

The Necessity of an Enemy
Pastor Joe Oakley
GFC – 8-22-21

Today we are beginning a new series called The Necessity of an Enemy. A few weeks ago I said that between your promise and your Promised land there are conditions to meet and devils to defeat. Between your dream and it's fulfillment there will be a wilderness of problems. And today I'm telling you that even when you do get into your promised land – there will still be enemies to defeat!

The Promised land was a land of:

Great wealth

Houses to live in without having to build them.

Vineyards to eat from without having to plant them.

And a lack for nothing

The Promised Land was everything the Children of Israel could hope for EXCEPT for the enemies who lived there, who wanted to keep them out, and utterly destroy them. Yes, God had given them the land but now they had to go in and take it.

It's the same way with us today. Yes, God gives promises – but they are not automatically received. We must possess them. You see the giving the promise is God's part. Taking possession is our part.

In 1 Timothy 1:18 Paul reminded Timothy of the prophetic promises he had received *that by following them you may fight the good fight*. Possessing a promise always involves a fight because we have an enemy who want to keep us from our destiny.

Many people fail to understand that and they fail to understand that life will always involve spiritual warfare.

- They want the blessing without the battle.
But without the battle there will be no blessing.
- They want the promise without having to possess it.
- They want the future without having to fight for it.
- They want to win without a war.

In Deuteronomy 1:8 God told the Israelites: *See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land.*

That doesn't mean you waltz right it without a fight. The Hebrew word for possess used here literally means to occupy by driving out previous tenants and possessing in their place. And today, enemies often seem to get in the way of our plans, leaving us discouraged and disoriented. But what if these obstacles are a *part* of God's plan for us?

We need to change the way we think about an enemy. We usually only see the negative aspects of an adversary, but an enemy exposes your weakness. That's good – because now you can correct it!

If the real purposes for an enemy are not understood, disappointment and defeat are likely. Our enemies - whether our own weaknesses, our circumstances, the Devil or other people, or any other challenges are there to try to keep us from fulfilling God's plan and purpose for our lives.

There's a Goliath or a Pharaoh or a devil standing between you and your promised land! And if you want to accomplish God's destiny for your life – you must understand the necessity of enemies and how they can help us accomplish our vision - if we handle them correctly.

I find it very fascinating that even after Israel got into the Promised Land, God left enemies in the land. Why did He do this?

1- God left enemies in the land to care for the land until Israel had grown enough to occupy the land

In Exodus 23:28-30, God said:

I will... drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land.

This is fascinating! The Israelites occupied a land that had houses they did not build and crops they did not plant. And their enemies were actually building their houses and tending their crops until Israel was ready.

And there are enemies in our lives that aren't revealed until we mature! They are there – many times unbeknownst to us – until we are mature enough to deal with them. Always remember – new levels bring new devils!

2- God left enemies in the land to test Israel and see if they would follow Him

God said this about those enemies in Judges 2:22-23:

"I will use them to test Israel and see whether they will keep the way of the Lord and walk in it as their forefathers did." The Lord had allowed those nations to remain; He did not drive them out at once.

Judges 3:4 says:

They were left to test the Israelites to see whether they would obey the Lord's commands, which He had given their forefathers through Moses.

An enemy is necessary to provide us with a choice in life. Who will we follow? God or ourselves or someone else?

There are differing opinions on whether or not God has given us free will – or the ability to make choices. Some people believe that everything that happens – including every choice we make – is predetermined by God. But my study of the Scriptures leads me to believe God gives us the ability to choose. For instance – Elijah asked people in 1 Kings 18:21

How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him.

Joshua told the people in Joshua 24:15

Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

God gives us the freedom to choose to follow Him or to reject Him. And choices require that there be more than one option!

That's one reason we have an enemy – to give us a choice. It goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden when God told Adam and Eve they could eat anything except the fruit of one tree. Why was that tree there? To give them a choice!

Adam and Eve lived in a perfect environment – yet there was an enemy in the Garden of Eden! Everything was going fine until the enemy came along and tempted them to choose their own will over God's will. That is the essence of sin and that is the same battle that rages in all of us this very day – choose you THIS DAY whom you will serve!

3- God left enemies in the land to teach Israel how to fight

Judges 3:1-2 says:

These are the nations the Lord left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan (He did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience).

Enemies are necessary to teach us to fight! The call to follow Jesus is a call to fight because Satan hates Jesus and His followers and he continually attacks us. There is never a time to think that you're beyond demonic attack.

I've heard some people teaching an error that says – you can get to the place in your Christian life where you are so holy or so mature or so full of faith that the devil will stop attacking you. Oh really? Show me that in the Bible. There are only two examples of people without sin in the Bible. The first example is Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden before they sinned.

The second example is the last Adam - Jesus Christ - who never sinned. In both of these examples – they were attacked by Satan!

Adam and Eve were overcome by Satan but Jesus overcame Satan. Even after that, Luke 4:13 says

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left Him until a more opportune and favorable time.

All of us need to stay on the alert because Satan is always looking for an opportune time to attack. We must live our lives on alert to the attacks of the enemy.

Many Christians today have a wrong view of devil. They see him as a sleeping dog—and if we'll just tiptoe around and not bother him—then the devil won't bother us. But that isn't true. The Bible doesn't say he's a sleeping dog — 1 Peter 5:8-9 says:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith...

So, be on guard all the time. Being on guard means being ready to fight!

We need to understand the necessity of an enemy. God can use the enemy to bring about His purpose. There are many biblical examples of the necessity of an enemy. For instance, how would Jesus have gone to the cross without Judas betraying Him?

What would Joseph have accomplished without his brothers selling him into slavery? Think about it – Joseph became second in command in Egypt because a fellow prisoner told the king about his ability to interpret dreams.

That would not have happened unless he was in prison. And he was in prison because he was falsely accused of rape. But that would never have happened if he had not been a slave in Potiphar's house. And he would not have been a slave if his brothers had not turned on him and sold him into slavery. Joseph would not have achieved his dreams without these enemies. In the end, Joseph understood that what his enemies meant for harm, God used for good!

One of the greatest biblical examples of the necessity of an enemy is David - who went from being a shepherd boy watching sheep in the wilderness to being the hero of all of Israel – and ultimately the king! What was necessary for this to happen? A giant named Goliath! An enemy was a necessary part of David's path to success.

Defeating an enemy named Goliath catapulted David from obscurity to popularity. What would David have accomplished without Goliath?

The reason David fought Goliath is because everyone else was too afraid to fight! But God had an even greater purpose in mind. 1 Samuel 17 says that David's father sent him to check on his brothers at a battle between the Israelites and the Philistines. Verses 3-11 say:

The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them. A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. He was over nine feet tall. Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us." Then the Philistine said, "This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other." On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.

We see that a champion named Goliath challenged the army of Israel – but they were too afraid to fight. I believe than any soldier in the army that day could have defeated Goliath in the name of the Lord. But they were held back by fear. That fear led to passivity – they simply did nothing.

The very same thing many of us are doing.

We are being attacked by the enemy and we're doing nothing!

Our marriages are being attacked by the enemy and we're doing nothing!

Our families are being attacked by the enemy and we're doing nothing!

Our children are being attacked by the enemy and we're doing nothing!

Our finances are being attacked by the enemy and we're doing nothing!

It's time to do what 1 Timothy 6:12 says: *Fight the good fight of faith.*

The Christian life is a life of warfare. We have an enemy who mocks us like Goliath mocked the army of Israel. When David saw the army shaking in fear he wondered – why isn't anyone doing anything about this! In 1 Samuel 17:26 David said:

Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?

David was surprised that no one was fighting. 1 Samuel 17:28-30 says:

When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle." "Now what have I done?" said David. "Can't I even speak?" He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before.

Your enemy is anyone or anything that tries to keep you from your destiny!
Your enemy is anyone or anything that tries to keep you from following the will of God for your life.

You must do what David had to do – he had to turn away from his own family who were trying to hold him back. He turned from those trying to hold him back and he ran to the real fight! 1 Samuel 17:48-50 says:

As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground. So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

That victory was more than just defeating one man. That victory was the defining moment in David's life! Defeating that adversary was the catalyst for David's advancement.

And just as David's victory over Goliath transformed him from a shepherd boy to a national hero, our enemies can be a blessing in disguise - if we recognize them and face them head-on. Human nature tells us to flee our enemies – but like David – we must run to the battle and defeat our enemies.

Hear this: every enemy is your footstool for promotion.
The size of your enemies is an indication of the size of your potential!

On the road to your God-designed destiny, enemies will show up! In 1 Corinthians 16:9 – the apostle Paul said –

A great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

Enemies are standing between you and your destiny! This happens because the common hate the uncommon, the impure hate the pure, the unrighteous hate the righteous, and the lazy despise the diligent. The enemy wants to steal your destiny, so when you get a picture of what God wants in your life, that's when an enemy shows up.

The appearance of an enemy is often an announcement that the next stage of your future is about to be born. When you see a bigger devil – realize you're about to hit a new level! When you face a bigger fight – know that something's going right! When you're in a bigger war – God's about to open a door!

All battles are fought over your future, not your past or present circumstances. The enemy is not so concerned about where you've been or where you are – he just wants to keep you from getting where God wants you to go!

An enemy named Pharaoh wanted to keep Moses from his destiny.

An enemy named Goliath wanted to keep David from his destiny.
 An enemy named Satan wanted to keep Jesus from his destiny.
 And Satan wants to keep you from your destiny.

God has destined you for greatness – that’s why you fight great battles.
 You’ll never be extraordinary if you only fight ordinary battles!
 If you want to be number one, you can’t just defeat number nine!

Many of us want to be overcomers – we just don’t want to have to overcome anything! Many of us want to be winners – we just don’t want to have to fight!
 Many of us want to be conquerors – we just don’t want an enemy. But an enemy is necessary to springboard you to success!

Please realize that no matter how big your enemy is – God is bigger!
 No matter how big your battle is – God is bigger!
 No matter how great your problem is – God is greater!

I made the decision a long time ago that I was going to believe what God said about me more than what the devil said about me.
 I believe what God says about me more than what other people say about me.
 I believe what God says about me more than what I say about me!

And one of the things that God says about me is found in Romans 8:37 –
In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

We are more than conquerors – not just in some things, but in all things.
 We are overcomers – not in our strength – but in God’s strength.

The Bible is full of overcomers and I want this church to be a church of overcomers! I came to tell somebody, today, don't throw in the towel. Don't throw up your hands, don't walk off the court, don't give up because there is an overcomer in you that God wants to release.

I know it’s hard, but you will never overcome in your own strength. You overcome because you have the presence of God in you and the power of God working for you.

When you understand the necessity of an enemy and you defeat that enemy in Jesus’ name – that adversary will have been a tool in the hand of God to lead you to your promised land – your destiny!

So I’m calling you off the sidelines and into the battle today!
 I’m challenging you to overcome your fear and your condemnation.
 Believe that God is for you not against you!
 God will never give up on you, so don’t give up on yourself!
 God says that you are more than a conqueror!
 That means that you won't just win, you will win big!