered disgrace.

He went to the cross in our place so that every deception of the enemy would be broken over our lives in Jesus' Name! He was divided from God so that we could become one in Him! And He took our disgrace so that we could receive His grace.

Next week, Pastor Theresa is going to talk about how to walk in the victory we have in Christ, don't miss it. Today, let's respond to the love of our savior, Amen?

6. If you have bought into the Devil's deceptions, allowed sin to divide you, and experienced disgrace, take a moment to repent. Be specific when asking God to forgive you for those areas of your life. Then ask Him to cover you with His grace and thank Him for sending Jesus to pay our debt.