

# "Those of His Own Household"

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In any contest, a failure to fully appreciate the opponent can be devastating. If we do not properly measure an adversary - his strengths, his tactics, his thinking, his weaponry, his assets - then we can never be fully prepared to defend against nor successfully attack him. Such is true in athletic endeavors, in literal warfare, in games of skill and strategy. And it is also true in our spiritual battle.

It occurs to me that we tend to underrate Satan. He is often reduced in our world to some kind of caricature - an outlandish, grotesque cartoon figure with red skin, pointed features, forked tongue, horns, tail, and pitchfork. In such terms, he becomes ludicrous to us, and thus not someone to be feared. We dismiss his strength, his cleverness, his strategy, and his tactics. He almost becomes a joke - a minor annoyance upon which to blame our frustrations and failures. "Old Scratch" is out to get us, and when he does, we laugh it off as if it were little more than a bee sting or a mosquito bite. Such thinking is dangerous.

The bible always presents Satan as powerful. Isa.53:12 portrays him as "the strong one" with whom the Messiah divides the spoils of human souls. In I Pet.5:8 he is portrayed as a "roaring lion." Those are not images to be lightly dismissed. Moreover, he is more than once described as clever (II Cor.2:11; Eph.6:11) and we are naive if we do not appreciate his time-tested tactics for tempting us. It behooves us to be aware, to take note, to appreciate the ways that Satan attacks us. He does not walk up to us wearing a t-shirt that boldly pronounces "I am Satan and I'm here for your soul." Instead, he approaches by means that often take us by surprise, or play upon our affections and emotions in ways that tempt us to either overtly sin, or at least lose our confidence in our God. One such strategy that he has employed successfully again and again is the use of other people.

Jesus warned the apostles in Mt.10:34-39 that discipleship would involve difficult sacrifices because "a man's foes will be those of his own household" (v.36). Nothing - or perhaps more accurately no one - can tempt us to sin/faithlessness like those whom we love. And Satan is really, really good at using our affection for others to test our faith. He used Eve against Adam, Job's wife and friends against him, Sarah against Abram, Jacob's sons against Joseph, Delilah against Samson, Absalom against David, Solomon's wives against Solomon, Jezebel against Ahab, Simon Peter against Christ, John Mark against Paul, etc. It's hard to stand up and stand against those that we love when it comes to right and wrong, service and sacrifice. Time and again people sacrifice their soul on the altar of relationships. We defend our loved ones in their sin. We maintain fellowship with old friends even when they defy God's Word. We change our convictions to support family in their ungodliness. We give lip service to the words of Jesus - "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he

who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Mt.10:36-37). But when Satan enlists those same people to oppose us in our faith, it is often the case that we side with the enemy. Yes, the enemy.

Part of “identifying the enemy” is identifying those whom the enemy uses. Be it “principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph.6:12), or be it my family and friends, anything or anyone Satan uses to try and turn me against my God is the enemy. And the sooner we recognize that, the more effective we will be in our defense against him, and in our victory over him.