

“The Believer’s Enemy”

September 29, 2024

Ephesians 6:10-13

I. Introduction

We are in the midst of another professional football season and, whether you are a diehard fan or of a “I couldn’t less” attitude, you know that the various players do more than just show up on the day of their game. During the preceding week, they spend a lot of time working on getting their bodies into the best physical condition possible and working on perfecting their game. But that’s not all. There is a phrase attributed to various military leaders that says, “*The best offense is a good defense,*” and with that idea in mind, time each week is spent looking at films and discussing the opposing team. Every team is following the writings of Sun Tzu, a Chinese general from the 6th century BC who wrote in “*The Art of War*” to “*know your enemy.*” Each team from the coach on down wants to know what to expect and then they need to devise a plan—a defense—on how to respond so that they can be victorious when “*the battle is joined.*”

Just like the football players, before any army goes to war, there are several things they must do before they engage the enemy so that they will have a chance of being victorious. They must know the mission. They must be prepared and trained to fight. And they must know as much as possible about the enemy. The Bible warns that the faithful Christian life is a battle; it is warfare on a grand scale—because when God begins to bless, Satan begins to attack. 1 Corinthians 16:13 says, “**Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.**” In 1 Timothy 6:12 Paul wrote, “**Fight the good fight of the faith.**”

Our Commander has given us our mission in Matthew 28; **turn to Matthew 28:18-20.** In the first 5½ chapters of Ephesians Paul has been describing how we are to carry out this mission. He wrote that Christians, good soldiers, are to walk in humility rather than pride; *in unity rather than in divisions;* in light rather than darkness; *in wisdom rather than foolishness;* in fullness of Spirit rather than drunkenness; *in mutual submission rather than self-serving independence.*

In John 16:33 Jesus said, “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.” Because of what Jesus has done, we do not fight *for* victory, we fight *from* victory. The Spirit of God enables Christians, by faith, to take on Christ’s victory for themselves. The war has already been won, but there are still some battles for us to fight here on earth. This is our mission and the plan.

Earlier in Ephesians, Paul wrote about the enemies that each Christian faces. Turn to Eph. 2:1-3.

Paul warned of 3 enemies: “**the world**,” “**our sinful nature**,” and “**the ruler of the kingdom of the air**.”

“**The world**” refers to the world’s system that is all around us and that is opposed to God. In particular, it refers to the godless culture and society that we live in; that as Romans 12:2 says is pressuring us “**to conform to the pattern of this world**.” The “**sinful nature**” refers to the old nature mankind inherited from Adam, a nature that is prideful, opposed to God, and can do nothing spiritual to please God. Turn to Ephesians 4:22-24.

In today’s Scripture Paul described the third enemy, “**the ruler of the kingdom of the air**”; **The Believer’s Enemy—the spiritual forces of evil.**

II. The Spiritual Forces of Evil

A. The leader

1. His names First, Paul named “**the ruler of the kingdom of the air**;” the leader of the enemy forces, he is called the devil. “**Devil**” means “*accuser*;” Revelation 12:10 says that he accuses God’s people day and night before the throne of God. This leader has many other names. He is called “*Satan*” which means “*adversary*;” he is the enemy of God and the enemy of God’s children. Writing to the Thessalonians Paul wrote in 1 Thess. 2:18, “**For we wanted to come to you-- certainly I, Paul, did, again and again-- but Satan blocked our way.**” In Matthew 4:3 he is called the tempter. In John 8:44 he is called a murderer and a liar. In 1 Peter 5:8 he is called a “*roaring lion who stalks his prey.*” In 2 Corinthians 4:4 he is called “**the god of this age.**” And 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 warns that he “**masquerades as an angel of light.**” As his names imply, Satan is very versatile. He also has power.

2. His power In the beginning, Satan was created as the chief of all angels who led the worship of God. But he rebelled against his Creator and tried to seize God's power and glory, and, for that reason, he was expelled from heaven. Isaiah, as well as [Ezekiel 28:1-10](#), and [Revelation 12:7-9](#) seem to describe this—[turn to Isaiah 14:12-15](#). Since he is a created being, and not eternal like God, the devil is limited in his knowledge and abilities. Unlike God, Satan is not all-knowing (omniscient), all-powerful (omnipotent), or everywhere-present (omnipresent). He is powerful, but his power is limited; so, to create the greatest amount of havoc and chaos, he has an army.

B. His army The devil has an army—fallen angels or demons—that carry out his schemes throughout the world. Paul called them “[the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world.](#)” These are the “[spiritual forces of evil.](#)” This suggests a definite army of demonic creatures that assist Satan in his attacks against God, believers, and the world in general. Paul’s purpose wasn’t to give the details of the demonic hierarchy, but he wanted Christians to know that there is a well-organized group that is functioning in the world right now—an army of evil.

In [Revelation 12:4](#) the Apostle John implies that one third of the angels fell with Satan when he rebelled. In [Daniel 19:13-20](#), Daniel wrote that Satan’s angels/demons struggle against God’s angels for control of the affairs of the world. The heartaches, the sufferings, the tragedies of life are the work of Satan and his forces in the background. He and his army are the cause of many of the great problems that are in the world today.

The important thing to remember is that our battle is not against human beings. It is against spiritual powers. We are wasting our time fighting people when we ought to be fighting the devil who seeks to control people and make them oppose the work of God. Our need isn’t to specifically recognize every feature of the enemy, but to turn to God, who is our powerful and trustworthy source of protection and victory. That’s why Paul commanded Christians in [Ephesians 6:10](#) to “[be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.](#)” The psalmist put it this way in [Psalm 46:1](#), “[God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.](#)”

C. Satan's Abilities Although, compared to God's power, Satan's power may be limited, one must never underestimate Satan's abilities. In [John 10:10](#) Jesus said that the devil "comes only to steal and kill and destroy." And he isn't compared to a lion and a dragon for nothing. Not only is Satan strong, but he is wise and subtle--sneaky. Paul wrote that we fight "against the devil's schemes." Scheming implies being crafty, cunning, and deceptive. Like all schemers, Satan's evil schemes are built upon stealth and deception. He knows it is easier for a person to stand against an open force than against stealth attacks—things like pagers and walkie-talkies which can suddenly explode or friends who entice one to "go along with the crowd." [2 Corinthians 11:14](#) warns, "For Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light." His attitude is like that of a lion or a wolf in sheep's clothes stalking his prey waiting to pounce when least expected. Peter put it this way in [1 Peter 5:8](#), "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

[1 Timothy 4:1](#) says that the devil's schemes include "deceiving spirits and things taught by demons." These seducing spirits whisper things like: "*Times are changing, and you have to change;*" "*You have to give a little once in a while;*" "*Who made you judge and jury?*" "*The Bible is an archaic, out-dated book. You need to get into the 21st Century!*" "*Where is all that 'love' you talk about?*" "*It's just a little thing. No one will even know.*" And the list goes on and on.

In the Garden of Eden in [Genesis 3:1-19](#), Satan was a sneaky, beguiling snake. His tactics haven't changed, he still tries to lull Christians asleep so that they don't feel threatened and before one knows it, the trap is sprung. This is why Paul wrote, "Put on the full armor of God, so when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground." Christians are never free from danger. We must never let our guard down. But there is no reason to fear, we can trust in God's power, then "after you have done everything, to stand." We will be safe and victorious—as the Lord reassured Paul in [2 Corinthians 12:9](#), "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Evil rarely looks evil until it has accomplished its goal. Evil rarely looks evil until it is done. It gains entrance or acceptance by appearing attractive, desirable, and perfectly legitimate. It is a baited and

camouflaged trap. As he masquerades as an angel of light, Satan uses our external enemy, the world, and our internal enemy, our old nature, to try to defeat us. Turn to 1 John 2:15-16. Christians need to be on guard; to “Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”

The word “struggle” was used when writing of hand-to-hand combat or wrestling. So, when Paul wrote, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,” he was saying that Christians are involved in a hand-to-hand battle. We’re not just spectators at a game. We are involved—a phrase of the day is “we are invested.” Our struggle, our hand-to-hand struggle, isn’t only against Satan himself, but also against the host of his demon subordinates.

Since we are fighting against enemies in the spirit world, we need special equipment—spiritual equipment—both for offense and defense. God has provided the “whole armor” for His children, and we need every part. Ephesians 4:27 says, Do not give the devil a foothold.” So, Paul commanded Christians to put on the full armor, to take the weapons, and to stand firm against Satan. We can do all of this by faith knowing that Christ has already conquered Satan, and that the spiritual armor and weapons are available. By faith we accept—we put on—what God gives us and go out to meet the foe in God’s power. The day is evil, and the enemy is evil, but “if God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31)

III. Conclusion

Getting back to football for a minute—the team that exerted the most effort in getting prepared for the upcoming game isn’t guaranteed a victory. Knowing everything they need to know and being as ready or prepared as possible isn’t enough—to win they also need to execute their plans—they have to struggle. They have to apply what they learned. The same is true for Christians. We must apply what we have learned so that we will “be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.”

Ephesians, the Bible itself, is full of great material for study and even meditation, but there is more to being a Christian than just “head knowledge.” There must be involvement—hand-to-hand combat. We are in a battle against the devil and his evil forces, the world, and our sinful nature. Christianity is not for the weak or for the lazy. Passive Christians cannot do the will of God. A battle is going on—there is

no neutral turf. We either live for God or fight against Him. In [Mark 9:40](#), Jesus said, “For whoever is not against us is for us.” [Matthew 6:24](#) says, “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other.” The choices you make either reflect God’s character or the character of Satan and sin.

The most willing and eager soldier of Christ is helpless without God. That is the point of the command to “be strong in the Lord” and to “put on the full armor of God.” We have His provision in being His children, in having His Word, in possessing His indwelling Holy Spirit, of having every resource of our heavenly Father. God is our strength, but His strength becomes ours only through obedience to Him. His mighty armor must be put on so that we can stand. Then we can and must execute God’s plan. With the armor and power of God, we will come out on top. When Satan or his forces attack, go to God, ask for His strength and help, and then “when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.” After all this talk about battles and warfare, it seems appropriate to close by reading [Romans 8:35-39](#): “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”