

## Know Your Enemy: A Primer for Spiritual Warfare

Ephesians 6:10–12

In the first 3 chapters of Ephesians, the apostle describes God's incredible, supernatural, bringing-of-the-dead-to-life accomplished in Jesus Christ. His supernatural salvation gives us a new heart and renewed mind that impacts every area of life. Nothing in your life is unchanged, or untouched when you belong to Christ. As he prepares to define what Spirit-filled living looks like, he pauses to pray for us, knowing the radical change from what they've known that lies ahead. It's tremendous prayer, reminding us that God can do immeasurably more than all we can think or imagine. Then he moves into Ch 4 detailing the impact of God's saving grace on daily living. No one can do it in their own power. We learn we must **walk** in his Spirit, **put on the things** of the Spirit, and be **filled** with his Spirit to live out the reality of Christ in us. The church, your personal life, your speech, thinking, actions, marriage, parenting — all are transformed, and it is all impossible to do in your own strength. And now we find it's an even greater challenge because there is an enemy working aggressively and methodically to destroy us. That enemy is a person named Satan, or the devil. Our spiritual enemies are the world, the flesh, and the devil. Today the apostle exposes the devil, who uses the world and the flesh. Let's read and pray for God's help as we prepare for battle.

**Ephesians 6:10–12** — <sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

### PRAY

In World War II, our sailors were given decks of cards with silhouettes of both Allied and Axis aircraft so that they would shoot enemies and not friendlies. Infantry men had cards picturing enemy officers. They all learned enemy tactics and methods so that they would not be duped, but would rather defeat them. In our text, **v 11** says that we are to stand against schemes of the devil. As with World War 2, I want us to learn our enemy and his schemes so we will not be duped. So we will gather several passages from God's word, then see how God has both won the victory in eternity, and provided for us to stand in spiritual victory in our day-to-day living. My notes are attached to the live stream media event in our app, and you can find the references there this afternoon.

## 2

**Satan is your enemy.** Satan means adversary. Here are sixteen ways Scripture describes him.

- Satan — adversary of God and humanity (Job 1:6–12; 1 Peter 5:8)
- Lucifer — Proper name of Satan before his fall; *shining one*, or *morning star* (Isaiah 14:12–15)
- devil — *diabolos*; separator and slanderer (*par excellence*) (Matthew 4:5–11; 1 John 3:8–10; Jude 9)
- tempter — he endeavors to see how real our commitment to God and his ways are. (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5) “You really love God? Let’s see if you really don’t love some favorite sin more.”
- Beelzebub — associated with a Philistine god and adopted as a name for the devil. It means “Lord of the flies,” revealing his uncleanness and corruption. (Matthew 12:24–27)
- serpent — he is a cunning deceiver leading you to think he is safe, then strikes to kill (Genesis 3:1–15)
- Abaddon / Apollyon — means destruction or destroyer; he is the angel of the bottomless pit (Revelation 9:11)
- antichrist — he opposes Christ (1 John 2:18; 2 John 7; and described in Revelation 13:1–10)
- accuser, accuser of the brothers — he keeps record of sins in order to produce guilt. (Revelation 12:10)
- evil one — His will is for evil; he is malevolent (Matthew 6:13; 13:18; John 17:16; Ephesians 6:16; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 1 John 2:13–14; 3:13; 5:18–19)
- the god of this world — he blinds the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4)
- prince (ruler) of this world — the leader of systematic rebellion known as the world. (John 14:30) He is not the ruler or leader of Christians in any sense.
- prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2)

Those descriptions of Satan as a ruler in no way apply to believers. Those in Christ are ruled by King Jesus, have a renewed mind by Jesus, and bow to him alone. Though the devil tempts, he cannot require us, or make us do anything. Neither sin, nor **sin’s prince** is our master, for **we are under grace, which breaks the power of sin**.

- deceiver — he leads astray, twisting truth to cause us to wander from truth. (Revelation 12:9) As the Lord leads us in paths of righteousness, the deceiver leads in paths of unrighteousness, calling them good. The refrain of his deceptive song is, “It can’t be wrong when it feels so right.” The deceiver’s work is on full display in a generation that can step out of the shower and look at God’s good design in a mirror, yet say my body is wrong and I must mutilate it to match my disoriented feelings. That is demonic deception on blazing display.
- a liar, the father of lies, calling evil good, and good evil. (John 8:44)
- he is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8)

### Important Facts about Your Adversary, the Devil

The devil is a created spiritual being, not an impersonal force found in Star Wars theology. He is God's devil, held together by the power of God's word, as all else in creation. The devil must gain God's permission in what he undertakes. We see this in the book of Job as the devil must ask God for permission to tempt and try Job. Even in that, God worked a higher purpose for his glory. The devil does not have the power to exist on his own. He is neither omniscient, omnipresent, nor omnipotent.

Pride and desire for worship were, and are his downfall. His destruction is complete through the Christ's crucifixion as he bore away our sin and death's penalty in his body on the tree, and through his death-conquering resurrection on the third day. We receive forgiveness of sin and peace with God — freedom from sin and Satan — when we turn to Christ in faith. This glorious truth of our enemy's destruction is taught in **1 John 3:8** — Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

He stands condemned forever. Your enemy is a defeated foe, yet for a time he roams the earth, marshalling and commanding ranks of demonic beings to destroy those who will not submit to Christ. He also attempts to do as much harm to God's saints as he can, endeavoring even to bring them to destruction, if that were possible.

How does the devil do that? We know he has come to steal, kill, and destroy. (John 10:10) We need to know the methods and schemes he uses toward that end. He may indeed work to create fresh and new sin to snare you. But why do that when it is far easier to simply leverage the desires of your flesh, or your old sin nature, against you? The "sin seeds," if you will, are already there, and we get insight into his attack by the word **schemes** in **v 11**. He, and the powers and authorities of the domain of darkness, study the crown of creation to set snares carefully crafted by dark art to destroy us and drag our souls to hell. He methodically aims at weak places, leveraging spiritual immaturity, and places where we have not taken seriously the command to put sin to death. He takes you seriously, hoping you won't take him seriously.

Here are 4 examples of using your flesh against you. Many more could be given.

## 4

- The fleshly response of unrighteous anger is a weapon that the devil can use to destroy you. Ephesians 4:26–27 says, Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. So an angry spirit gives a foothold to your enemy to bring destruction into your life.
- The root sin of rebellion, first leveraged in the Garden in Genesis 3, gives place for your enemy to destroy you. So James 4:7 teaches us to slay our rebellion and Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. There will be little resisting of the devil as long as there is little submission to God.
- 1 John 2:16 speaks of 3 categories of sin that will ruin us: The desires of the flesh (sexual lust), the desires of the eyes (desiring and craving everything I see, always wanting more), and the pride of life. We know too well how lust springs up with little effort, and it is coaxed up by the world. The destruction of lust is all too familiar to a generation in the death grip of online porn.
- Consider the dangers of western wealth and money envy — acquiring stuff to satisfy your desire for more. 1 Timothy 6:9 warns us that those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

We are significantly helped and prepared when we realize that many of the weapons our enemy uses against us are already present in us. Therefore, as John Owens clearly stated, ***Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you.*** To paraphrase that in light of our passage, “Be killing sin, or your enemy will be using your own sin against you to kill you more.”

With an eye toward victory over our spiritual enemy, let’s do the infinitely greater and more satisfying work of looking at our Savior — fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. In our passage, Ephesians 6:10 — Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Our victory is ***in the Lord!*** There is no source of strength other than Christ, so there is no hope apart from being in him. Pagan practices are on the rise in our generation. Those who reach to paganism to gain power spiritually, or otherwise are grabbing I want to what weakens and kills them. Life and strength are in the Lord alone. Consider how the Apostle has tethered us to Christ and in Christ throughout this letter. Everything about our life is rooted in Christ: We are blessed in Christ; adopted through Christ. God’s purpose is set forth in Christ. We are made alive in Christ; our certain hope of eternal life is in Christ alone, and his resurrection from the dead. In this spiritual warfare homestretch, we are again directed to the essential need of being ***in Christ.***

## 5

We have only spiritual poverty on our own. We cannot save ourselves — we do not have the price in our hands. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. We cannot in any way stand on our own. We cannot grow to spiritual maturity on our own. We cannot win spiritual victories on our own. We will not grow in holiness or grace on our own. It is all of Christ. It's foolhardy to think that since Christ has already done "a lot" of work, now it's your turn — *Do something to contribute or earn some merit*. Christ alone is our strength. Being in him alone is **where**, and **how** we stand. As John 15 teaches, we must remain in him; apart from him we can do nothing.

But here is great hope. He has given us capacity through his adoption so that we can stand in him! Spiritual advance and spiritual victory are ours in Christ. He equips us to win the very battles we think may destroy us. This is our Victor! This is our King! Be strong in the strength of your King, and in his mighty power! **Note the imperative:** Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. This is not abstract, aspirational "maybe-so" stuff. This is a command to stand in the very resurrection power that the Lord Jesus out of the grave.

The next command is to put on the whole armor of God, and Lord willing, we will get there next time. For now, just see clearly that God commands us to stand, and **equips us to stand**. He supplies all we need to stand against the schemes, the methods of the devil.

To close this section of understanding and knowing our enemy, let's be sure we really know our enemy. Like those playing cards with enemy officers' pictures on them so they know who to shoot at, let's be sure we know who to shoot at.

**v 12** — For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

The real conflicts we face daily often leave us feeling like we are in a mighty battle — and we are, after all. But our opponent is not, at the root, other people. We may well experience hostility and conflict from others, but our great conflict is not with people or things made out of dust. People may be dupes of Satan, they may persecute, they may trip you up. They may often expose areas of sin that need to be rooted out of your own heart. And as someone told me years ago, anything that dents your pride is probably a good thing. But our greater, long term spiritual war is with spiritual opponents, and those spiritual enemies are playing for keeps. The life-giving news is that Jesus

## 6

reigns over all of them, as we read in the Call to Worship in Colossians 1 — by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

See the real enemy behind his puppets and do battle against those spiritual enemies. Your King is supreme over them, and will answer your praying and empower your godly battling. The war will not be won in gossiping and complaining about someone — or in a vengeful spirit. The battle is waged on your knees in prayer, and the sword of God's word. (More of that next week.) But let's have our vision corrected and see with the eyes that Christ gives us to understand that we must win, and not get distracted by side skirmishes that do not ultimately produce spiritual growth, Christlikeness, or a godward life.

**PRAY** — Though our accuser reminds us of sin and seeks to condemn us, thank you, O God, for this truth: There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.