

Satan and Spiritual Warfare

April 7, 2013

Ephesians 6:10-20

Dr. David Harrell

I wish to invite you to take your Bibles and turn to Ephesians chapter 6. We are continuing in our series on spiritual maturity and this is a key area that we need to understand. The area of Satan and spiritual warfare. Before we look at the text I have much to say by way of introduction. In John Bunyan's powerful allegory called *The Holy War*, he speaks about Satan and spiritual warfare in a way that captures our attention. He said this:

"In this gallant country of Universe, there lies a pleasant and peaceful municipality called Mansoul. The picturesque architecture of this town, its convenient location, and its superior advantages cannot be equaled under heaven.

Once upon a time, a mighty giant named Diabolus made an assault upon this famous town of Mansoul. He tried to take it and make it his own habitation. This giant was the terrible prince of darkness. He was originally one of the servants of King Shaddai, who had placed him in a very high and mighty position.

Knowing they had lost their positions and the King's favor forever, Diabolus and his rebels turned their pride into hatred against Shaddai and his Son. They roamed about in fury from place to place in search of something that belonged of the King on which to take their revenge.

At last they happened to find this spacious country of Universe, and they steered their course toward the famous town of Mansoul. Considering it to be one of the chief works and delights of King Shaddai, they decided to make an assault upon the town.

When they found the place, they shouted horribly for joy and roared as a lion over its prey, saying: "Now we have found the prize and how to take revenge on King Shaddai for what he has done to us." So they called a council of war and considered what methods they should use to win this famous town of Mansoul for themselves."

Many Christians have been banished to an island of spiritual infancy because they simply do not understand spiritual warfare. Many have been uninformed, many are just naive. There are frankly 2 opposite and opposing errors that people can fall off into.

To be completely obsessed with demons and Satan. You will see some people running around binding and rebuking demons, exorcising demons with mystical incantations and deliverance ministries. They tend to blame the devil and demons are virtually everything. Then the opposite extreme is indifference. Where people are completely indifferent to spiritual warfare, they never consider it; they are clueless how to battle it and how to gain victory over it. In fact, many just think it is superstition.

In both cases, those believers will be characterized by doctrinal error. Their lives will be filled with spiritual chaos, sorrow, depression, ineffectiveness, and broken relationships.

Show me a Christian whose personal life is in shambles, and I'll show you a Christian who does not understand the three sources of evil in his life: the world, the flesh, and the

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devil. All three work in harmony to ruin a believer's testimony, to render us useless, to destroy our marriages, our family, to make us miserable and rob us of our joy in Christ.

In light of this, I want to focus this morning primarily on Satan and his demons. I want you to understand how they operate in the world and how they appeal to your flesh. We all need to know our enemy so that we will not become ensnared in his traps. Unless you know how to effectively battle your enemy, you will certainly never be able to gain the victory. A victory that is already ours because Christ has won the victory at the cross.

This morning we will focus on this topic in three ways. I want you to understand first of all:

- A. What God has revealed in His word with respect to Satan and demons.
- B. Their methods and how they destroy believers.
- C. The Believer's defensive and offensive weaponry, how we can gain victory.

I share the Apostle Paul's concern for the church in Corinth when he said in 2 Corinthians 2:11: "that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes."

First of all, what has God revealed to us about Satan and Demons? Who are they and what are they up to? What are their powers? What can they do? What are their limits, schemes? How can they take advantage of us?

First of all we need to understand that Satan was originally called "Lucifer" that means "star of the morning" and "son of the dawn". Satan in the Hebrew means "adversary". According to Isaiah 14 we see that he was a highly intelligent creature of great position, of great power and even of great pride. He said of himself, "I will make myself like the Most High." So Satan is the rival of God who was joined by one-third of the angels and an unsuccessful rebellion against God according to Revelation 12:4. A rebellion of cosmic proportion that continues to this very day. We must understand that there are two competing kingdoms in the world. Kingdoms that we cannot actually see in terms of the spirits that lead them, but nevertheless they are there.

We have the Kingdom of Darkness versus the Kingdom of God. Of course as saints we can rejoice according to Colossians 1:14 that, "He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

In Scripture, Satan is called: The serpent, the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the god of this world, a murderer and the father of lies, a deceiver, the accuser of believers, the evil one.

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Certainly these titles betray the nefarious and malevolent character of the diabolical creature. We know from scripture that Satan and his minions assault God by warring against the holy angels. They seek to annihilate the nation of Israel and thus thwart the purposes of God with His covenant people Israel by preventing the Abrahamic covenant to ever come to fruition. By preventing the Messiah of even having a people to rain over when He returns again in a millennial kingdom. Satan and his minions try to destroy Christ, they continue to try to destroy those who belong to Christ and certainly they keep non-believers in spiritual darkness and in the bondage of their father the devil. In fact unbelievers are called in Matthew 13:38: "the sons of the wicked one." They are according to 1 Timothy 5:15 those who "turn aside after Satan." Jesus says they have the same desires as their father the devil, Ephesians 8:44.

Ephesians 2:2 Paul tells us that Satan is the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience. According to 2 Corinthians 4:4, he is the god of this age that blinds unbelievers so they cannot see Christ and the gospel.

According to scripture, Satan commands a very well organized demonic army, a hoard of demons. The strata of his forces are described in Ephesians 6:12, we will look at that a little more closely later. They are described as "rulers, powers, world forces of this darkness, and the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."

Apparently some demons are assigned to rule over earthly kingdoms to oppose the purposes of God. We saw that, for example, in Daniel 10 where we learned of the "prince of Persia", that demon who opposed the angel Gabriel for 3 weeks until the Chief angel Michael came to assist him. Michael, by the way, is always associated with the protection of Israel, which he continues to do this day. And we read in Jude 9 that it was Michael that "disputed with the Devil and argued about the body of Moses."

We know that at least four very powerful demons are "bound at the river Euphrates." Revelation 9:14. One of the rivers that flowed from the Garden of Eden, of course that was the region where Babel originated. A region that spawned the majority of the pagan religions of the world, the region that continues to be the most hostile towards Israel and towards the church. We know that God is going to release those demons that are bound at Euphrates during the tribulation as part of His judgements upon the earth. This, by the way demonstrates ultimately God is in control of Satan and those demonic forces.

According to 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 there are other demons that God has bound and are being "kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgement of that great day." Jude 6. We believe that's because they possessed men who then cohabited with women, you read about that in Genesis 6 and God's judgment came right after that in Genesis 7 with the worldwide flood. That was a wickedness so abhorrent that God likened it to the sin of homosexuality and the judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah according to Jude 7: "Since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire."

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For reasons that we do not know, God has also incarcerated one of Satan's demonic kings in the abyss and his name is "Apollyon." We read that in Revelation 9:11, it means "destroyer". We know that he is going to be released during the tribulation at the time of the 5th trumpet judgment and he will lead a vast army of demons that are likened to a combination of locusts and scorpions that will inflict enormous pain on men for 5 months during that time.

Ultimately, as we already read, at the end of the Millennium, God is going to defeat Satan and all of the demons and they will be according to Revelation 20:10, they will be "thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur" and "tormented day and night for ever and ever."

Now while God has not revealed great details with respect to the spirit world of evil, He has made some things very clear to us. He has warned us, for example, in Ephesians 6:10 to "Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."

So let's examine more closely what the Lord has to say in this regard. As we examine scripture, we see that Satan and his demonic hoard function in the context of the world, the cosmos. Which can be understood as orderly systems of evil in opposition to God. 1 John 5:19, "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." In Revelation 12:9, he is called "the deceiver of the whole world."

The Cosmos, the orderly systems, would include things like government, political parties, educational systems, media and entertainment organizations, editorial offices, courts of Law. He fills prominent pulpits with false teachers. In fact Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:14: "No wonder, Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness."

According to scripture Satan and demons along with the human beings that serve them, will not necessarily look like the terrifying demons we see in horror shows from Hollywood, but instead they will disguise themselves as being winsome, charismatic, and benevolent type of creatures that anybody would love to have over for dinner. They do this in order to position themselves in strategic places to thwart the purposes of God and destroy His people.

Robert Culver has said well: "We err if we suppose his goals are simply to promote crimes, civil disorder and immorality. Rather, Satan would have human beings, whether crude or primitive, or refined and sophisticated, worship any creature rather than the Creator, to follow their own wills to death and hell rather than God's will to life everlasting. To this end Satan is less the ruffian than an 'angel of light', as much at work in dignified courts of law, legislature, universities and schools of art, even theological seminaries and church conferences, as bars, brothels, and opium dens."

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Once again, bear in mind, their goal is to deceive, to blind, persuade, destroy, murder. This explains like Herod murder of young children trying to destroy Christ. It explains Hitler's Nazi Germany and the holocaust, it explains Islamic terrorism. Isn't it amazing how we live, for example, in a culture that is fine with killing millions of unborn infants, but goes nuts when a terrorist is water boarded.

This explains why so many Americans would vote to have our new system of government described as an Ineptocracy. Have you heard of that word? This is a system of government where the least capable to lead are elected by the least capable of producing, and where the members of society least likely to sustain themselves or succeed, are rewarded with goods and service paid for by the confiscated wealth of a diminishing number of producers.

Satan is behind all of these types of chaotic things. In the Old Testament we learn that demons are identified as the false gods of the pagans, which continues to this day. In fact Moses described this in Deuteronomy 32:16-17: "They made Him (referring to YHWH) jealous with strange gods; with abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons who were not God, to gods whom they have not known." This of course included the hideous practice of child sacrifice that the Israelites began to participate in alongside their pagan neighbors. By the way, a practice that bears undeniable parallel with the millions of infants that are sacrificed every year to the demonic idol of sexual immorality on the altars of abortion clinics. There in Psalm 106:35 we read: "They mingled with the nations, and learned their practices, and served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons."

This reminds us of Jesus' description of Satan in John 8:44: "he was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

We even see demonic influence in the pagan religions in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 10:20 Paul said, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons."

In the Old Testament we see God handing people over to Satan and his demons to punish them for high handed sin. For example in 1 Samuel 16:14: "and an evil spirit from the Lord terrorized" King Saul, it caused him to become insanely jealous, you will recall, to try and kill David. The demon caused him, if you will read that passage in 1 Samuel; it caused him to rave out of control in his house, to throw a spear at David. He stripped himself naked and fell to the floor in a stupor in chapter 19. He massacred an entire city of innocent priests. "Men, women, children and infants, also oxen, donkeys, and sheep, he struck with the edge of the sword." 1 Samuel 19:19

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This was the same demon that caused him to consult with a medium to speak with the dead. By the way, when people do that they actually do speak with something, but it's not the dead, it's demons that disguise themselves as the dead. We read about that in chapter 28:7-20, and ultimately he committed suicide.

Ultimately, Satan is, as Luther said, is God's Ape. He is not doing anything that God does not in His sovereignty allow him to do.

We saw God allowing Satan to test and torment Job to prove his faithfulness.

He allowed Satan send to Paul a messenger to buffet him, some wicked false teacher that oppressed him constantly. Paul called it a thorn in his flesh.

He allowed Satan to sift Peter like wheat, remember in Luke 22 resulting in Peter denying Christ 3 times.

Because Judas refused to repent and submit to the Lordship of Christ, Satan entered into Judas in John 13 and he betrayed Christ and then went out and hung himself.

In Acts 5:3 we see how Satan "filled the heart of Ananias" and caused him to lie to the Holy Spirit, ultimately resulting in his death, the first act of church discipline by the way.

In the ministries of Jesus and the apostles we see demons controlling certain individuals, yet terrified of Jesus and the apostles who had power over them. I would also hasten to add that they are terrified of all who submit to God

Secondly we need to understand their methods to destroy believers. In order to do this you must first remember the enemy that is within, that is the real enemy, your flesh. We remain as believers incarcerated in this unredeemed humanness. That is why Jesus said in Matthew 26:41 "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Paul said in Romans 7:25: "I know that in me (that is in my flesh) nothing good dwells." Paul reminds us in Galatians 5: 16, "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."

So we must understand that Satan will provide temptations that appeal to our flesh. Many of you men and some of you women understand this because you hunt and you fish. We all know that in order to be a good hunter, or good fishermen, we must learn the habits and desires of your prey. You must deceive them with hooks and traps and camouflaged clothing, various scents and call and then when they least expect it, you kill them. The unseen spirit world works in the same way. They study us, they lay snares in the very well worn paths of our wickedness, our sinful habits and then they capture us. They do this in order to destroy our life and render us as believers useless for the cause of Christ. This dishonors Christ and it discredits the church.

Despite their powers they have limitations. As we look at scripture we see that they are not omniscient, they are not omnipotent, they are not omnipresent. They can't directly

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communicate with a believer by speaking to our minds. Sometimes you will hear people say "Oh I could just hear the Ole Devil whispering in my ear, he said this and that", No, you didn't hear the devil, that was your flesh or that was your imagination. They do not speak to you in that way. But they do work through unsaved human agents to accomplish their will.

They cannot coerce our will, but when we yield our will to temptation or when we believe false doctrine, they we yield our wills to theirs. Paul speaks of this in 2 Timothy 2:26 there he describes people that were ensnared by the Devil because of false doctrine, "having been held captive by him to do his will."

We also know from scripture that they cannot know the future, only God knows the future. Isaiah 46:9, "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done."

In fact, Mark tells us in Mark 13:32 that they do not even know the time when Jesus is going to return. Moreover, they cannot read our minds, they cannot know our thoughts. God makes this clear for example in 1 Corinthians 2:11 only He knows the thoughts of men. But they can and do observe what we do and they can communicate with non-believers in various ways in order to position them to deceive us and to deceive everyone, to tempt, influence and even to oppress believers. We know from scripture that they can enter into animals and they may even be able appear in the likeness of a man. We know that the angel Gabriel could do that and did do that in Daniel 9:21. There is much evidence over the course of history that they do this type of thing.

But there is no clear example in scripture where a Satan or a demon spatially possesses, inhabits, or invades a true believer, but there are numerous examples where they can do that with non-believers. They can, with God's permission, attack believers, but they cannot cohabit a believer with the Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians 6:15 Paul says, "What harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'"

Again remember Colossians 1:14 God has, "delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son." John tells us in 1 John 4:4, "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."

I would also add 1 Peter 1:5, believers are "protected by the power of God" because of this, according to 1 John 5:18 "the evil one does not touch him." But certainly those without Christ whose body is not the temple of the indwelling spirit, they are open to satanic and demonic invasion.

There are a myriad of ways that Satan can attack us but let me give you this morning 3 primary strategies that we see Satan using to defeat us.

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1. He will seek to conform you to this world. Remember what Paul said in Romans 12:2 do not be conformed to this world. Literally do not allow the world to shape you into its image without you realizing it. Do not allow the world to squeeze you into its mold. Satan wants you to look, think, act like the world. In order to do that, he will make it as though the old song says simply irresistible. He will try to make you love the world by offering you a smorgasbord of delicious deceptions and poisonous pleasures that will appeal to "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world." 1 John 2:16, "is not from the Father, but is from the world." Think of how he does this, television, internet, pornography everywhere these days, music, fashion, educational systems. Again, the spirit world studies our lusts and provides for us the perfect poison that will be delicious to our taste. For example we know from scripture that God wants our lives as believers to confront the culture, but Satan will say I want you to conform to the culture.

God has commanded us to "come out and be separate from the world" 2 Corinthians 6:17, but satan says no I'm going to seduce you so that you will, according to Ephesians 2:2 "walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience" This is why elders are required to have according to 1 Timothy 3:7, "a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." Literally the snare of worldliness set by the devil. Satan loves to set traps to discredit leaders in the church of God.

Not only will he seek to conform you to this world another thing he will do:

2. He will convince you to believe lies. This was his strategy in the garden, was it not, with Eve? What did he try to do there? He distorted what God said. He created doubt in her mind and began to deceive her. He wanted to get Eve to believe what she wanted to believe rather than look closely and be careful to not only know what God said, but do what God said. As a result what happens with people you begin to distrust God, deny His goodness, you create doctrinal confusion in your mind and you begin to promote error and you violate God's will. He accomplishes this, according to 1 Timothy 4:1 through "deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron."

There are so many ways he has done this, for example, he has deceived the seeker sensitive church into believing that the scripture and the Holy Spirit are deficient in power to bring men to salvation, therefore we must invent our own strategies to compensate for this deficiency. As a result you fill the church with tares and you keep the believers that are in that church on an island of spiritual infancy.

He deceives others into believing and teaching everything from legalism to libertinism, from tolerance to intolerance. Then we begin to think and act this way and our families

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buy into it and before you know it you have generations of people in the church that believe these things.

Paul instructs shepherds in the church to gently correct those who have been deceived by error in 2 Timothy 2:26 that "they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."

A third way of thinking how Satan will operate to destroy your life is that,

3. He will seduce you into worshipping idols in your heart. Things that you love and serve more than God. What is God's supreme commandment? God says I want you to love Me with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. What does Satan say? No I want you to love anything but Him with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. I want you to love your neighbor as much as yourself, and Satan wants you to love yourself more than your neighbor. It's always going to be just the opposite. So what he says is basically given that I have a list of things that I have created that will appeal to your specific appetite. A smorgasbord, a banquet because we've been studying you. In 1 Peter 5 warns us to be disciplined in our mind and our body so that we will not succumb to the intoxicating allurements of the world. "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert". In other words be ever vigilant regarding attitudes of submission, humility, trust, and self-control that he has been discussing. Why does he say this? Because "Your adversary, the devil, prowls like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." 1 Peter 5:8. Your adversary, your personal adversary is seeking after you. He wants you to worship anything but God.

Of course the idol that most people worship is the idol of self. Self love and self will is really at the heart of sin. It's as though they are saying something like this: "We've noticed how you love to have your own way" for example. You clearly lack what Peter was saying, submission, humility, trust, and self-control. And as a result of that you are a person that is filled with anger, oh we love that. You are a real hothead and you can't control your temper. So what we are going to do just for you is fill your life with people that you love and that you respect who will model the very same thing. Not only that, they will watch you explode in rage and somehow justify it. Paul says those who live this way according to Ephesians 4:27 "give the devil an opportunity." In other words angry, controlling people are those that give Satan an opportunity to ruin their testimony, ruin their marriage, ruin their family, to ruin their church family ultimately to ruin their life. This is how Satan devours.

Another idol is the idol of sexual immorality. Yeah we've been watching you and we can tell that that is a big deal for you so what we are going to do is we are going to provide every imaginable form of sexual immorality that you can indulge in. Not only that we are going to put people in your life who have absolutely no moral compass. We are going to surround you with those kinds of people. People who love sex as much as you do. Not only that we are going to bring into your life sexual partners, partners that you will absolutely worship and we are going to devour you through the stress of broken

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relationships, through the stress of sexually transmitted diseases. We are going to devour you with the trauma of unwanted pregnancies and divorce.

Oh you like the idol of drugs and alcohol; oh we've been watching you. We've noticed how those chemicals really do something for you. So we want to make sure that you have at your disposal all the drugs and alcohol you want. We are going to surround you with friends, we are even going to bring people into your life that will not only condone that but help you get that stuff. They will become your circle of friends. We want you to absolutely stay drunk and then we will devour your health and all that you hold dear.

Oh you worship sports? Yeah we've watched you, especially your kids. Ok we are going to provide opportunities for you so that sports becomes the absolute priority of your life so that you will spend thousands of dollars and an enormous amount of time teaching your kids what is really important. We will devour you by wasting your time and money and causing you and your family to ignore the God who demands your worship.

Oh you worship money; you're obsessed with it so we are going to provide people, business, and investment opportunities that will keep you utterly intoxicated with greed and materialism. We are going to build malls everywhere where you can go worship. We are going to make catalogs and we are going to make it so that on the internet you can just hit a button and have anything you want until you are so hopelessly in debt that you cannot serve God. You cannot worship him with your finances and you can't even care for your families. That is how we will devour you. Anything to keep you from loving the Lord your God.

Finally we must understand, The believer's defensive and offensive weaponry so that we can gain the victory. This brings us to our text in Ephesians 6:10. This is a call to arms dear friends. In fact the Ephesians were waging warfare before and during the time this epistle was written. Notice what Paul says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might." In other words you have no power in yourself, you've got to tap into the power of Christ who defeated Satan at the cross and in whom you have been hidden.

May I remind you of 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, "For though we walk in the flesh (in other words human limitations), we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses (referring to demonic strongholds, prisons of deception that incarcerate the naive and ignorant)? We are destroying speculations (false ideologies) and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God (proud intellectualism, politically correct philosophies of the elitists, the arrogant heresies of the religious intellectuals). And we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." Present tense, it's a continuous struggle.

So my friends, we don't bind Satan. If we did, how long is that going to work? An hour, a day? Where do you see that? What is the scope of the binding, just your house? Your community? If we could do that, why don't we bind the rascal and get it over with! You

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are not going to bind him, that is ridiculous, that's folly. You don't see that in scripture. That is a distortion of scripture. Satan would love for you to believe that you could do that, to distract you from the real methods of dealing with him over which he cannot defeat you. But instead we "take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" constantly. This is how back to our text in Ephesians 6:10, "be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might."

We don't assault evil spirits, we assault their systems, but this requires supernatural power. This is how we get it in verse 11: "Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." In other words against his cunning deceptions that are designed to make you stumble and fall, designed to destroy your testimony, marriage, family, to render you useless in Christian service and to steal your joy and fellowship with Christ. Like all predators, he is going to do this at a time when you least expect it.

Verse 12: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." Here again are the organized ranks of Satan's demonic empire. Verse 13: "Therefore, take up the full armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm." That is a great term; I like to sign a lot of my letters to my Christian brothers and sisters. Maybe you have received some of them from me, at the end I will say "stand firm". It's a military term and has the idea of holding a critical position at all cost. Ask yourself, am I standing firm? Verse 14: "Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth". This refers to divine truth, the truth of the word of God.

The imagery here is taken from the Roman soldier who would wear a tunic in hand to hand combat and you can't have any loose fitting clothing with that. So they would take that tunic and they would tuck it in to a belt-like girdle that protected their lower abdomen. They would cinch their tunics together in that belt because they knew that they were going to be, according to verse 12 "in a struggle", that means hand to hand combat. The image taken from Roman wrestling that many times would result in a life or death struggle.

Verse 14, not only must you be ready with the truth but, "and having put on the breastplate of righteousness." See this was the heart protector for the Roman soldier. Usually it was hammered bronze and fitted to the body. Sometimes it was made of chain mail, sometimes leather with overlapping animal hooves or horns or metal. This was anchored on that leather belt. So the idea here is on the anchor of truth, on the foundation of truth, you must put on your heart protector which is righteous living. We wear the breastplate of righteousness when we choose to be obedient to the truth. So naturally Satan does not want you to understand the truth much less does he want you to live the truth? Satan wants you to bear bad fruit, the deeds of the flesh.

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Verse 15: "and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace." The roman soldier would put spikes in their shoes for footing in battle. As Christians our spiritual footing is crucial in order for us to be able to stand firm. You have that over and over here; you want to be able to fight the enemy you have to stand firm verse 11, 13, and 14. In this passage the gospel of peace is the good news that as believers we are at peace with God. To make it real clear we need to be absolutely certain what the scriptures say with respect to the security of the believer and the assurance of our salvation that indeed we have been reconciled to God through faith in His Son. We are no longer His enemies; we are no longer children of wrath. We are now at peace with God because of our justification. Romans 5:1. That is what he is saying, so have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Satan wants you to doubt all of this. He wants to provide all manner of heresies that will cause you to believe that somehow it is up to you to maintain your faith by deeds of the flesh. That's why Paul said in Galatians 3:3 "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh." Then in Galatians 5:1 he exhorts them to "keep standing firm".

I have had to deal over the years with many people in this area who struggle with severe anxiety problems and inevitably they are people who are trapped in the error of Arminianism and Arminianism theology, not understanding the doctrines of grace. So they can't stand firm.

I want you to notice that the first three pieces of armor are permanent. We are never to be without them as indicated by use of the past tense in verses 14 and 15 he says, "Having girded, having put on, having shod." So to be without any of these pieces of armor exposes you to Satanic attack. But there are three more items that are to be kept in readiness by a Christian warrior, verse 16: "in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one."

This speaks of the Roman thureos shield. It was 2 1/2 feet wide and 4 1/2 feet high. It was designed to protect the entire body. They were alot smaller then we are today. It was made of wood covered with metal. Sometimes it would be covered with heavily oiled leather and it would be put in the front lines of battle and you have probably seen pictures of this. They stood side by side and form a huge phalanx, sometimes 1 mile long or more. The archers would stand behind them and they would be protected by these shields from the enemy projectiles which would typically be arrows covered with pitch and on fire and when they would hit things they would splatter and burn the soldiers. They would ignite everything, so these shields were very important. The idea here is even as these shields protected the roman soldiers, so too God will protect us from the flaming missiles of the evil one those seducing temptations that lead us into sin when we take up the shield of faith.

What is faith? Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." So my friends if you are going to do battle with the enemy you must have the shield of faith which basically means you must have a resolute

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confidence, a confident assurance in the body of doctrine that God has revealed to us in His word. The truths that have activated our salvation and trust in all that He says, and do all that He says knowing that He rewards those who seek Him Hebrews 11:6. Many Christians have toy shields. As soon as difficulties come on they are afraid and filled with doubt and discouragement. They yield to temptation. "I'm just not sure that God can.... fill in the blank." "I'm not sure that I can trust God with...." So they say thanks God, but I'll take care of this on my own. This is exactly what Satan wants you to do. The only way to extinguish Satan's flaming missiles of temptation is to believe in him, to trust him at his word.

Paul said in Romans 10:17: "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God."

David reminds us in Psalm 18:30: "the word of the Lord is tried; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him." Isn't that wonderful?

1 John 5: 4: "This is the victory that overcomes the world-our faith."

Then he adds it again in verse 17: "and take the helmet of salvation." You must understand that the helmet protected the soldier from the two-edged broadsword; it was called a Rhomphia, a large broadsword 3 to 4 feet. The Calvary riders would come in to decapitate and maim the frontlines of the soldiers and try to split their skulls. So here "the helmet of salvation" indicates that Satan's blows are directed at our salvation. Satan's double-edged, decapitating, mutilating broadsword produces discouragement and doubt, confusion and error with respect to salvation. In other words, what he wants you to do is believe errors with respect to the doctrine of soteriology. He wants you to be confused about the doctrine of salvation. He wants you to believe a man-centered salvation not a God-centered salvation. So he attacks routinely the doctrines of grace and promotes doctrines that deny God's absolute sovereignty and salvation, that it's all of grace.

In verse 17 he says, "And the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God." In other words, we've got to know and obey the truth.

This is what Jesus used to ward off Satan's temptations in the wilderness, right? Friends you simply must discipline yourself to know the word and obey it. Then in verse 18, "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit." Technically this is not part of the armor, but it is central to Paul's exhortation and a major theme throughout the epistle of Ephesians.

Proportionally, Ephesians has 55% more verses directly related to prayer than any other epistle in the New Testament. So prayer is to the believer's armor what oxygen is to our life, it must be the very air that we breathe. My friends if prayer is not the joyful habit of your secret devotion to God, then you are losing the battle to Satan and you don't even know it. He is the ultimate silent killer.

Dear Christian, the Word and Prayer are "the weapons of our warfare" that Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 10:4, "are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful". This is how we take

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very thought captive to the obedience of Christ. This is how we can be strong in the Lord and stand firm.

Dear Christian friend ask yourself where has the enemy seduced me? Frankly it's not going to be hard to spot. Look for those areas in your life where doctrinally you know you cannot defend your position. Look for those areas in your life where you are the priority, not God. Look for those areas in your life where there is chaos, sorrow, depression, and broken relationships. Where instead of maturing in Christ, you're reverting back to your childhood. Then cry out to the Lord for discernment because the enemy has taken advantage of you.

My friend if you don't know Christ, I'm sure some of you within the sound of my voice do not. May I be of encouragement to you; you may think well, if Satan is blinding me, what can I do?

Well the Lord has addressed that through His servant James in James 4:7, there is a wonderful invitation to you, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."

Let's pray together, Father teach us from these great truths. Help us to live out what we have heard today. By the power of Your Spirit help us to be brutally honest with our lives that we might repent specifically of those areas where we have yielded ground to the enemy. By Your grace, oh Spirit of God, cause us to walk faithfully with You. For those who do not know You, will You convict them this day that they might be saved. Cause them to submit to you by believing in the gospel of Christ and in so doing, resist the devil. As Christ comes into them, he will absolutely flee from them. We pray these things in Jesus' name and for His sake, Amen.