

Finishing Well

Lesson #17

Wiles Of The Devil

May 18, 2022

Eph. 6:10-13 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

¹² For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

¹³ Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

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| 1. The Devil is the Leader | Devil means accuser | Rev. 12:7-11 |
| ➤ Satan means adversary | Enemy of God | |
| ➤ Tempter | | Matt. 4:3 |
| ➤ Caused man to fall into sin | | Gen. 3:1-7 |
| ➤ Murderer and Liar | | John 8:44 |
| ➤ God of this age | | II Cor. 4:4 |
| ➤ Ruler of this world | | John 12:31; 14:30 |
| ➤ Prince of the power of the air | | Eph. 2:2 |
| ➤ Spirit that is working in the sons of disobedience | | Eph. 2:2 |
| ➤ Satan is compared to a lion | | I Pet. 5:8 |
| ➤ Compared to a serpent | | Gen. 3:1; Rev. 12:9 |
| ➤ Called an angel of light | | II Cor. 11:13-15 |
| ➤ Abaddon & Apollyon | Destroyer | Rev. 9:11 |
| ➤ Deceives the whole world | | Rev. 12:9-10, 13 |
| ➤ Accuses believers before God's Throne | | Rev. 12:9-10, 13 |
| ➤ Persecutes believers relentlessly | | Rev. 12:9-10, 13 |

It doesn't matter if one is playing cards with friends, enjoying a pick-up game of basketball at the gym, or even lending something of value to a friend, nobody likes it when someone is caught cheating, trying to manipulate the rules, breaks or fails to return what was borrowed.

We don't like to be duped, fooled, tricked, and taken advantage of by anyone.

What is more disappointing? We find out later that those who tricked and cheated us had planned it out all along. Premeditated, intentional well executed plans.

Rather evil? Actions such as these are none other from the spiritual realm of the devil.

"Evil rarely looks evil until it accomplishes its goal; it gains entrance by appearing attractive, desirable, and perfectly legitimate. It is a baited and camouflaged trap."

William Gurnall (The Christian in Complete Armour [Banner of Truth], 1:112) observes that there is a great difference between how God and Satan deal with their followers.

God reveals to His followers the strength of the enemy, but Satan does not dare to reveal to his followers the strength of God, or they would mutiny.

Key Point: We must learn what God's Word tells us about the strength of the enemy.

Paul calls his tactics the "wiles of the devil."

Wiles is often translated to carry the idea of something that is "cunning, crafty, subtle or full of trickery or deceit."

- To ensnare us through temptation, fear, loneliness, doubt, threat, or intimidation.
- He especially loves it when we become weary, distracted, and distanced from God.

Paul: The strategy of the devil: He is not haphazard or blindly taking shots at you hoping to "hit something." Not quite! The devil has a detailed plan to destroy you. He has developed an intricate method of bombarding your mind with fear, anxiety, bad ideas, negative emotions, thoughts, and other destructive acts of deception to put your life into a "tailspin" of confusion, uncertainty, and defeat!

Devil's Wiles In Scripture

1. Challenging God's Word

- Genesis 3 gives us a detailed look into this tactic of our enemy.
- It led to the first human sin. Satan still uses it because it works so well.

Gen. 3:1 Now the serpent was more subtil [crafty, cunning] than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

Gen. 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: ¹⁷ But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

The first recorded words of the devil, through the serpent, were these:

Gen. 3:1 Yea, hath God said, "Has God really said?" Is it true that God has said?

- He rarely attacks openly, straightforward. Attacks: tricky, sly, subtle
- With those words, the devil invited the woman to reconsider what she understood God to have said. By adding her human interpretation, she convinced herself that God's Word was far too restrictive.

By suggesting that we should reexamine the clear teaching of God's Word, Satan invites us to add our own interpretation and thereby nullify God's stated will.

Entire church denominations are falling prey to these wiles of the devil.

"Did God really say that homosexuality is wrong?" he hisses, and churches crumble.

"Did God really say there are only two genders?" he suggests, inviting us to put our own spin on reality, making ourselves gods in place of the Lord.

Gen. 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Gen. 3:4-5 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: ⁵ For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

- Tactic: Deny & discredit God's Word

Key Point: The corrupting of God's Word, subtracting from and adding to the words of God occurred BEFORE the forbidden fruit was ever eaten.

2. Twisting God's Word

II Pet. 3:16 speaking of these things in all his [Paul's] letters. Some of his comments are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters to mean something quite different, just as they do with other parts of Scripture.

And this will result in their destruction. [New Living Translation]

Key Point: The trickery involved not only twisting God's words; it also changed the context and the meaning.

Gen. 3:1b Yea, hath God said, 'Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'

Did God say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" God did NOT say that!

Gen. 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying,

"Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat;

3. Appeal To Man's Carnal Desires

Genesis 3:4-5 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

⁵ For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Satan knows he can't come at mature believers with a frontal attack on their values and convictions. So he slides in the back door, posing as a friend and appeals to desires of the flesh.

Tactics: Appeal to man's covetousness; desire for more, for better

- Appeal to areas of forbidden fruit: drugs, alcohol, immoral movies, etc.
 - Judas, here are your 30 pieces of silver.
 - King David, you need that beautiful neighbor woman

Michael Brown: Your first step to enlightenment is to recognize that this God is not who he seems to be and that His intentions are questionable. I know better.

Consider: It is clear both from Scripture and from the testimony of many of God's servants that Satan can access our mind and emotions.

Matt. 16:13, 16-17 Jesus asks the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?"

Simon Peter answers, saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus commends him for his response, "Blessed are you Simon, Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

In Matt. 16:21-23 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Key Point: In the first instance, Peter's mind was influenced by the Lord. A few minutes later Peter was under the influence of Satan and his thoughts were satanically inspired.

4. Challenging our identity

Luke 4:1-13 Satan came against Jesus to tempt Him in the wilderness. On two different occasions, Satan began his temptations with these words: "If you are the Son of God."

- The devil chose a time when Jesus was physically weak and hungry to attack His identity.

Mark 1:34 Satan knew exactly who Jesus was. And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him. To make his wiles more effective, he hits us during a crisis or a spiritual struggle and suggests,

- "If you were a child of God, this wouldn't happen."
- "If you were actually a Christian, God would help you right now."

Key Point: The fact the helmet is related to salvation indicates Satan's blows are directed at the believer's security and assurance in Christ. I must be spiritually equipped with the "helmet of salvation" firmly in place to withstand such attacks against our identity and God's character.

5. Offering a tempting alternative to obedience

Cunningly, Satan knew better than to suggest that Jesus forget the whole salvation plan and go back to heaven. He suggested another path but avoiding strict obedience to God's will.

Luke 4:5-7 And the devil, taking Him up into an high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

If you therefore will worship me, all shall be thine.

This temptation was aimed at the humanity of the Son of Man. Jesus knew what it felt like to be in the flesh. He knew what spikes would feel like in His hands and feet. He knew what rejection and mockery would feel like when He was stripped naked and paraded before the crowds. Satan was offering Him a compromise, an alternative path.

What if Jesus could "save the world" without having to suffer crucifixion?

What if He could take a shortcut and possess all the world's kingdoms now?

When Satan tempted our Lord, recorded in Matt. 4 and Luke 4, he gave up, for the moment. But Luke makes it clear that it was only for a time, only until he could regroup:

Luke 4:13 And when the devil had finished all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season. [until an opportune time]

Not only did Satan tempt our Lord with several different lines of approach, he purposed to continue to tempt Him, when the opportunity presented itself.

Satan is an opportunist, with an almost endless variety of "schemes."

Eph. 6:14a Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,

- Paul lists the belt of truth first: Satan's chief weapon is lies.

John 8:44 He [the devil] was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth,

- for there is no truth in him.

Truth is a crucial component for every believer in this spiritual battle—without it, believers are not prepared to stand and fight.

Matthew Henry: The belt girds or secures ALL the other pieces of our armor.

- Truth should cleave to us as a belt cleaves to our body.
- The belt of truth of the spiritual armor holds the sword of the Spirit, linking truth and the Word of God [John 17:17]. The Word of God is truth.
- The belt of truth is a crucial piece of defensive armor guarding our inmost being in the battle against the lies and deceptions of the enemy.

Without an understanding of truth, we are left vulnerable to being "carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming." [Eph. 4:14]

Key Point: The most important battlefield of your life is your mind! Spiritual warfare is primarily a matter of the mind. As long as the mind is held in check and is renewed to right thinking by the Word of God, the majority of spiritual attacks will fail.

The Sufficiency Of God's Word

Sola Scriptura means we trust the Scripture ABOVE our emotions, ABOVE our church traditions, ABOVE our family traditions, ABOVE our cultural practices, & ABOVE all other authorities. What do you do when your emotions, traditions, practices, or authorities clash with the Scriptures?

II Pet. 1:3-4 His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue.

⁴ Thereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. There's absolutely no need to retreat into the shallow grave of ignorance and apathy. We should be on the spiritual battlefield, emboldened by the filling of the Holy Spirit, and rejoicing in the power of the gospel!

Key Point: Scripture's demand for total allegiance and submission to the authority of God's Word is emphatic.

More and more pulpits, classrooms, and influential publications fail to mention the intense prohibitions throughout Scripture against altering or rejecting the written Word of God.

Prov. 30:5-6 Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Add thou not unto His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

Matt. 5:18-19 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Rom. 3:3-4a For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? ⁴ God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar:.

The Scriptures contain multiple warnings about allowing outside influences to turn us from submission to the written Word.

Craig Bahnsen Humble submission to God's Word must precede man's every intellectual pursuit.

Gal. 1:6-8 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you into the grace of Christ, to a another gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

What was Paul's Gospel he preached?

Gal. 1:11-12 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

I Cor. 15:3-4 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures;

⁴ And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures:

Col. 2:8 Beware lest anyone spoil [cheat] you through philosophy and vain [empty] deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the rudiments [basic principles] of the world, and not according to Christ.

Key Point: These warnings are applicable to all who embrace this error, but the discipline is more severe for erring Christian leaders. Leaders who claim to understand the teachings of Scripture should know better!

James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

I Tim. 6:20-21 O Timothy, guard and keep safe the deposit [of godly truth] entrusted to you, turn away from worldly and godless chatter [with its profane, empty words], and the contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge"— which some have professed and by doing so have erred (missed the mark) and strayed from the faith. Grace be with you.

II Pet. 3:17 Therefore, [let me warn you] beloved, knowing these things beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men [who distort doctrine] and fall from your own steadfastness [of mind, knowledge, truth, and faith],

Instead of "pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" [II Cor. 10:4-5], many Christians are content to remain "children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" [Eph. 4:14].

Michael Brown: Our battle is both spiritual and intellectual as we engage in spiritual warfare with demons and their ideologies. Paul wrote:

I Tim. 4:1 Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

Michael Brown: It is not only the temptation of sin that pulls people away from God; it is also the deception or error.

Scripture gives us insight into our enemy's tactics:

Ps. 32:8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. [I will give you insight.]

Do you know your enemy? "We are not unaware of his schemes"

II Cor. 2:11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

II Cor. 11:3-4 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from led astray from sincere and pure devotion to Christ. ⁴ For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, *this you tolerate very well!*

Michael Brown: His greatest concern was not that they would completely deny Jesus but that they would believe in a different Jesus.

II Cor. 11:14-15 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

¹⁵ Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness;

- The only thing on Satan's mind is your destruction.

I Peter 5:8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

- The devil is always stalking for prey. He is a bloodthirsty, violent, ravenous enemy who quietly waits and watches for a chance to suddenly pounce and viciously attack when a human soul least suspects it.
- Your ruin is his prize. Orchestrating your complete annihilation is his pleasure. He follows no rules and is the master of deception and chief antagonist. He shows no mercy.

He loves to "shoot the wounded" and to rub much salt into the wounds he inflicted.

Failure To Enter Spiritual Warfare

Serious consequences await those who fail to obey God's command to dress for battle and enter the war.

Two of the great sins in David's life, which had devastating consequences for himself and for his nation were directly related to his failure to go to war, as was his duty as the king of Israel.

- Two times David stayed in Jerusalem "at the time when kings go to war":

II Sam. 11:1-2 In the spring when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his servants and all Israel, and they destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem. One evening David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, when from there he saw a woman bathing; and she was very lovely to behold.

- David's decision to stay at Jerusalem, rather than to go to war, resulted in a great moral disaster. Not only did David sin by sleeping with Bathsheba, he attempted to cover up his sin by having Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, killed in battle.
- David was not active in killing the enemy; he was active in killing his trusted soldier.

I Chron. 20:1 Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that Joab led out the army and ravaged the land of the sons of Ammon, and came and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem. And Joab struck Rabbah and overthrew it.

- David's decision to stay at home was followed shortly by his sinful decision to number the Israelites, which led to divine judgment. Instead of waging war against the enemy, Satan waged war against David.

I Chron. 21:1 And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.

- God brought judgment on the nation.

When the Lord God of the universe, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the King of kings—whose very name is held to be the greatest name among all creation [Phil. 2:9], whose name is not to be taken in vain [Ex. 20:7]...

Ps. 138:2b for You have exalted above all else Your name and Your word and You have magnified Your word above all Your name!

- It is wise to respect The Word and honor its message.

The Devil is always stalking for prey. He is a bloodthirsty, violent, ravenous enemy. He has a detailed plan to destroy you. Your ruin is his prize.

Eph. 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.