

**Ephesians 6: 11b; “The Wiles of the Devil”, Sermon # 3 in the series –  
“The Whole Armor of God”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall,  
on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

The Apostle Paul would have you and I to be good soldiers for Christ’s cause and the advancement of His Kingdom. When we would be holy, when we would seriously strive to live out the truth of God’s word, we will find that we will be opposed by the devil. As a true and sincere Christian, we not only find remaining sin in our hearts which needs to be put to death; we not only find worldly acquaintances who would suggest that we ought to follow them into every pursuit that leaves God out, and doesn’t put God in; but we find that we are face to face with a real spiritual, fallen, angelic adversary who seeks to ruin every good thing that Christ would do in us and through us. This is the reason that we must put on the whole armor of God. We looked before at what the Apostle Paul would have us to do. It is to put on the whole armor; to put on Christ Himself. So now, we want to look at the question “why” should we put on the whole armor of God? –It is that we might stand against the schemes, or wiles of the devil. For there is a great danger at our doorstep. It is that we may fall prey to Satan’s designs, or his schemes, and be deceived by him, and drawn into sin. That is what his wiles are working toward. So this afternoon I would like to attempt to show you the main methods which Satan uses to deceive and draw Christ’s people, His soldiers, into sin. I would like to unveil 3 methods that Satan uses to do this.

**The 1<sup>st</sup> method that he uses to draw the Christian into sin is that he presents temptation at the most opportune time.**

Turn with me to the book of Ecclesiastes 9, verse 11. “I returned and saw under the sun that – “The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all.” “For man also does not know his time: like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so that sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them.” There are many things which to men are outside of their control. A man may be a swift runner and yet not be able to win because of factors outside of his control. A man may be running in a marathon race, and have natural strength to be swift, but he is running under a hotter sun than he is used to running under, and thereby not be able to win the race. There may be many skillful and strong men fighting a battle and they may not win because of the season of the year that the battle is fought in. It was thought by Hitler in 1941 that his siege of Leningrad would bring him victory in just a few weeks. Instead, after 900 days, the German troops were forced to withdraw because of the stubbornness of the Russian people and their military, and the bitterly cold weather. It appears that time and chance have brought this about. But God is sovereign over all the conflicts in our life as a Christian. Remember that the book of Ecclesiastes was written from the perspective of man living under the sun; just looking at things from the human

perspective. We know that what men call time and chance are not random things in God's sight at all. And neither are they random in regard to Satan's schemes. For man does not know his time. He is like a fish that is taken in a cruel net. He is like a bird caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time. This is what happens when Satan comes to tempt to sin. He comes at an evil time to snare men like fish taken in the net and birds caught in the snare. He seeks for the most opportune time. He comes often to tempt just after conversion. The believer has just been delivered from the bondage of sin and Satan pours a flood of temptations upon the new-born saint. He would like the new convert to believe that nothing has happened at all, and that sinful desires can still be pursued, false doctrines and sinful practices can still be held on to. But the Lord, by His powerful grace, and His mighty wisdom will teach the Christian differently.

We can see this if we will turn over to 1 Thessalonians 2: 14. "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus." "For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost." "But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire." "Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us." "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?" "Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" "Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this." "For in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know." "For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain." "But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you—therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith."

It is good for us, as Christian brethren, to pray often for each other; especially new converts and to show them our holy concern for them. Because, as it says in the verses that I just read to you, Satan could lead them astray. The tempter could tempt them to turn back from following Christ, and the labor of the Apostle or pastor would be in vain. If a young disciple sees that persecution is sometimes the lot of the Christian, they might be tempted to turn back from following Christ. We see from these verses that Satan had also tried to hinder the Apostle Paul time and time again

in his attempts to come to them to encourage their faith. Even so Satan loves this time shortly after conversion to tempt, because the young believer is a babe; not grounded in the truth. He is vulnerable and often doesn't see his need of the armor of God. He is experiencing times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and he feels that since he is saved from sin that he will always be safe. He little realizes what it means to watch and pray. He is overconfident because he is near the Master; like Peter in the garden, he thinks he can do anything for the Lord. The best example that can be set is that of fervent prayer and by telling the young Christian how easy it is to fall. What Paul was looking for in them was their faith and love in exercise. And when he saw that, he rejoiced. Let me ask you if you have faith and love in exercise? Do you love those who preach to you the gospel? Do you have a doctrinal faith in common with the other believers in the church that you attend or are a member of? Do you have faith that God through Christ will be helping you through the difficulties and trials of what it will mean for you to publicly declare your faith to others around you? This is what will enable you to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Another season in which Satan likes to tempt men to sin is in the time of affliction, when the saint is in bodily pain, or disease, or in great weakness. He did this with Job when he obtained permission from God to afflict him and then tempted him to think that God had become his enemy. He will try to make a believer under the discipline of the Lord to think that God has deserted him, or intends to destroy him, or will not provide for him in a timely fashion. You see this in the life of our Lord in Luke 4: 1-13. Satan thinks it an opportune time to tempt Christ when he is to begin his public ministry. Our Lord fasted forty days and nights and then the temptation came when he was weak bodily. "Command these stones to become bread." "If You are the Son of God...", as if Jesus had to prove to Satan who He was by an independent exercise of His power. Jesus passed all the testing of temptations there, but in verse 13 it says, "Satan departed from Him until a more opportune time"; that is for a season. He would try again.

And then we also see that Satan sometimes comes to tempt and draw the soul into sin and unbelief in the hour of death. Our Lord, before His crucifixion and death was greatly beset with Satanic opposition. Judas, one of His own disciples, betrayed our Lord with a kiss, and the chief priests and rulers came to take him. And Jesus says, "Have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs?" "When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize me." "But this is your hour and the power of darkness." Oh how Satan loves the hour of temptation to sin. This is why we must put on the whole armor of God.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – The 2<sup>nd</sup> method that Satan uses to draw God's people into sin is that He orders and presents his temptations in subtlety.**

Turn with me over to 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11: 1-4. "Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me." "For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy." "For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by

his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” “For if he who comes preaches another Jesus Whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!” We see here that to be subtle is to be crafty and to make fine distinctions to deceive, in this case. The Apostle knows that he betrothed these believers to the true Jesus by his preaching. But he also knows the craftiness of the devil; so much so, that he fears that the devil may somehow corrupt these believers from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ by his craftiness. He knows that if the devil can manage his deceptions well, he will attempt to draw any believer away from the simplicity and purity of the gospel. Satan attempts to manage his deceptions through preaching a different Jesus from the true Jesus who is plainly manifested in the written word of God. It may be that he will use deceptive religious people who call themselves Christians to preach a salvation by works. They believe that Jesus only helps them to do what they supposedly have the power in themselves to do; to merit favor with God. Or perhaps they preach a sacramental salvation which comes through the observance of infant baptism or partaking of the Mass.

It may be that the devil will attempt to deceive through the means of a preacher, preaching decisional regeneration; his telling you that if you simply walk an aisle or pray a prayer after someone, that since you have participated in such activities you can instantly be assured that you are saved and are a Christian. This is not to say that the true risen Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, is not received by faith through prayer. But sometimes a preacher may place all the emphasis on your decision to accept Christ, rather than preaching faith in the actual work that Christ has done and accomplished. No, the purity and simplicity of the gospel is this; that if you will by faith believe that Jesus Christ is the Savior of sinners, that He alone lived the perfect life of obedience to God’s holy law, that He died the Divine and human sacrifice for sin on the cross, and seeing yourself as a sinner and a transgressor at many points, and sense your need for forgiveness; he will save you when you call upon Him, believe in Him, and ask for this free gift from God. The strategy which Satan often uses in his craftiness is that he mixes truth with error and thus draws a person to sin in that way. He said to Eve in the garden that she would be like God, knowing the difference between good and evil; that she would not die if she ate of the forbidden fruit. Satan’s talk, his suggestions, always sound good; it sounds promising, but it is bait with a hook in it. It is the snare of the trapper. And this is why we need the whole armor of God.

**And then 3<sup>rd</sup> – Satan’s method is to choose fitting instruments for carrying out his designs.**

Turn with me over to Acts 13: 4. “So being sent out by the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.” “And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the

Jews.” “They also had John as their assistant.” “Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man.” “This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.” “But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.” “Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, ‘O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?’” “And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.” “And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.” “Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.” You can see here that this man, Bar-Jesus, was seeking to turn the proconsul from the faith, and Paul had to address his deceptive speech and ways. He was attempting to hinder this man Sergius Paulus from coming to saving faith in Christ. Satan will often use those who are cunning in their use of reasoning; men like Balaam the prophet, like Ahithophel who was one of David’s trusted counselors. Men like Haman who would destroy the Jews by edict, because their customs were different, and they would not bow to him, who thought himself to be a great man. Haman smoothly persuaded the king to let him deal with them in this wicked way because they were made out by him to be people who were not compliant or profitable subjects. Men like Haman are often admired by other men because they are so worldly wise; but behind it all stands the master deceiver Satan.

Let us close with a couple of lessons. First, if Satan is this crafty an enemy, let us see how much we need the grace of Christ in the putting on the armor of God, in order to meet him and overcome him in spiritual battle. Christ defeated him at the cross, and in doing so, He destroyed his power to be able to hold God’s Elect in bondage to their sin and to deceive them. The truth is, that if you would be freed from Satan’s tyranny, then fly to Jesus by faith, and you will be freed. You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free, and you will be free indeed. Then secondly, God calls us as Christians to stand toe to toe with this awful enemy in spiritual battle. We must learn, not only to resist him, but to overcome him by prayer and decisive and valiant holy actions. This begins with humility being the controlling factor in all that we would attempt to do for Christ, and the furtherance of his kingdom. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5: 5 – “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders.” “Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’” “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” “Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” You can see here that it is Satan’s

express purpose to make young people as proud as peacocks, so that they will not listen to the experience and counsel of older Christians. The armor that you should put on is to clothe yourself with humility and be willing to submit to other Christians. It is not wise to live simply according to your own wisdom, but to hear the voice of God speaking to you through others who can skillfully use God's word to help you on to the right attitude and actions in everything. It is also evident that Christians should be sober and watchful against the attacks of the enemy. Satan loves to demand and get permission, if he can, to test the sincere Christian's faith. The armor that you should put on is to become a person of regular prayer and persevering faith in Christ and in His precious word. Let no other person move you away from this. Sufferings of various sorts may come when you take your stand for Christ and His truth, but remember that this is the way to being confirmed in faith. This is the way to eternal glory. This is God's way of perfecting, strengthening, establishing, and settling you. To Him be the glory forever.