

*“Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes...” - Ephesians 6:11*

### **“The Devil’s Schemes”**

Ephesians 6:10-13

#### I. The devil’s many schemes (11), include:

- 1) Presenting himself as a concerned friend (Genesis 3:1)
  
- 2) Masquerading as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14-15) as he:
  - a) Shows up where least expected (Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:4)
  
  - b) Mixes truth with error (Genesis 3:4-5, 22)
  
  - c) Misuses Scripture (Matthew 4:6)
  
  - d) Imitates the power of God (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10)
  
- 3) Roaring as a lion, as he seeks someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8)

#### II. In the spiritual battle that marks every Christian’s life:

- 1) Find your strength in the Lord (10)
  
- 2) Put on the armor God provides (11)
  
- 3) Stand your ground against the devil’s schemes (13).

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**“The Devil's Schemes”**  
Ephesians 6:10-13

Our Scripture reading is from Ephesians 6:10-18:

*<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

May the Lord bless the reading and study of His holy and infallible Word to your life and mine.

Congregation in the Lord Jesus Christ,

None of us knows the specific events that the new year of 2011 will bring. Will the economy recover? Will the job picture brighten? Will the war between North and South Korea escalate? Will our military make progress in the war in Afghanistan? Will you and I live through 2011? Or will 2011 be the marker on your tombstone and mine? We don't know the answer to any of those questions, do we?

But the Holy Spirit, as He inspired the Apostle Paul to write this section of Ephesians 6, gives us a guarantee of what will happen in 2011. In this new year ahead, indeed in every year that you and I have grace to live, we will be caught up in a great spiritual battle.

The warning that Scripture gives us in these verses - to put on our spiritual armor and fight against the schemes of the evil one - is even more crucial in 2011 than it was in the year 60 or so when Paul wrote to the Ephesian Church. The reason why this warning is even more crucial today than it was in the first century is spoken about in Revelation 12:12: *“Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows his time is short.”*

Paul wrote this letter to the church at Ephesus when he was imprisoned in Rome for two years, most likely around the year 60. That was 1,951 years ago. 1,951 years for the devil

to realize that with each passing year his time is shortened. 1,951 years to realize that his doom is more certain. 1,951 years for his fury to increase.

### **The Reality of Spiritual Warfare**

I realize that many people scoff at the idea of spiritual warfare. We live in a secular and materialistic world that has reduced reality to what can be seen and examined by the scientific mind. Anything spiritual and invisible is not considered rational and thus many in our culture scoff at spiritual warfare. - "You are afraid of that cute little man with the tail...? You really believe in invisible demons...? - If you want to believe that, go ahead and live in your fantasy world, - but don't bring those ridiculous ideas into the public arena!"

In the visible church there are also many who deny that we are in a great war against the devil and his forces. For example, the prosperity gospel presents Jesus as the earthly cure for everything. Rather than entering into a great spiritual battlefield, the new Christian is assured that all his problems will be solved. The prosperity gospel offers anything but spiritual warfare. Instead it offers peace, prosperity, health. Jesus will give you every earthly blessing, - if, - if - you have enough faith.

However, Ephesians 6:11 paints an entirely different picture. It warns, "*Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes...*" The Scripture is giving us a warning us that the devil has many schemes. They are not directed just at humanity in general. The schemes are directed at the followers of Christ. Furthermore, those schemes are put together with care. A lot of cunning and craft is designed into each varied scheme of our adversary.

### **The Scheme of Friendship**

One scheme of the devil, which worked especially well with Eve, is to present himself as a friend who is concerned for you. "Eve, did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden... ? - Eve, God is so restrictive. He doesn't want you to be like Him, knowing good from evil. But Eve, as your friend, let me share how eating from that tree will open your eyes! As a true friend I can tell you, Eve, once you eat of that delicious fruit, you will be as wise as God. You will know good and evil...."

The evil one still works the same way today. Many people are pulled into cults today because they feel as though the people in the cults really care for them, they are the true friends... - Ask any Jehovah's Witness or Mormon into your house, - they will come in, they will be your friends...

### **An Angel of Light**

Another scheme of the evil one, another very effective scheme, is to masquerade as an angel of light. 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 warns: "*Satan himself masquerades as an angel of*

*light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness.”* Masquerading as an angel of light works to Satan’s advantage in a number of ways:

First, he shows up where least expected. Who would expect to find the devil, or his messengers in church? Yet it is in the church where the devil works hardest and has his greatest success. Those of you who were here on Christmas remember how we saw that already in 1924 over 1200 ministers in the large liberal Presbyterian Church signed the Auburn Affirmation, a document that disputes the virgin birth of Jesus Christ along with several other clear teachings of Scripture.

The ministers who signed the document were men who should have known better. These were pastors in churches; they were to teach others about Jesus Christ: His virgin birth; His perfect life; His sacrificial death and substitutionary atonement, His glorious resurrection; His ascension and the certainty of His return. But instead of teaching these biblical truths many ministers - back then in 1924, and even more today, - deny those clear Biblical truths.

Should we be surprised? Not according to Jesus, who warns in Matthew 24:15, *“When you see standing in the holy place the abomination that causes desolation, spoken about by the prophet Daniel...”* (beware). He is warning us that the antichrist, the embodiment of evil, will come from within the church. 2 Thessalonians 2:4, speaking about the antichrist, says: *“He opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, and even sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.”*

As the devil masquerades as an angel of light, he mixes truth with error. If the devil and all false teachers had only errors and no truth, then they would be easy to spot, wouldn’t they? But false teachers follow the lead of the evil one, they almost always present some truth with their errors.

In Genesis 3, when Satan approached Eve, he presented her with a big lie. He said, "If you eat from that tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you won’t die." But he also presented a kernel of truth. He said, "Your eyes will be opened... you will know good and evil." ...He still excels at lying, as he mixes some truth with a lot of error. In John 8:44, Jesus gives this warning: *“When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of all lies.”*

As he masquerades as an angel of light, the evil one misuses Scripture. It is not that he doesn’t know Scripture. He knows the Bible far better than you or I know the Bible. But he twists the Scripture out of context. When he tempted Jesus to jump from the highest point of the temple, he quoted from Psalm 91:11-12. *“If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down, for it is written”* - here comes the quote from Psalm 91 - *“He will command His angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”*

Jesus refuted the devil using the Scriptures. He quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16: *“Jesus answered him: ‘It is also written: Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”* To this day the evil one, and those under his influence, use the Scriptures, but they twist them out of their context and misuse them to teach the opposite of what they are intended to teach. Peter wrote about this in 2 Peter 3:16. He writes about the Apostle Paul’s letters, saying, *“His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.”*

As an angel of light, Satan and his followers are also able to imitate the power of God. Satan is not all-powerful the way God is. He is not omnipresent nor omniscient as is the Lord. Yet he has enough power that he, and those who are under his influence, are able to imitate God in performing miracles signs and wonders. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10: *“The coming of the lawless one will be displayed in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders.”*

Miracles, signs and wonders have become popular in our day. For instance, the third wave of Pentecostalism, which has made inroads into almost all the established mainline churches, including our former denomination, stresses the importance of miracles for evangelism. One of their tenants, one of their core teachings, involves “power evangelism,” meaning that by performing signs, wonders and miracles, people will believe and be saved.

But did they believe when Jesus performed miracles? They still doubted Him. Scripture says: *“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God”* (Romans 10:17). We certainly see that in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. You remember how the rich man was in torment in hell and asked that Lazarus be sent to him so that he could have just a drop of water placed on his tongue. When Abraham explains that cannot be done, the man asks Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers who were still living, to warn them of the reality of hell so that they would repent. Jesus says: *“Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’*

*‘No father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them they will repent.’*

*He said to them, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”* (Luke 16:29-31).

All the miracles in the world won’t cause someone to believe. *“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”* Yet, despite the clear teaching and warnings of Scripture, so many professing Christians have turned, and are now turning, from the Word of God to explore the spectacular, - what well may be the *“counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders.”*

## **A Roaring Lion**

So far we have seen that Satan, and those under his control, will approach us as our friend... or approach us as an angel of light.... But if those tactics don't work, Satan puts on the gloves to really do battle. 1 Peter 5:8: *"Be self controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour."*

The devil will do all he can to intimidate the Christian. In that sense he is like a roaring lion. How crucial that we are self controlled and alert, focused on Christ. Only then will we have a measure of peace even when the lion roars, when Satan schemes and attacks.

## **Our Response**

How else are we to respond to the certainty of encountering the devil's schemes...? As you face the schemes of the evil one, find your strength in the Lord. If you trust your own strength you will fall, just as Adam and Eve did.

Sometimes we wonder: "How could they listen to the serpent and plunge humanity into sin..?" Yet as more than one commentator points out, they knew spiritual realities far better than you and I know them. They walked and talked with God. They saw the glory of His creation before the fall, when His handiwork was even more impressive than it is in this sin-stained world. They watched over and cared for the paradise of God. Yet even being so close to the Lord and living in His paradise, they fell, quite quickly and easily. It all goes back to the warning of 1 Corinthians 10:12: *"If you think you are standing firm, be careful you don't fall!"*

When we try to deal with temptation and the devil's schemes in our own strength we will fall. Ephesians 6:10 is so very clear: *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and His mighty power."* We can only withstand the devil's schemes when we look to the Lord for our strength.

## **Put On the Armor**

Second, in the spiritual warfare that each one of us faces, we are to put on the armor God provides. Some of you men fought in WW 2, some in Korea, some in Viet Nam, some of our younger men have been to Iraq and Afghanistan. When you go into those areas of great conflict you go prepared for battle. No infantryman would line up to fight without his weapons. It's no different in the Christian life. That's why we are instructed to *"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes..."* (Ephesians 6:11). Although our adversary is crafty and powerful, our God has prepared armor for us. It is only when we use the armor, which we will look at in the weeks to come, that we are able to withstand the schemes of the evil one.

When you put your faith in the Lord's strength, and put on the armor He provides, then, and only then, can you stand against the devil's schemes. And we are called to stand

strong against the schemes and temptations of the evil one. We are not just to acknowledge that they are there, - to admit that we are caught up in the battle of the ages, that we are part of the spiritual battle between good and evil, God and the devil. We also must stand firm against the devil's schemes, as verse 13 says: *"Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."*

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We know so little about the new year ahead. Will the economy recover? Will the job picture brighten? Will the war between North and South Korea escalate? Will our military forces make progress in the war in Afghanistan? Will you and I live through 2011? Or will 2011 be the marker on your tombstone and mine?

We don't know the answer to those questions. But we do know, with a certainty, that we will be caught in a great spiritual battle in the new year. May you and I always find our strength in the Lord, put on His armor, and stand firmly against the devil's schemes. Amen.