

## Gospel and Discipleship — 2

### (Three Enemies)

**Principle:** God's **passion** is to save His creation from destruction by sin, Satan and death. He does it by destroying the power of sin in us through His Son Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Discipleship is sharing God's passion by allowing Christ to rule our hearts — which is abiding in Christ — becoming like Him in character and gospel mission.

#### Outline:

1. Moses' Intimacy with God
2. Your Three Enemies
3. Overcoming Your Enemies

#### 1. Moses' Intimacy with God

*Exodus 33:8-9 Whenever Moses went out to the Tent of Meeting, all the people would get up and stand in their tent entrances. They would all watch Moses until he disappeared inside. As he entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and hover at the entrance while the Lord spoke with Moses.*

Moses had great intimacy with God, and the people stood at a distance watching him with awe as he entered the Tent of Meeting. Often, we may feel a vast distance separating us from God, which may last for days. But the **good news** (gospel) is that when we put our trust in Jesus' death and resurrection, we don't need to go on an extraordinary pilgrimage, go to a particular church or use specific words to speak our thoughts, needs and fears to God. Jesus loves us passionately as to die on the cross for our sins and rise again from the dead, having fully paid our penalty. **Our Tent of Meeting with God is as close as a whisper because Christ lives in us by His Holy Spirit.** He invites you to come freely to Him, rest in His presence, talk with Him as a friend, even as you work, live, and walk throughout your day.

The Almighty Creator Son of God Himself paid such a heavy price for us that when He rose from the dead, God released immense and every spiritual blessing for us and poured His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. So, when we remain in His love (abide in Christ), we will bear much fruit that brings glory to God (John 15:8). The fruit is becoming like Jesus in character and sharing in His mission.

*Eph 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*

*Rom 5:5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

*John 15:8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

So, are there any problems in abiding in Christ? Yes! We have three enemies—the world, the flesh and the devil.

#### 2. Your Three Enemies

- i. **The world** is a world system controlled by the devil—God's biggest enemy. You cannot escape the system.

Right from childhood, it shows you over 25000 images per day through advertisements, TV, newspapers, secular studies etc., about what the world says is essential — the pride of life, the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh. And if you don't follow the world system, it says you are a nobody. The world mocks the spiritual principles of Jesus because the world says the physical is only what matters. Therefore, we hear so many youngsters commit suicide every year because they fail in their exams or romance, which makes them feel hopeless.

- ii. **The flesh** is the selfish part of your life, independent of God and in war with the Spirit inside you. The world system appeals to your selfishness, to your glory—to your pride, your lust and your greed. So, entertaining your flesh is like dancing with a tiger. It will destroy you because the devil is behind it all.
- iii. **The devil** is a powerful supernatural being who was once a guardian angel but fell away from God because of pride. He has many demons (fallen angels) under him. He controls the world, and through the world, he controls your flesh.

These three enemies work in unity and must be dealt with together and not separately. Evangelicals teach holiness (against flesh and worldliness) but don't deal well with casting out demons. Charismatics may cast out demons but don't deal well with holiness. If you cast a demon from a person but do not deal with their flesh and worldly attachment, then the demon will return with seven other demons, and the person's condition will be worse than before (Luke 11:24-26)

### 3. Overcoming Your Enemies

Now, Jesus puts His Holy Spirit inside you, which is stronger than **the world, the flesh and the devil**. And Jesus expects you to be an **overcomer and share His passion for saving His creation from destruction**.

*1 John 4:4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*

*1 John 5:3-5 In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, <sup>4</sup> for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*

Therefore, remember, without adequately understanding and receiving the gospel, a person can't be free from these three enemies. But the person who properly understands and believes the gospel will be able to defeat the three enemies. The gospel is a summary of the spiritual armour of God (Eph 6:13-17). It enables the believer to say, "With all the benefits and blessings I have in Christ, I will cooperate with the Holy Spirit and **abide in Christ** instead of yielding to the world, the flesh and the devil.

*Col 2:6-7 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, **continue to live your lives in him, <sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.***

Remember two simple rules:

(i) World without Jesus is Nothing, and (ii) Jesus without World is Everything If you have everything in the world but don't have Jesus, then the world and your flesh, controlled by the devil, will eventually destroy you. You will be miserable now and forever —rule (i)

But if you have Jesus but **nothing else** in the world, you have everything you need because Jesus, your Creator and Saviour, loves you passionately and will give you **everything you need** to make you like Himself, which is God's plan for you. So, **Jesus is everything!** This assurance will give you true **joy** and **peace** now and forever — formula (ii). [Matt 6:33, Ps 23 & 121].

*Neh 8:10 Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength (Ps 95:1)*

*Rom 16:20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.*

*Ps 4:7-8 You have put gladness in my heart, More than in the season that their grain and wine increased. 8 I will both lie down in peace and sleep; For You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.*

**Joy:** Joy is the deep rejoicing that you have the only thing that matters in life. And as you keep telling yourself this, despite the problems, disappointments and uncertainties you face in the world—you will eventually say to yourself, “Well, **so what?** By God’s grace, I’m doing quite well because I have my relationship with Jesus to fall back on. This foundation cannot be broken. The joy of the Lord is my strength”.

But if you have nothing to fall back upon, then your case is hopeless. The opposite of joy is not feeling sad because we all feel sad sometimes, but the absolute opposite of joy is hopelessness. Unlike the world, we have hope even when a loved one dies. (1 Thess 4:13 *Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope*). **Joy is like a piece of cork. It is unsinkable.**

Happiness is temporary and a wrong type of joy because it focuses on gifts but not on the Giver (God). But when you focus on the Giver, you can also enjoy His gifts. You can enjoy physical and emotional pleasures because you know where they come from and what they are there for. They are just samples of the eternal joys in heaven. You can enjoy a good dinner on earth because it is just a sample of the wedding supper of the Lamb in heaven (CS Lewis).

**Peace** is the confidence that the Lord is your shepherd and you shall not want. It is the trust that God is in control of your life.

*Isa 26:3 You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast because they trust in you.*

*Phil 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God, and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

But how can you thank God for something you have just started praying for? Because you have a foundation of trust in God, who is for you and not against you because of the gospel. So, you are confident that He will answer what is good, irrespective of whether the answer is yes, no, or later. Don’t squeeze God on the promise of an answer to prayer, but wait upon Him in deep trust.

Peace is quiet, steadfast trust. Peace is singlemindedness (like Mary). The opposite of peace is anxiety. Anxiety is unfocused on many cares (like Martha). You can either listen to your soul (there is unrest there—tension) or talk to your soul.

*Ps 42:5 Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your **hope** in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.* (2 Kings 6:1-7: At the place where the axe fell, Elisha threw a stick, and the axe floated. Hope makes you float)

Jesus is your Saviour and Lord. He is the gospel. **Keep speaking the gospel to your soul — and you will have joy and peace. You will abide in Christ, and you will bear fruit.**