

Lessons Learned from The Book of Ephesians Spiritual Warfare

Book 1



Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers

Vistoso Community Church

Sermon Series

Spiritual Warfare

Book 1

**We have an enemy,
and he's both real and powerful!
Our only hope is to be strong in the Lord,
and the power of His might!
And put on the full armor God provides—
every piece of it!**

All Scripture Quotes have been taken from either The
NIV (1984 edition) or the NKJV (1992 edition).

First Edition

October 2018

Foreword

If we come to God's Word with a preconceived idea of what we are going to find and how long it is going to take to understand it, we are often going to be in for a surprise. That is exactly what happened to me when I came to the closing verses of the book of Ephesians. I had forgotten that the Word of God is an inexhaustible *gold mine* of truth for the child of God.



Few things I have studied have proven to be such a source of practical truth than these last few verses. They are all the more the blessing for the unexpected depth and richness of what God has preserved for us.

Truly, He knows our every need and provides accordingly.

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Redig". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning and a large, looping flourish at the end.

Kevin Redig

**Put on the
whole
armor
of
God,** that ye may be able to stand
against the wiles of the devil.
Stand therefore, having your
loins girt about with truth,
and having on the breastplate
of righteousness; And your feet
shod with the preparation
of the gospel of peace;
Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith
ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts
of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation,
and the sword of the Spirit, which is the
word of God: Praying always with all
prayer and supplication in the Spirit,
and watching thereunto with all
perseverance and supplication for all saints.

Ephesians 6:11; 13-18 Calligraphy by Tom Seale

Introduction

The last 15 verses of the sixth chapter of the book of Ephesians are the close of one of the most doctrinally rich of the New Testament epistles. It might seem like a strange place to focus one's study! Haven't the great truths of Paul's letter already been fully developed?



Should we expect anything more than a warm closing salutation—much like a leisurely stroll into the twilight? Instead, in Ephesians 6:10 we get the word "**Finally**" followed by the

sounding of a trumpet and the call to battle.

The change of tone that occurs at the close of the book is jarring in context. Paul is not going to close his letter without getting the full attention of every reader. For what we find in these closing verses is not only something crucial to



the flow of truth within the context of the book of Ephesians, but a crucial component of living the Christian life in *enemy-held territory*. It is going to challenge us, gather and tie together an immense amount of both Old and New Testament truth, and give us a fantastic mental picture from which to make application for the rest of our lives. And that should be all the reason we need to devote ourselves to a detailed study of this passage. With all that in mind, let's refresh our memory on the scope of doctrine covered in the book of Ephesians.

First, Our Blessings

Not surprisingly, the closing verses of Ephesians are very much dependent upon the thrust of the rest of the book. The first three chapters are devoted to establishing and developing our position in Christ. They are particularly noteworthy in that they don't direct us to do anything, but rather direct us to come to grips with the tremendous riches of what God has done for us. For example, we learned how we have been made alive with Christ, raised up with Him, and are right now positionally seated with Him at the right hand of the Father. (Ephesians 2:4-6)



Then, perish the thought that we would ever forget the amazing statement that by virtue of our position in Christ, we have been blessed in the heavenlies with every spiritual blessing in Christ, followed by a marvelous listing of just a few of those many blessings. (Ephesians 1:3-11) We also find the wonderful description of how both Jew and Gentile are brought together into one household, built upon Jesus Christ as the Chief Cornerstone, a dwelling not made of stone but of flesh and blood in which God lives by His Spirit and through which He manifests His grace to the watching angelic host. (Ephesians 2:14-22, 3:10-12) All of this great truth is presented through the use of what many have called the most important prepositional phrase in the Bible—"***in Christ.***"

Over and over the emphasis is placed, not upon what we do, but upon what God has done for us in His Son!

Then, Our Walk

As we moved into the second half of the book, there was a marked change in content. After developing all that is ours *in Christ*, the opening verses of Chapter 4 admonish us to *walk worthy* of who and what we are in Christ. The picture is one of a set of scales. On one side is what God has done for us in Christ. On the other side is the life that we live. In no uncertain terms, using one analogy after another, we are told to live a life of equivalent worth to who and what we are in Christ. Once this picture is clearly in mind, we are told how to do so:



- To put off the old man—a reference to the sinful nature—as we might take off soiled clothing.
- To put on the new man, which is the very life of Christ.
- To do so by the renewing of our minds through the Word of God and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

After all of this tremendous doctrine—our position, our walk, and the Spirit-filled life as it relates to hearth and home—it would seem that we have arrived at a time for a tender-hearted closing. There is the expectation of a closing something akin to:

“God bless you as you walk in the Spirit
and may the grace of God be with you all!”

Instead, we get the jarring notes of the trumpet calling us to arms. For Paul is not going to let us move forward in the Christian Life unprepared. Instead, he is going to acquaint us with the harsh reality of the spiritual battle in which we are going to find ourselves as we seek to *walk worthy* of the tremendous blessings we have *in Christ!* For this *worthy walk* is to be conducted in enemy territory over which the Devil holds sway. This means that we need to be fully prepared to appropriate what God has provided so that His victory would be put on display in us! Now we are ready to narrow our focus to the last 15 verses of this monumental epistle.

A Closing Admonition

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Ephesians 6:10

Although the word *Finally* introduces us to Paul's final topic, it is not inconsequential in nature. On the contrary, he is closing by alerting us to the forces arrayed against us in our efforts to *walk worthy of the calling we have received* (Ephesians 4:1). Paul wants us to be prepared, for he knows that, if we are not prepared, we don't stand a chance of living a life acceptable to our Lord.

Perhaps you are thinking that I am overstating the situation. Consider this: we are citizens of heaven living in a lost world under the control of an arch-villain who is in total rebellion against God. Not only are we to walk worthy of who we are in Christ, but we are also called to be ambassadors to this lost world! We are called to be witnesses to the saving work of Christ, so that those who

have rejected Him, and are on the broad road headed to destruction, might hear the good news of God's saving grace in Christ. This is a message, by the way, that the ruler of this world will do everything in his power to quash, twist, or pervert. We most certainly better be ready.

Paul continues by addressing, *my brethren*. We all need to pay attention at this point. Paul is not addressing leadership or those with certain gifts. This imperative from Paul doesn't apply to someone else! This is, first and foremost, a call to the Church of Christ to get its *game-face* on! It is a call to each and every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! For this spiritual battle, in which we find ourselves, is not a sandlot softball game where we all shake hands afterward. It is a battle of a completely different kind with eternal stakes.



All you need in order to grasp the significance of this admonition, to know what is at stake, is to have seen the Evil One get hold of a family member. We have all seen loved ones squander potential and waste a portion of their lives—often with consequences that cannot be undone. I am not talking about the lost here, but about those who had a good Christian testimony at one point, and then became entangled in the deceitful attractions of this world—attractions behind which is an evil intellect.

Paul's admonition is not to a select few, but to the church at large. So don't make the following error in thinking. You likely know that Paul is about to use a metaphor associated with armor in order to explain how we are to take our stand within the context of spiritual warfare. It is almost certain that you have something in mind similar to the graphic below. In your mind, you are going to think of

obedience to this passage in terms of you putting on the "*armor of God.*"



Now, it is most certainly true that there must be an individual response to what is being taught in this passage. But, that is not the end of the story in terms of what Paul has in mind, and we need to think of this in different terms altogether because of the word *brethren*—because Paul has the Church in mind. It is much more appropriate to think in terms of the following graphic than that of a lone soldier.



Let me put this in terms of our local fellowship of believers. Our fellowship may draw the Devil's attention because lost people are getting saved, because of our emphasis on missions, and because of our loving fellowship. If he finds only one fully armored individual, he is going to have no problem sowing error, causing dissension, and distracting this body of believers from their God-ordained calling. But, if he comes over the top of the hill upon which our local fellowship gathers, and he comes upon a body of believers who look like the illustration above—*brethren* who are all clothed with the armor of God standing shoulder to shoulder—he is going to have to look elsewhere to interfere, sow dissension, and spread error. For, in such a church fellowship, there is not a single gap in which he can drive the wedge of dissension, not a single un-armored person he can exploit. It is this kind of Church fellowship against which the *gates of Hades will not prevail!* (Matthew 16:18)

Now I know that you may be thinking, “Pastor, you’re making me feel uncomfortable with this talk of spiritual warfare. You don’t actually believe that a real demonic power can attempt to work evil in our fellowship, do you?”

I understand your concerns completely. I would choose another topic if I could, except this is what God has for us in the closing verses of His Word to the Church at Ephesus. And, yes, I most certainly do think demonic influence can be brought directly against our fellowship. But let me remind you:

. . .the One who is in you (the Lord Jesus Christ)
is greater than the one who is in the world.

1 John 4:4

- **. . .be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.** Ephesians 6:10

Consider the above quote from Ephesians carefully. All too often we take this as an admonition to: “Toughen up, get out there, and be strong!” We assume this is something we can do—perhaps with a little help from the Lord. On the contrary, the verb in this phrase, *be strong*, is in the imperative mood, making it a command, but it is also in the passive voice, meaning that it is something we receive. In short, this is clearly commanding us to *receive* strength. From Whom can we receive this strength? We receive it from the Lord! More specifically, we are to receive from the Lord—power! We are to receive the power of His might! So three times in this simple phrase our attention is directed away from ourselves and to the Lord: *receive power. . . from the Lord. . .the power of His* (not our) *might*.

Consider the following scriptures and, while you are reading through them, ask yourself if you see any reference at

all to the strength of the individual.

The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. Proverbs 18:10

The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge.

Psalm 18:2

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

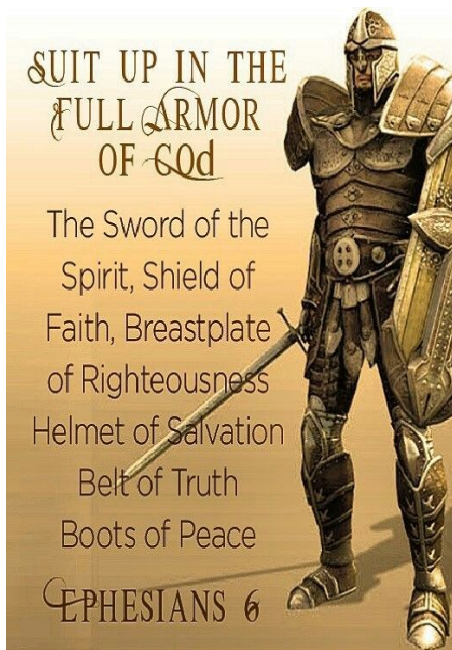
Psalm 73:26

Furthermore, to make the above point as firmly as possible, look ahead in Ephesians 6:14 to the armor we are asked to put on:

- *Girded with truth* (Whose truth?)
- *The breastplate of righteousness* (Whose righteousness?)
- *Feet shod with the Gospel* (Whose good news?)

This is not an admonition to apply our own strength, but instead to turn to God for His strength and whatever else He, in grace, has provided. To summarize, consider this point of application:

To think of ourselves as the solitary warrior is a huge mistake, to look to our own strength—an even bigger one!



Moving our discussion to Ephesians 6, Verse 11:

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

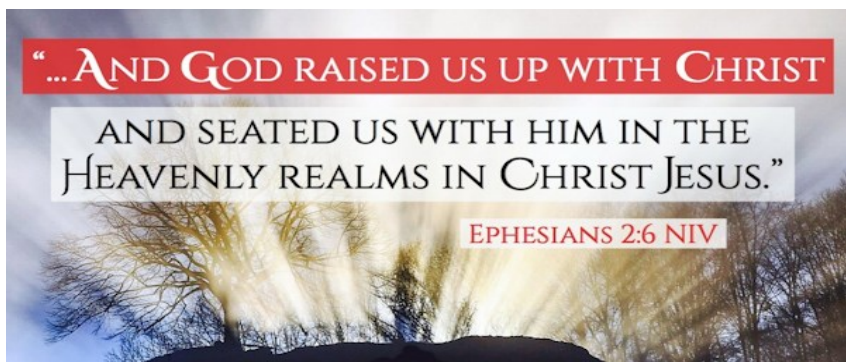
What armor? Be patient, we will get to the details in Verse 14 in due time. First, let's discuss the question: "Why do we need this armor?" I would like to draw your attention to three reasons that we need armor.

First, consider the word *stand*. Let's begin with another point of application:

There is no worthy walk for the Christian, unless that Christian starts from a firm stance!

In other words, we can't even begin to deal with the issues of living a life that is consistent with who and what we are in Christ, unless we thoroughly understand our position in Christ and our resultant eternal security. These are the solid base from which we can move forward seeking to apply what God has provided for us to live a supernaturally transformed life.

Then, consider the words *wiles* and *devil*. These two words speak first of methodology and then the personality. At this point it becomes necessary to make sure that we improve our understanding of our adversary.



Our Adversary

Before we discuss the armor of God, it is helpful to make sure that we understand our adversary:

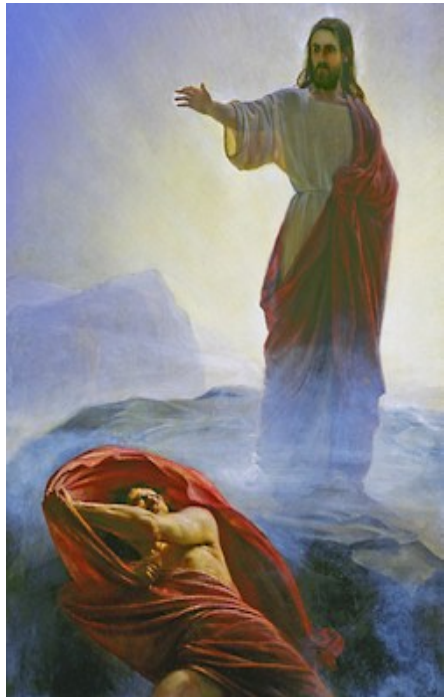
Our Chief Antagonist Is a Personality

The Devil is not a cosmic force or an impersonal idea. He is not some mystical idea of yin/yang, bad karma, or the fallen nature within. The Devil is a malevolent and extremely powerful being who has chosen to rebel against his Creator, the Most High God, and seeks to do as much harm as possible to the plans and purposes of God while he furthers his own agenda. Lost mankind is nothing more to him than pawns to be used to his own advantage in his ongoing conflict with God above. I say this, knowing that this may be somewhat new to you or something you vaguely remember from the distant past. For here is our current sorry state of affairs as documented in research done by the Barna Group:

" . . .90% of Americans have a belief in God. . . "

" . . .more than two thirds of Americans do not believe in the Devil as a living entity."

That latter statement is quite literally *not giving the Devil his due!*



As another example, these comments recently published in the newsletter from one of America's mainline denominations further illustrate how we have departed from Biblical truth:

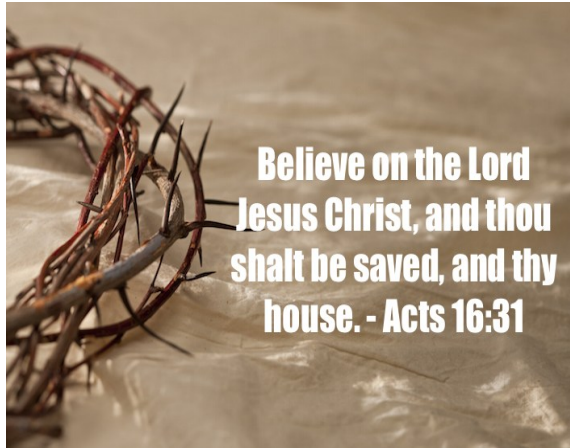
"The reality underlying this question is that the evil spirit, Satan or whatever is interpreted as evil, refers to the lower nature in man. This baser nature is symbolized in various ways. . . . God has never created an evil spirit; all such ideas and nomenclature are symbols expressing the mere human or earthly nature of man. Why should one adopt this non-literal view? One reason is freedom from inordinate fear, anxiety and even neurosis that can develop. Secondly, to reorient one's faith toward love, attraction to God and service to humanity, rather than fear of damnation and evil spirits."

The above is a widespread view among those 90% of Americans who say they believe in God, to say nothing of the 10% who don't make that claim. This error is widespread and very dangerous for the spiritual condition of mankind! Consider this text from the Book of Hebrews.

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself (Jesus) likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Hebrews 2:14-15

Perhaps, to some the denominational newsletter's call to *reorienting one's faith toward love and attraction to God and service to humanity* sounds good. But this is an exceedingly dangerous and irresponsible position to proclaim from any pulpit. For how do you reorient your faith?

If our faith is not oriented toward the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is meaningless. Did you notice in that quote that there was not one mention of Jesus? Further, is it a good idea to make the fear of death go away if the issue of eternal damnation has not been dealt with?



**Believe on the Lord
Jesus Christ, and thou
shalt be saved, and thy
house. - Acts 16:31**

It is the complete absence of love for a lost person to avoid discussion of the judgment to come. For, once it arrives, the decisions made in life are irrevocable! The Devil holds the power of death over every single lost person on this planet. But, through the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ has broken his power and released those in bondage through faith in His name! We don't need freedom from this. We need to hear the truth pointing us toward the marvelous freedom that is available in Christ!

Contrary to the newsletter's bad theology, the devil is very much a personal being. Consider the names used for him in Scripture, each refers to a someone and not a something:

- **Diabolos:** false accuser, slanderer—the being who does such things
- **Devilas:** an adversary, one who stands against
- **Beelzebub:** lord of filth, flies, and idolatry—the one over such things

Look how personal is the context of the following passages:

The Lord said to Devil, "Where have you come from?" Job 1:7

From here the dialogue continues discussing the activities of the Devil and his response to statements of truth from the Lord. There is no other way to deal with this than to see the Devil as a created being.

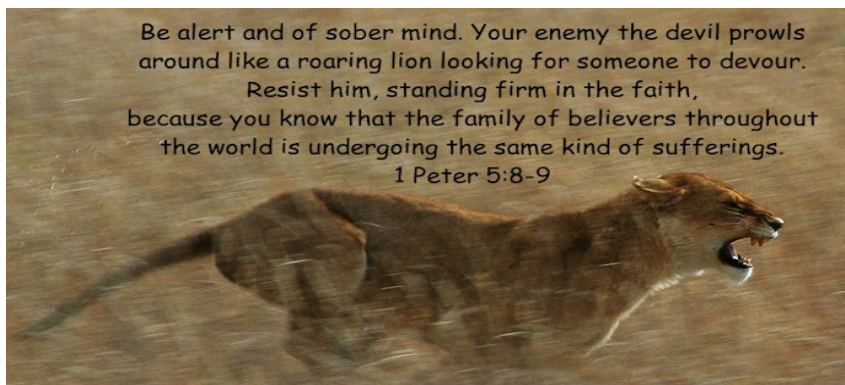
Then we read of the temptation of Jesus by the Devil.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the Devil. . . the Tempter came to Him and said. . . then the devil left Him and angels came and attended Him. Matthew 4:1-11

Finally, we have this admonition by Peter:

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him. . . 1 Peter 5:8-9

You might want to pretend there is no such entity as the Devil, but the clear record of Scripture is that the Devil is a being in opposition to God, capable of great evil, and the determined enemy of the Christian.



You may be getting more and more uncomfortable with this subject, but it is important for us to continue. So, let me remind you:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons. . . nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:38-39

The only thing you need to be absolutely certain of, in order for this verse to apply, is that you are *in Christ Jesus!* And, of course, God has put *in Christ* all who have believed in Him unto eternal life!

This Personality (Creature) Came Perfect from the Hand of God

How do we know that the Devil came from the hand of God? Consider the following descriptions:

- His original name was *Lucifer* (Isaiah 14:12), which means *light-bearer* or *morning star*.
- In Ezekiel 28:11-15 he is described as the *anointed cherub*, upon him was said to be the *seal of perfection*, and he was said to be *full of wisdom, perfect in beauty!*

Until Iniquity Was Found in Him

The scriptures document both the origin and outworking of sin as the creature rebelled against the Creator.

The origin of the Devil's sin:

By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within and you sinned. . . Ezekiel 28:16

This chapter of Ezekiel describes both the beauty of the Devil and his exalted status within God's creative order. But then something happened. The word translated *trade* carries the connotation of that which passes through the hands, while the word *violence* carries the idea of unjust gain. We have a picture of one whose role is that of guardian of the throne room of God, the one whose position was on the holy mount of God. As all praise due to God *passed through his hands*, he *unjustly* determined to divert it to himself, as if he was worthy of that praise.

Here we have a clear example of the result of the sin of pride—the idea of thinking of oneself more highly than is warranted. This happens every time an individual thinks things really depend upon me, I deserve more—whether it be the Devil, a prideful pastor, or any servant of the Lord.

The outworking of the Devil's sin:

**For you (the Devil)
have said in your
heart, I will ascend
into heaven, I will
exalt my throne
above the stars of
God. . . I will ascend
above the heights of
the clouds, I will be
like the Most High.**

Isaiah 14:13-14

What is really being declared here is the Devil's intent to supplant God and take His place. The Devil had fooled himself



into ignoring the vast gulf between God as the Creator of all things and he, the Devil, as the creature. There is no transcending this unbridgeable gulf as Lucifer discovered when God expelled him from heaven. Yet, he has actively been working against the plans and purposes of God ever since in an effort to further his own dominion. Although we are many centuries removed from Lucifer's sin of pride, at which point he became the Devil, everything we are going to learn in Ephesians 6 flows from that sin and its outworking.

The Devil Has a Position

Our adversary has a fully fleshed out organizational chart, and his position at the top is often underestimated. The Bible declares the Devil to be the:

. . .Prince of the power of the air. . . Ephesians 2:2

Further, he exercises a certain dominion over this world:

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

I John 5:19

God Is Sovereign

The question that comes to mind is: "Where is the Sovereignty of God in all this?" The answer is something we have to piece together from the Scriptures. In Genesis 1:26, God gave man dominion over the earth. In Genesis Chapter 3, after being tempted by the Devil, man rebelled against God's command to refrain from eating from the tree. At that point, it would appear that dominion of this world was transferred from Adam to the Devil. We know the Devil has that dominion based upon I John 5:19, as quoted above.

We see the Devil exercise that dominion in Matthew 4 when he promises to give Jesus all the kingdoms of this world if Jesus will just worship him. Note that Jesus makes no effort to refute the legitimacy of the Devil's offer because apparently the Devil actually has the kingdoms to offer. Instead, Jesus responds to the Devil on the subject of worship, for we are to:

"Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only."

Matthew 4:10

Note the background this provides for our discussion of spiritual warfare. The Devil's rulership over this world is real. That fact explains much of what has been behind the policies of world governments through the ages—everything from Haman and Hitler's efforts to exterminate the Jews to the modern day legalization of abortion in our own country.

But it is essential that we do not take this too far. The Devil may rule over this earth, but he does not have a dominion that is independent of the sovereignty of God. The Devil's evil machinations have come up against the sovereign boundaries of God continually through the ages, and our God checks his evil intent today. It has been essential to the survival of mankind, and the opportunity of so many through the ages to respond to the Gospel!

The Devil Has Minions!

The Devil is not alone, he has an army of demons (fallen angels) at his disposal.

Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon . . . His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to earth . . . The great dragon was hurled down. . . He was hurled to earth, and his angels with him. Revelation 12:3-9

When the Devil rebelled against God, apparently he was able to co-opt one third of the angelic host to follow him in his rebellion. *His angels* are the demons mentioned throughout the New Testament.

The Devil Has an Organization

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12

This is a very clear and revealing verse in Greek, which is perhaps poetic, but totally mystifying in English. Paying closer attention to the words that have been underlined above will help. For these are words that refer to a leader, his rulers, and his host of followers. In the military language of our day, our spiritual battle is against a commander (the Devil), his battalion commanders, and his rank and file demons. Thus the devil and his angels function in a highly organized dominion that desires to wreak havoc with the plans and purposes of God.



We need to realize that it is against this kind of organized foe God has called us to engage in ministry:

. . . I now send you to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Devil to God. . . Acts 26:18

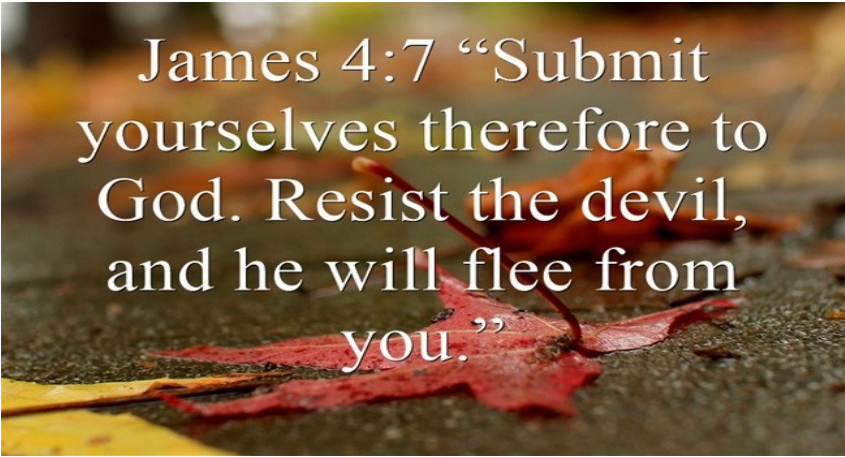
Let me pause and give you two points of application:

1. With the kind of powerful and organized foe that is arrayed against us, it would be utter folly for any Christian to be ignorant or unaware of what they are up against, or to fail to avail themselves of what God has provided in order to stand firm.
2. Behind every anti-God theory of academia (big-bang, evolution), behind every enslaving political theory (socialism, communism), behind every evil social policy (abortion) stands a malevolent and intelligent being seeking to use the human race as pawns in his rebellion against the God of Glory!

Perhaps you are thinking these points go too far! On the contrary, the Bible is pretty clear on this:

The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. Revelation 12:9

What does the Devil do? He leads the whole world astray—and he has been actively doing so ever since He rebelled against the Most High God.



James 4:7 “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

There is Method to the Devil's Madness!

We should never underestimate the Devil's intent. This takes us back to Ephesians 6:11 and the word that is translated *wiles*.

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

It is the Greek word *methodeia* from which we get the English word method. It refers to cunning, arts, and trickery. The Devil's attacks are not haphazard, nor is he a lazy foe. He has a well-established organizational structure and a complete playbook which is revealed to us in the Word of God.

We do not want to become obsessed with the Devil or paralyzed with fear, but we do need to realize what we are up against. God has revealed just enough to allow us to realize we are ill-matched in our own strength, so that we would recognize early on our need to turn to the *power of His might!* So let's explore some of the Devil's methods, right from the pages of Scripture:

- The devil stimulates the lower nature of man:

But if you harbor bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual and demonic. James 3:14-15

- He also stimulates that which is good, but counterfeit:

And no wonder! For Devil himself transforms himself into an angel of light. II Corinthians 11:14

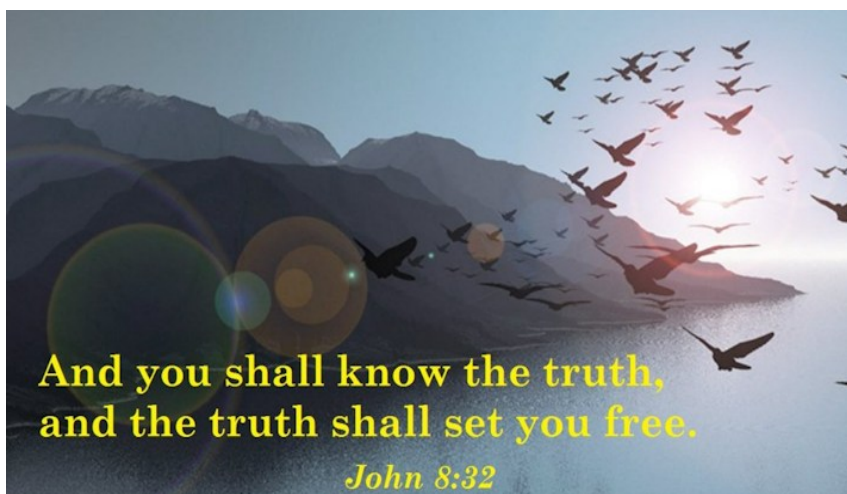
Many a false teacher has proclaimed a message which sounded good, and contained bits and pieces of the truth, but ultimately the message was a plot of the Devil to obscure truth with error.

In our day, he has all kinds of good-works projects. He would like nothing better than to engage us in any and every one of these projects in order to distract us from the finished work of Christ—the only work that can actually save!

- The Devil is the father of all religion.

“ . . . you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks his native language. . . . ” John 8:43-44

If any religion was ever going to be acceptable to God, it would have to be Judaism. But is that the case? What God gave the people for their ultimate blessing was turned into a religion and its chief proponents are said to be *children of Devil!* Religion will never be the solution to man's problems.



God's Redemptive Plan

At this point let me pause for a minute and ask you: "Do you understand and appreciate God's redemption?" The word *redeem* has a simple meaning—it means *to purchase and set free*. In ancient times, it was common for workers in the fields or even family members to be taken captive by marauders and sold into slavery. To redeem or set free the ones taken, their loved ones had to buy them from the slave market in which they languished.

Do you see the spiritual significance of this? Mankind was created to have fellowship with God. He was stolen away and enslaved by the deceitful wiles of the Devil as he preyed upon Adam and Eve's failure to trust. Now, every member of the human race is born in the Devil's dominion—without hope for the future, helpless to do anything about it, and often blissfully ignorant but hell-bound.

But there is a Kinsman-redeemer—One who was made like us in every way yet without sin and who has bought us out of the slave market of sin. He redeemed us with an outstretched arm and mighty acts of judgment.
(Exodus 12:6-7)

What was the price of our redemption? Nothing but the blood of Christ could free us from the slave market to which we were condemned:

For you know it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

I Peter 1:18-19

Was the redemption price, paid at such an infinite cost, sufficient? Oh, it was sufficient beyond all that we could ask or imagine:

You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.

Revelation 5:9-10

Now you see that part of our role as Christ's ambassadors is to hold out the word of truth so that the light of the Gospel might cause the blind to see! Where does this leave us? Has not the problem been solved by the work of Christ?

It brings us right back to our study. For there are those whose lives are under such pressure to survive that they have no time for the Gospel. Then, there are others whose attitude is: I'm already living the good life, I don't need any good news.



There you have it, these are the methods of the Devil for he is both murderer and counterfeiter.

The god of this age (the Devil) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God. II Corinthians 4:4

The Devil's Purpose

So what is the Devil's playbook regarding the Christian? Why is this armor going to be so precious and important to us? The armor of God is not new truth, it is just a great way to summarize things we should already know. Frankly, the context of a spiritual battle is an excellent way to encapsulate and remind us of essential truth. So let me start by summarizing Devil's playbook regarding the Christian, and then we will be ready to move on to the individual pieces of armor—that which God has provided that we might stand in the *evil day*!

The Devil strives to:

- Despoil the Christian of his wealth
- Lure the Christian from his walk
- Distract the Christian from his mission

Despoil the Christian of His Wealth

These are things that the Devil seeks to do both individually and corporately:

- He seeks to keep us ignorant of what is ours in Christ:

. . . every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms, in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 1:3

- He seeks to attack all that is ours in Christ through guilt, feelings of unworthiness, and by reminding us of past failures, for he is the:

...accuser of the brethren day and night.

Revelation 12:10

- He seeks to push us towards focusing on rehabilitating the old man and making ourselves acceptable to God. In doing so, he takes our eyes off of Christ. For we are to know that self will never be worthy, while God has established us as infinitely worthy in Christ!

Since Christ never changes, neither can God's view of us change. You can always rest upon your worthiness in Christ! Think of it this way:

To be occupied with self is to fail to see oneself as "in Christ"—the great positional blessing of the Christian. To strive to make oneself acceptable to God through works is to again fail to see oneself as totally and completely accepted in the Beloved. It is from this position of blessing we seek to cooperate with God on developing a life of devotion, and not the other way around.

Miles J. Stanford

I AM ACCEPTED

"TO THE PRAISE OF THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE,
WHEREIN HE HAS MADE US ACCEPTED IN THE
BELOVED."

EPHESIANS 1:6

Understanding these truths makes a huge difference in how we view life and where we focus our energies. In fact, I would go so far as to say that if I were 60 years old and I came to the point of understanding the above truths—after a lifetime of pursuing sanctification in my own strength, trying to gain God’s approval, seeking to walk uprightly before Him—it would change everything and refocus my life. I would put my full energies into *knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection in my life, and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings—becoming like Him!* I write this with tongue in cheek, because I am 60 years old and that is exactly what I am trying to do!

Lure the Christian From His Walk

As we have seen, the Devil is a liar and a deceiver. He and his minions seek to influence our thinking:

But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

II Corinthians 11:3

Not only that, but the Devil uses the world system, behind which he is the puppet-master, to seek to draw us away from devotion to Christ as a fisherman throws a lure in front of a fish. He uses our cravings, lusts, and pride of life to draw us away from His call to a worthy walk.

Do not love the world or anything in the world. . . the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does. . .

I John 2:15-17

Recall that the Devil’s efforts are felt by the individual, but they are ultimately intended to do great damage corporately, and by that I mean great damage to the church.

Consider these evaluations of the churches listed in the first few chapters of Revelation.

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write. . . Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love." Revelation 2:1-4

"To the angel of the church of Laodicea write. . . Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me." Revelation 3:14-20

What do you think it is that might have caused the church in Ephesus to have forsaken its *first love*, who is none other than the One who bought them with His own blood—the Lord Jesus Christ? Why it is the Devil from without, enticing the flesh within.

And, how is it possible that the Lord Jesus is on the outside of the fellowship in Laodicea, asking to be invited in? He is the head of His Church, the First-born from the dead, our Blessed Hope. Perish the thought that we should ever become so engaged in anything else that our Lord and Savior is on the outside asking to be let in!



Distract the Christian from His or Her Mission

Our mission is to bear witness to the Savior (Acts 1:8), fill the role of ambassador representing the King of kings and Lord of lords in enemy-held territory (II Corinthians 5:20), and to go and make disciples out of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). You see, when the fullness of the Gentiles have responded to the Gospel message, Jesus is coming for His Church (Romans 11:25). This represents a desperate situation for Devil. He needs to come against the church with everything he has in order to buy more time. He uses persecution, false teachers, and the enticements of this world.



What is the one thing that will stand against these onslaughts, that will stand against the Gates of Hades? One thing and one thing only, a Church that holds fast to the message—*You are the Christ the Son of the Living God*—and then learns to operate in the *power of His might*, never for a moment trusting in their own strength.

Summary

It is because of what God has promised to do through such a people that we have the following encouragement:

“Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:20

. . . receive strength. . . in the Lord and in the power of His might. Ephesians 6:10

And so, we have reached the point we understand:

- Our infinitely worthy position
- The call on our lives to walk worthy of that position
- Our *call to arms*, for we are in a spiritual battle in which we have no real option but to rely upon the strength and might of our great God
- The methods and means of our adversary

Thus, it is time to begin to look—one piece at a time— at what the Lord has provided that we might take our stand, shoulder to shoulder with our brothers and sisters, against the devil’s schemes.

And, we will do that in Book II of this series on *Spiritual Warfare*.



I have told you
these things, so that
in me you may have

peace.

In this world you will
have trouble. But

take heart!

I have overcome
the world.”

John 16:33



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