

“The Enemy Who Has Been Switched Is Jesus”

Ephesians 6:10–13

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by Senior Pastor Hong Poonghwa

Ephesians 6:10–13 (PowerPoint)

Preface

Last week, we looked at how the greatest work that Satan the devil does is to make us think, “The enemy for human beings is other human beings,” and that the most important strategy for the devil in driving us humans to think only about things on this earth is precisely to make us think that people are the enemy.

The devil makes people think that people are the enemy, makes people hurt one another, makes them hate one another, and seeks to destroy that relationship which should be like indispensable parts of one body.

And then, where does he lead us to? He leads us to doubt the existence of God, and ultimately, to make us think that God is the enemy.

And what I would like us to think about today is something a little more troublesome, or shall we say, a more cunning scheme of Satan the devil.

What kind of scheme is it? It is about the kind of human relationships, the appearance of us humans, or even of believers, who—although we do not think that God is the enemy, and rather confess and take pride in “believing in God”—actually end up being in opposition to God.

In the Bible, many concrete examples appear.

Part One

For example, there are Adam and Eve, whom we looked at last week.

The first man Adam, who offered the first love song in human history to his beloved wife Eve, saying, “You are bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh; you are my very self, and I exist because you are there,” came before the Lord God accusing her, hurling at her, “This woman—because of this woman—because of her, things have turned out like this.” But the thing is, Adam’s feelings at that moment were, in fact, feelings entirely right to him, wrapped in a sense of good righteousness.

Therefore, of course, I do not think he had *any* awareness that his faith toward the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who created heaven and earth—had become weakened, or that he “did not believe in God.”

On the contrary, he surely thought something like, “I am making a correct point because of my faith; I am making an accurate judgment,” with a feeling that could even be called “faith,” something like, “God, *you* are the one who is wrong. Let me teach you the true facts,” and, “My faith is strong,” or, “I am more correct than this person.”

But contrary to such thoughts, what is clear is that, at the point when he hated Eve, resented her, condemned her, accused her, looked down on her, belittled her, evaluated her, and in his heart even before actually presenting his accusation, thought, “That person is no good; she is inferior,” he had already become one who opposed God.

Then why is this able to become an act of opposing God?

Last week, we looked at the Word of Genesis chapter 1, but when God created human beings, how did He create them?

God created humans in His own image, in the likeness of God.

That is to say, when we look at a person, the preciousness of God, the beauty of God appears there.

When a person looks at another person, he should naturally be able to find there the preciousness and beauty of God, and while finding it, to build up a relationship of honoring one another.

Originally, we were able to know, feel, and see what kind of One God is through people.

It means that in the appearance of a person, one sees God who is love.

When we think about it, it is certainly true that if God Himself were to appear directly, or if the risen Jesus were to appear directly anywhere to anyone, Christian mission or evangelism might proceed more easily and more smoothly, but God did not choose such a method. (Of course, on rare occasions such things do happen.)

Then what method did God choose?

When the apostle Peter was carrying out the ministry of preaching, he once said to a man lame from birth, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.” This is the method God chose.

That is, through the image of God, the likeness of God, the appearance of Jesus Christ manifested in Peter as a person, God made it so that people may know God.

Christian mission is, in a sense, the restoration of the original human being before sin was committed—the restoration and reappearance of the order of creation in which the image of God, the likeness of God, the fragrance of Christ appears in human beings.

But unfortunately, Adam came to no longer see the image of God, the likeness of God that was in Eve.

Instead of seeing the image of God, the likeness of God, the preciousness and beauty of God that still remained in Eve, he was enticed by Satan the devil and saw only Eve's evil parts, sinful parts, lacking parts, and darkness. Furthermore, he became intoxicated with the fact that he could point out Eve's evil parts, sinful parts, lacking parts, and darkness; he flourished his own sense of righteousness, made himself appear more pious than Eve, strutted about in his own correctness, posed, and with confidence became self-righteous, and came to regard Eve as his enemy.

He made his wife Eve—whom he was supposed to love, whom he had loved—into his enemy.

As a result, he neglected, gave up on, and became unable to find in Eve the God who was in her, the love of God, and thus became one who opposed God.

Part Two

The apostle Paul, the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians, also once, instead of finding the image of God, the likeness of God, and the preciousness of God in people, became intoxicated with being able to point out people's mistakes, strutted about in his own correctness, truly thought with a straight face that he was more devout in faith than anyone else, made it appear so, and with confidence took hold of Christians, threw them into prison, and even participated in killing them.

To that former apostle Paul—Saul—there was a time when Jesus Himself spoke directly to him from heaven.

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.”

At that time, the ones Saul was persecuting and seizing were not Jesus.

They were Christians who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, what Jesus spoke to Saul was, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,” speaking as though the one Saul was persecuting were not the Christians but Jesus Himself as the one being persecuted.

That is to say, the true intent of what Jesus spoke to Saul was, “Saul, while thinking, ‘This is zealous faith,’ or saying, ‘This is for God,’ you are unable to find within the person right before your eyes the image of God, the likeness of God, the preciousness of God! The very fact that you cannot find in a person the image of God, Me—the One who is the perfect manifestation of God’s essence—is itself your error and the very thing that means you are opposing God!”

I titled today’s message “The Enemy Who Has Been Switched Is Jesus,” and indeed, without even realizing that the devil had switched the enemy, he ended up making Jesus—God—his enemy by persecuting people.

Once Jesus said, “What you did for one of the least of these, you did for Me; and what you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me.”

And He also said that “the work of the devil is to lure people into being unable to find the image of God in others, and whether you ride along with that work or not is the very battle that is not against flesh and blood, but the battle against the devil’s strategy of switching the enemy.”

Matthew 25:31–46 (PowerPoint)

“What you did for one of the least of these My brothers, you did for Me. What you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me. You cursed ones, who neglected to find Me in the one who was the very least—depart from Me and enter the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels,” He says.

In other words, to look at a person, at what is within a person, and fail to find God there in that person is the devil’s strategy; and going along with the devil’s strategy results in opposing God and being unable to believe God.

Our battle is the battle of whether we find or do not find the image of God, the appearance of Jesus, in people; and Satan sets traps to prevent us from finding the image of God, Jesus, in that person.

Even the disciples who heard this teaching of Jesus directly, throughout the three years they were with Jesus, kept thinking among themselves, “Who is the greatest?” They criticized one another, evaluated one another, and looked down on and despised one another.

Knowing or not knowing that they were caught in Satan's trap, they kept thinking, "As believers in God, we are making correct judgments."

And what happened as a result? They forsook Jesus and fled.

To such disciples, the words spoken by the risen Jesus, after His death on the cross, appear to have been the very answer for them.

John 20:22–23 (PowerPoint)

Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit," and He spoke to them, "Forgive one another's sins."

What scene does this moment—Jesus breathing on them and saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit"—remind you of?

It is that scene in Genesis 2:7, when God created humans in His image and breathed into them the breath of life.

That is to say, "to receive the Holy Spirit" is to be restored to that relationship in Genesis before sin was committed—Adam and Eve's beautiful relationship, where each could find the image of God in the other—which is "Be restored."

From that point where, having ridden on the instigation of the devil and evil spirits, one boldly declared, "This woman—because of this person—it is this person who is wrong," the restoration of the original beautiful human relationship is what is meant by "Receive the Holy Spirit."

When one receives the Holy Spirit, the person's evil parts, lacking parts, dark parts, sinful parts become felt as though they were one's own, they press in as pain, and furthermore, one comes to find the forgotten image of God within that person, and the work of God appears, in which one forgives and is forgiven in God.

We sinners, because sin dwells in us rather than good, naturally ride upon the devil's temptations, are guided by evil spirits, and without any effort at all, quite naturally criticize people, look down on people, and make people our enemies.

What is required of us every day—what we must seek every day—is not evil spirits but the Holy Spirit.

It is the filling of the Holy Spirit.

We seek the filling of the Holy Spirit in prayer seeking the filling of the Holy Spirit of God, and in the Word and in praise.

Ephesians 5:17–18 (PowerPoint):

“Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,”

Just as this Word says, the will of the Lord for us is to be filled not with evil spirits but with the Holy Spirit, and thereby to find the image of God, the likeness of God, the Lord Jesus, within people.

To forgive and forgive one another, to love and love one another.

Part Three

Now, as for me personally, I have been slowly and carefully reading through First and Second Samuel, and in the figure of David and the figure of Saul that appear there, I feel as though I am seeing the very content of today’s message.

No matter how many times King Saul hurled a spear at David and tried to take his life, no matter how unreasonable and relentless the death threats that came through Saul’s persistent pursuit, David—until the very, very end—sought to discover and to respect in Saul the image of God, the likeness of God, and the reality that he was one loved by God.

And David carried this out with the conviction that this itself was the will of God—what God desired first and foremost for himself, and what God desires for every human being.

And the one who enabled him to do this was the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

And the people of Israel, who were moved by such a way of life in David, together with David, honored Saul as the Lord’s anointed and mourned and grieved his death when King Saul passed away.

On the other hand, Saul, until the very, very end, followed the leading of an evil spirit. He entrusted his heart to the false sense of justice and false conviction whispered and lured by the evil spirit, and instead of discovering God in David, he persecuted David.

When we look at the way of life of David and Saul, it seems to me that we can clearly and distinctly see the contrast between one who valued receiving and being filled with the Holy Spirit, and who valued discovering the preciousness of God in others, and one who did not.

Conclusion

After this, we will have the Holy Communion, in which we remember that the Lord Jesus was crucified for our sins, shed His blood, and His body was broken. But Jesus Himself is the loving God who alone, without any doubt, discovered in us the image of God.

For the forgiveness of our sins, He Himself was crucified and resolved it, and instead of discovering sin in us, He discovered in us the restored image of God—our restored identity as children of God.

In other words, He is the only One who thought of us entirely, holding nothing back, as He thinks of Himself.

As those who love such a Jesus, and who have received the Holy Spirit, and as those who have received the grace of *Psalm 32:1–2*—

Psalm 32:1–2 [PowerPoint]

—as such people who have received this grace, I desire that we also may be those who extend the forgiveness of sins to others.

This, indeed, will be the only—and also the greatest—countermeasure and attack against the devil who seeks to swap out our true enemy.

Let us pray.

Benediction: *1 Peter 4:8*