

Things That Need Protecting

Introduction:

- I. We live in a society today that is full of violent men. We are forced to lock our doors at night and make sure all of the windows are shut tightly and properly secured. When we get out of our cars and go into the store or the bank or wherever we are going, we must make sure that our doors are locked. In fact, we must make sure that our doors are locked even while we are driving anymore. Why? Because we live in such a nefarious world today. Because of all this, we sometimes spend large amounts of money on alarm systems for our homes, and for our cars. Parents watch over their children constantly, or we make sure that someone we trust is watching over them. In the home we have security latches for lower cabinets and protective coverings for electrical outlets and so on. Why do we spend so much money and expend so much energy and effort to guard the things that we have? I'll tell you why. It is simply because there are some things that are so important to us, so valuable to us, that they are worth protecting.

- II. Now understand, please, that while there are things in this world that need protecting because of the threat of man, there are some things that are even more important that need protecting because of the threat of the devil. Now remember, the devil is alive and active and he is "*as a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour.*" He is on the warpath, ladies and gentlemen, fighting with all his might against the Christians of this world. And what that means is that we are engaged in a real war, not of a physical nature, but real nevertheless.

Rev 12:17

And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

In any war we must realize that the enemy has a plan; some kind strategy to help them gain the victory. Now usually a part of that strategy will be trying to determine the best place of attack within the enemies camp. That is, an area that if destroyed would bring the foe to his knees, and lead to his defeat. Now, I guarantee you that Satan has such a strategy. There are certain areas that if Satan can destroy or weaken, he can gain the victory over a countless number of souls. These areas, ladies and gentlemen, need protecting, and I want to discuss three such areas with you in this lesson.

Lessons:

I. The Battleground of the Mind.

May I suggest to you that the first place Satan will try to attack in regard to an individual is the mind. As Satan begins to check us out; as he begins to look us over and size us up, he will try first to make some inroads into the mind. He wants to control our minds. He wants to control our thoughts, emotions and attitudes. You see he knows that if he can control, or even influence, our thinking, he will win. He will be the victor, and for all practical purposes we will stand defeated. And so the first step towards spiritual victory over the devil is protecting our minds because, as someone has said, *"the territory of the uncrucified thought-life is the center of satanic assault in our lives."* In other words, if Satan is able to have his way with us, it is because he has been able in some way to infiltrate our minds. Listen to what Paul said about spiritual warfare (2 Cor. 10:4, 5). A stronghold is *"a fortified place"; "a place of security or safety."* Now in this text, Paul is talking about strongholds of the mind that are occupied by Satan. There were some ungodly and unrighteous men at Corinth guilty of such things as strife, backbiting, uncleanness and fornication and Paul said in one place that they would not repent. Why? Because Satan formed a stronghold in their minds; he took up residency in their hearts. And once Satan gets in, it is hard to get him out. It is easier to keep him out, than it is to get him out once he gets some roots in our heart. So, we must protect our minds at all cost.

Now, how do we protect our minds against the attacks of Satan?

A. Study the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15).

Paul said, *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* There is not enough room in our minds for both the Word of God and Satan to dwell.

Ps 119:11

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

1 John 3:9

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Col 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

B. Focus our minds on things that are spiritual in nature.

We are living in a world in which carnality dominates the mind of most. People today think that being rich physically is the key to happiness, and too many Christians are starting to fall into that category. No Christian should desire to be rich. I'm not saying it is wrong for a Christian to be rich, I'm saying that should not be the focus of our life as Christian (1Tim. 6:9-10). It's not money that is the root of all evil, it's the love of money that is the problem. Once we begin to have the wrong attitude towards money and the riches of this world, Satan begins to set up a stronghold in our minds and our priorities get all mixed up (*illus of man' car going over a cliff*). Listen to me: money isn't the all important thing in life, serving God is. I don't care how much money you have, you can't find a relationship with God at a corner ATM machine and you can't purchase eternal glory with a credit card. Riches can't buy you the more important things of life, but choosing God over Mammon can. Choosing God as the Master of your life will get you an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, and that, ladies and gentlemen, is priceless. So protect your mind by focusing your thoughts, not simply on the things of this world, but by setting your affections on things upon (1 Pet. 1:13).

C. Not allowing immoral junk into our minds.

As Christians we have been coned by the devil in the realm of entertainment more than any other walk of life. As Christians we know the difference between right and wrong, good and evil. We have studied the Bible too long not to know. We know what pleases God and what is offensive to Him. And when it comes to our own behavior, we strive to be morally upright. But the devil has fooled us into believing that as long as we behave ourselves in a pure fashion, it okay to allow filth into our hearts by way of books, magazines and especially television.

I'm not one who thinks that the television set is in itself sinful. But I know that there are a lot of sinful things that come out of the television set. There's enough profanity, blasphemy, and obscene gestures on the TV today to make an ex-Marine Sergeant blush! And yet so often, we just sit there, soaking it all in, all in the name of "family entertainment." The average child will see 20,000 murders before he's 16 years old, plus thousands of bedroom scenes, 95% of which are between unmarried persons. One man described, very accurately I think, television as junk food for the soul. He said,

“Junk food is artificially flavored and colored, excessively sweetened and highly addictive. It is harmful to physical and mental health and its consumption interferes with or even deprives one of beneficial, healthful nourishment. Television is an almost precise spiritual equivalent of junk food. The entire content of its programming is unedifying, un-nourishing, opposed to sound mental and emotional health and filled with value-training which is diametrically opposed to a sound and healthy society. The life styles and ideals it portrays are artificial, corrupt and undesirable. Moreover, television is highly addictive.”

If one carefully examines the moral content of television programs he will see that they portray the exact opposite kind morals and ideals as does the Bible. A couple of years ago, USA TODAY reviewed a week's worth of programming on ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX. Take a look at the results: 57 killings, 99 assaults, 29 car wrecks, 22 incidents of child abuse, 45 sex scenes (only 4 were portrayed as married heterosexuals). Now I want you to notice what the Bible says about the mind:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Ps 51:10).

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov 4:23).

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil 4:8).

Don't give the devil a stronghold in your mind. Fill it with the Word, not with the trash of the world. Focus your mind on the things of God. Protect your mind from Satan at all cost.

II. The Battleground of the Local Church.

Satan knows that the more local churches he can either completely destroy, or greatly weaken, the more souls will be lost. We must protect the church! Let us look at some of the dangers that face local churches today. And by the way, these dangers are satanic in origin, and again form strongholds for the devil.

- A) The Stronghold of false teachers and their doctrines.**
- B) The Stronghold of indifference.**

C) The Stronghold of unhealthy or undeveloped relationships.

III. The Battleground of the Home.

The home has always been very important to God and it ought to be important to us. Local churches are, to a large extent, reflections of the homes of their members. So, the success or failure of local churches can almost always be traced back to the kind of homes that its members have. And so, we need to determine that we are going to protect our homes at all cost. There are two important areas that need protecting in our homes.

A) Our Marriages Must Be Protected.

Why are so many marriages failing? The truth is there are many reasons. But one major reason that so many marriages are failing is that society has developed an overall philosophy about marriage that is contrary to the will of God. It is a philosophy that generally takes marriage lightly and encourages divorce at the first sign of trouble. It is a philosophy that views marriage as a simple contract that can be broken on a whim.

"It is easier to divorce my wife of 26 years than to fire someone I hired one week ago. The person I hire has more legal clout than my wife of 26 years. That's wrong." --*Judge Randall Hekman, President of the Michigan Family Forum*

Well, that is wrong, isn't it? And the fact of the matter is it is contrary to the will of God. You see God doesn't view marriage as a simple contract that can be broken. God views marriage as a covenant that is to be permanent.

Prov 2:16-17

Wisdom will save you from the immoral woman, from the flattery of the adulterous woman. 17 She has abandoned her husband and ignores the covenant she made before God. New Living Translation

Ezek 16:8

"When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine," says the Lord GOD. New King James Version

Mal 2:14

Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. King James Version

How do we protect our marriages? We begin by realizing that we have entered, not just into a civil contract, but into a covenant that is binding until death do us part.

The word “covenant” means, “A *formal, solemn, and binding agreement or compact.*” Now the word “bind”, especially when dealing with an oath, means, “*to confine or restrain; to put under obligation; to cause to stick together*” (Merriam-Webster’s 11th Collegiate Dictionary). So then, when two people enter into marriage, they are entering into a binding agreement that puts them under the obligation to stick together. This is the mind-set of a covenant marriage. We will stick together. When conflict arises, we will stick together! When financial problems arise, we will stick together! When differences of opinion arise, we will stick together! When sickness arises, we will stick together! When family interferes, we will stick together! When friends try to break us up, we will stick together! When circumstances of life become difficult, we will stick together! Why? Because we have entered into, not just a civil contract, but a God-ordained, God-instituted, and God-pleasing covenant. This is the foundation upon which we must build our marriages.

A man’s wife had Alzheimer’s and had to be placed in a nursing home. Every day that husband would go to the nursing home and spend time with his wife. He would talk to her, read to her, comb her hair and try to meet her various needs. Before he left her room, he would tell her he loved her and kiss her goodbye. He did this day after day, week after week, and month after month. He never missed. Often he would bring her fresh flowers.

After one of his daily visits, a group of nurses asked to meet with him. They spoke admiringly and told him that everyone was impressed with his faithfulness and the special way he cared for his wife.

“But we want you to know that you don’t need to come everyday to see your wife,” the head nurse said gently. “She doesn’t know that you are here and doesn’t even know who you are. Your wife is fine here with us, and you can do other things with your time. There is absolutely no need for you to feel like you have to keep coming day after day.”

The husband lifted his head. Tears ran slowly down his cheek. In a quiet voice he said, “I know she doesn’t know who I am, but I know who she is, and that what matters. She is my wife! Fifty years ago I made a covenant with her that I would never leave or forsake her and that I would be with her in sickness and in health. And I intend to keep that covenant.”

Let me ask you: if you are married, do you intend to keep the covenant that you made? I'll tell you right now God expects you to (Matt. 19:3-6).

We must cleave one to another because marriage is not a contract; it is a covenant. And there is a difference between the two. Someone might ask what's the difference between a contract and a covenant? Well, I'm glad you asked. Now, let me say first that I am not denying the civil and contractual aspect of marriage. Obviously from the standpoint of human law marriage involves a civil contract. But what I am saying to you is that as God-fearing Christians, we are to understand marriage, not just from man's perspective, but from God's perspective and God views marriage as a sacred covenant.

Now listen to me: Contract is about terms while covenant is about trust. Contract is about convenience while covenant is about character. Contract is about receiving while covenant is about giving. Contract is about legalities and leverage while covenant is about love and loyalty. There is, ladies and gentlemen, a difference between the two. And the reason understanding this is so important to marriage is because a major difference between the concepts of covenant and contract have to do with attitude or mind-set. And like with a lot of things, one's mind-set towards marriage can make the difference between having a bad marriage, a good marriage or a magnificent marriage. So how do you view your marriage? Are you viewing it from the standpoint of contract or covenant?

**CONTRASTING ATTITUDES
(FRED LOWERY, MARRIAGE COVENANT)**

Contract Attitude

You had better do it!

What do I get?

What will it take?

It's not my responsibility.

It's not my fault.

I'll meet you halfway.

Covenant Attitude

How may I serve you?

What can I give?

Whatever it takes!

I'm happy to do it!

I accept responsibility.

I'll give 100 percent.

B) Our Children Must Be Brought Up In The Nurture And Admonition of The Lord.

More and more parents are failing in this area. We need to be more like Hannah, who upon the birth of her son, gave him to the lord. Figuratively speaking, we should give our children to the Lord. And

what I mean by that is we need to raise them in such a way that they will, more likely than not, give themselves to God at the proper time. Now there are at least three ways of doing this: *study with them, pray with them, and be a good example for them.*

Conclusion:

So, there you have it. Three battlegrounds that need protecting. The mind, the church, and the home. Without question Satan has been and will continue to attack these areas. He knows that if he can win in these places, many souls will be lost. We must keep on fighting, for these are things worth protecting.