



Links Players

Adversity - The Axis of Evil

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind.... (Ephesians 2: 1-3, ESV)

When we stop to consider the “axis of opposition” that awaits us in any given round of golf, especially a competitive one, there are three: the course, your opponent, and yourself.

This threefold reality always attempts to defeat our hoped-for expectations. The course has daunting challenges designed to wreak havoc on a good score. Whether it’s the speed of the greens or the height of the rough, the course throws a great many adversities at us.

Then, as always, our opponent wants to hold the trophy and enjoy the view of you watching from the sidelines. This makes the competition so much fun: not losing but the challenge of winning. Nevertheless, we must overcome whatever he throws at us.

And, then, there is always the battle raging inside ourselves. Overcoming our nerves, the prospect of embarrassment, various fears, and negative thoughts are always formidable battles; perhaps these battles are the toughest to win.

Anyone who plays golf is acutely aware of the “axis of opposition” that confronts us in golf. And, unless we’ve had our head in the sand, we will be aware of the “axis of evil” that is forever present in our journey through the “valley of the shadow of death,” our life on this side of the grave—“the world, the flesh, and the devil.”

Now, to be sure, many have argued against this view of things. Ever since the Enlightenment, the devil has been portrayed as nothing more than a myth. According to this view, he is a cartoon character invented by the medieval church to scare people.

According to the evolutionists, we are “brains on a stick.” That is, we are nothing more than “molecules in motion” without a soul. For them, our struggle is not between “flesh and spirit.” Our battle is merely to be an insignificant and meaningless part of the “survival of the fittest.”

According to secularists committed to a naturalistic worldview, there is no battle between ourselves and worldliness; our struggle is nothing more than being true to ourselves and revolting against external boundaries imposed on us by antiquated moral systems left over from bygone eras and party-poopers.

One has to choose. We will either drink from the fountain of ancient wisdom found in a biblical worldview, or we will imbibe what modern scholars are feeding us—a reductionistic bowl of tasteless porridge that never satisfies or equips us to fight and win in the battles of life.

That said, we cannot confuse “worldliness” with the good world God has created. Paul is talking about “worldliness,” the misdirected desire to follow current cultural patterns hostile toward God. The “flesh” involves those misdirected passions inciting us to transgress God’s good laws. The “Devil,” according to Paul, is a personal enemy seeking to deceive and destroy.

The good news for those who are disciples of King Jesus is we have been equipped to overcome all three.

Prayer: Warrior God (Genesis 15:3), thank you for training our hands for battle.

READING: Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 John 2:12-17; Exodus 15:1-3.

1. Which of the three mentioned obstacles (i.e., course, opponent, or self) is your biggest obstacle to achieving success in a round or a match? Discuss!

2. After reading the recommended texts, what can we learn about God and your three major opponents?

3. Application: After understanding the biblical nature of our warfare, discuss practical ways to better prepare for battle.
