

“Our Arch Enemy – His Power”
Ephesians 6:11-12
(Preached at Trinity, February 7, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I pointed out last time, this passage describes the intense spiritual warfare that is consistent with the Christian experience. It is a fierce warfare that demands courageous warriors.
2. In **Verse 10** Paul describes the Christian approach to the spiritual war:
Ephesians 6:10 NAU - "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might."
3. Beginning with **Verse 11** Paul describes the chief enemy in this war.
Ephesians 6:11 NAU - "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."
4. As I've pointed out, Paul describes three elements of this enemy: His Person, His Plan, and His Power.
We've looked at the first two:
 - a. His person: Paul refers to him as "the devil" and "the evil one" – generic terms to describe Satan. He is a created being; created as a holy angel but being puffed up in pride, he willfully rebelled against God and turned to evil. He's our great adversary.
 - b. His plan: Paul describes his schemes using the word *μεθοδεία* – We get our word "methodology." Satan's chief plan is to hinder God's redemptive purpose upon the earth. He seeks to destroy our holy lives always seeking to draw us away from Christ.
5. This morning I want to focus our attention upon Satan's POWER.
6. This is where most Christians underestimate Satan's assaults in this world. After all, isn't God all powerful? Doesn't the Holy Spirit dwell within us? Yes. But Satan is still a powerful foe against God's people and we must engage ourselves valiantly in the war. We must fight the good fight of faith!
 - A. William Hendriksen writes – "In view of the fact that the power of God in Christ is infinitely superior to that of Satan and his allies, need we be so concerned about the onslaught of the prince of evil? The answer is: Assurance of this superiority does not diminish the seriousness of any given conflict on any evil day nor give certain assurance of any particular battle. Not only this or that particular battle but the entire war will be lost unless we exert ourselves. Overcomers are conquerors, and in order to conquer we must fight!"
 - B. Martin Luther understood our great battle with Satan
"For still our ancient foe. Doth seek to work us woe; His craft and power are great, And armed with cruel hate, On earth is not his equal."

7. In **Verse 12** Paul describes an organized force: “world forces,” “spiritual forces of wickedness.” He describes a force so formidable that it demands armor and a great shield for protection against flaming arrows that fill the sky.
8. This morning I want us to look at the power of Satan.

I. First of all, we must realize that Satan’s power is limited

A. God created him and allows him to exist

1. Satan is doomed. God could have destroyed him when he fell or at any time since. And Satan knows it. When Jesus came to the demon possessed man at the Gadarene tombs the demons cried out to Him.
Matthew 8:29 NAU - "And they cried out, saying, "What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?"
 It’s almost like they are crying, “Unfair. It’s not time!”
 Satan doesn’t know the time of the end but he knows that as long as this world exists he will be allowed a degree of movement. He also knows that at the end of the age he will be granted a season of great liberty.
Revelation 20:7-8 NAU - "When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations"
2. Satan moves about only by God’s permission. It is an interesting dialogue in Job 1
 - a. First of all, we see the limited domain of Satan. It’s like he’s on a leash.
Job 1:7 NAU - "The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."
 - b. God gave Satan permission to tempt Job but also placed limitations upon what he could do
Job 1:12 NAU - "Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD."
3. We can also see that Satan had to seek permission to tempt Peter
Luke 22:31 NAU - "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat"
 ἐξαίτεομαι – to ask and receive
4. Satan is under the sovereign control of God - all of creation moves according to God's good pleasure
Daniel 4:35 NAU - "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And *among* the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'"
5. God allows him to exist according to His purpose. This is a mystery. God works all things for His own glory.

- B. As a created being Satan is not omnipresent, omniscient, or omnipotent. He's not like God.
1. As a creature he has limited power and limited resources. He is potent but he is not omnipotent.
 2. He only has the power that God permits him to have
 3. His knowledge is limited to what he can observe. Like man, Satan can only observe and make conclusions based upon his available knowledge. His plans are often thwarted because he cannot foresee every contingency.
 4. He can only be at one place at a time. This severely limits his ability to bring his deceits to the world. This is where his ancient scheme came into play. When Satan fell he convinced a myriad of other angels to rebel with him. They too are doomed to destruction
Jude 1:6 NAU - "And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day,"
- II. Satan works through a great network of fallen angels
- A. These are the rulers, powers, and forces Paul is speaking of here.
1. They are described as "Rulers and powers," "world forces of darkness" All of these terms are personal—spiritual beings working against us. "against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness"
 2. Paul is describing them as having order and organization. They are working out a carefully crafted plan under the direction of Satan.
 3. They attack us on the level of the mind. It is mysterious how they engage our thoughts and desires. These influences are powerful
 This is why we must pray continually:
Matthew 6:13 NAU - "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil."
 τοῦ πονηροῦ - The masculine form with the article implies a personal being – "the evil one."
 We see this in **Matthew 19**
Matthew 13:19 NAU - "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road."
 It is also how Paul uses it in **Verse 16**
Ephesians 6:16 NAU - "in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."
 4. These assaults upon the mind are referred to here as flaming arrows—terrible weapons that wound and bring pain and suffering.
- B. Paul says they work in the realm of the heavenly places
Ephesians 6:12 NAU - "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." - ἐπουράνιος – it simply means, "of heaven" or "heavenly places" or simply "the heavenlies"

1. Paul is simply saying that Satan and his angels dwell in the spiritual realm. They are not flesh and blood. They are “spiritual forces.”
 2. In **Chapter 2** Paul described them as the “Power of the air.”
Ephesians 2:1-2 NAU - "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked 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."
 3. Martyn Lloyd-Jones – “We are citizens of the Kingdom of God, but the Bible tells us that we are opposed by another kingdom, which is also a spiritual kingdom, and that all along we are being attacked and besieged. From the moment we become a Christian we become the special object of Satan’s attention.”
- C. Jesus described Satan’s dominion as the "gates of hell or hades"
Matthew 16:18 NAU - "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."
1. Some interpret this as hell on the defensive as the church is boldly marching against it.
 - a. Scripture, however, presents Satan as on the offensive.
1 Peter 5:8 NAU - "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."
Ephesians 6:16 NAU - "in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."
 - b. The gate of the city in Scripture was a place where the elders met to govern the city. It was a place of authority and dominion.
 2. The gates of hell describe the dominion of Satan – Jesus said that it will not ultimately prevail against the church.
- D. It is common for these forces to use other people in their attack
Ephesians 6:12 NAU - "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood"
1. I don’t think Paul is referring primarily to *our* flesh here. We do struggle with our own flesh.
 - a. We can’t blame our sinful behavior on Satan
James 1:14 NAS - "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust."
 - b. We DO wrestle with our flesh and we must battle to keep it under subjection.
1 Corinthians 9:27 NAU- "but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."
 - c. It is true, however, that we must never diminish our spiritual warfare as we battle with our flesh.

2. I believe Paul is speaking primarily here of the involvement of other people in our warfare. Paul is saying they are not the ultimate source of the conflict.
Paul understood the nature of the war. He told the church of Thessalonica that he planned to visit them but severe opposition hindered him. He knew, however, that it was actually Satan that stirred up the opposition.
1 Thessalonians 2:18 NAU- "For we wanted to come to you-- I, Paul, more than once-- and yet Satan hindered us."
3. He sows seeds of divisions and doubts and discouragements—often spoken through the mouths of people.
4. Has he used you? At home, at church? Have you ever gossiped about another church member? Do you discourage or encourage with your words?
5. With careless words we can actually hinder the work of the kingdom
Matthew 16:23 NAU - "But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."
Jesus was telling Peter that he was actually being used to make His work more difficult – Peter was being a stumbling block (σκάνδαλον)
6. Most often we are not even aware that we've been used as an instrument of Satan. Peter had no idea. He spoke his words with all sincerity.
7. He usually attacks churches when things are at their best – this is when we are unguarded.

He uses men to sow discord—most often over trivial issues

- E. These spiritual forces have a powerful influence upon the mindset of the world
- 1.. This explains the common mindset, the world outlook. No other time in history has Satan had the resources that he has today. With the electronic media and the internet His schemes are easily spread.
 2. Satan is referred to as the “god of this world.”
2 Corinthians 4:3-4 NAU - "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."
 3. The people of this world reflect Satanic values

Conclusion:

1. Our enemy is powerful and relentless but God has not left us without the necessary tools to overcome his attacks. We'll begin looking at these next time.
Ephesians 6:10-11 NAU - "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."
2. Satan is powerful, but God's greatness is limitless.
Paul commands us, "Be strong in the Lord."

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.