

THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL: A STUDY OF EPHESIANS

(LESSON ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN)

“THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL” (PART 3)

EPHESIANS 6:10-12

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

11 Put on the whole armour 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.

In verse **11** of our text Paul writes, “*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*”

The **New English Translation** renders the verse as follows: “*Clothe yourselves with the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.*”

The phrase, “*the whole armour of God,*” is a translation of the Greek word **panoplia**: (**pan-op-lee’-ah**), which refers to the complete set of instruments used in offensive and defensive warfare. Paul exhorts the Ephesian believers to “*put on the whole armour of God,*” because that is the **only** way that they will be “*able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*”

The word “*wiles*,” or “*schemes*,” is a translation of the Greek word **methodeia**: (**meth-od-i’-ah**), which refers to an orderly, logical, effective arrangement, usually in steps followed to achieve an end. It describes deliberate planning, or a systematic approach. Paul’s use of the definite article “**the**,” before the word “*wiles*,” indicates that the schemes of the devil as they relate to believers, are not general but very specific. It suggests that the devil and his emissaries have specific schemes that are tailor-made for each believer. These schemes are carefully and methodically selected to attack **each** believer’s specific weaknesses and vulnerabilities. The only way we can stand against the devil and his “*wiles*” is to “*Clothe [ourselves] with the full armor of God.*”

The term “*devil*” is a translation of the Greek word **diabolos**: (**dee-ab’-ol-os**) which means, “prone to slander, slanderous, accusing falsely.” It refers to one who utters false charges or misrepresentations with the intention of defaming and damaging the reputation of another. **Diabolos** is the noun form of the verb **diaballo** which describes not only those who bring a **false** charge against another, but also those who circulate the **truth** concerning a person in a secretive and malicious manner.

We must be careful to avoid one of two extremes in regard to the devil. First, we not think that Satan causes everything and that he is everywhere. Satan is not **omnipotent** (all-powerful), **omniscient** (all-knowing and all-wise), or **omnipresent** (everywhere-present at the same time). He is a created being and therefore, a controlled being. The other extreme is just as dangerous, and that is to think that there is no such being as the devil, but that he is imaginary or a myth. He is very real, very wily, and very dangerous. However, the fact that the devil is a created being means that he is subject to the Lord. God uses the devil to fulfill His good purposes (**Romans 8:28**). Although he is very powerful, Satan is ultimately a finite creature who is by no means a match for our Lord.

In the final analysis, the devil can never operate outside of God's decree. Therefore we may say that the devil is God's devil! That God rules over Satan without Himself being guilty of sin is a difficult truth for us to grasp, but it is also a very comforting truth. It tells us that whatever we suffer at the hands of the devil and his demons, together with all evil, has a definite purpose and will ultimately lead to our good and God's glory.

We will now consider some of the **methodeia**-the "wiles" or "schemes" of the devil that he employs against believers.

Accusation

Job 1:6-12

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

7 The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it."

8 And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?"

9 Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason?"

10 Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

11 But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face."

12 And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Zechariah 3:1-5

1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

2 And the LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?”

3 Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments.

4 And the angel said to those who were standing before him, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” And to him he said, “Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.”

5 And I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD was standing by.

Revelation 12:10-11

10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

Brothers and sisters, Satan is able to accuse us before God continually because we sin continually, according to **1 John 1:8-10**. Thankfully however, the **one-time** sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, justifies us **eternally**. Satan’s accusations toward the believer are

essentially made against the perfect righteousness of Christ which is imputed to him or her (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). The work of Christ on the Cross takes into account **all** our sin, past, present, and future. Our sin only affects our **fellowship** with Him, not our **position**, or **standing** as justified persons. Once we come to faith in Christ, Satan's accusations are dealt with by a God who is no longer our judge but our Justifier, according to **Romans 8:33**. This is how believers "conquer" or "overcome" the accuser "*by the blood of the Lamb.*" Satan's accusations are ineffective because Jesus has already paid the penalty that our sins deserved! We may be even **worse** than Satan's accusations imply, but we are still made righteous by the work of Jesus on the cross.

The Holy Spirit does not **accuse** us; He **convicts** us and **comforts** us. That means that conviction by the Spirit will be followed by a sense of peace and purity. If we have confessed our sins and still feel as if we have not been forgiven, it is likely that Satan and his demons are attempting to do their work of accusation in our lives. We must stand against them in such instances, reminding them of the surety of the Lord's promises and thus our forgiveness in Christ (**Romans 8:33-39**).

The phrase, "*the word of their testimony,*" refers to the believers' faithful confession of Jesus Christ as Lord, and as their only hope. The word of their testimony overcomes Satan's deception. Knowing and remembering the work of God in their life protects them against Satan's deceptions. As faithful witnesses, they have a testimony to bear – and because they know what they have seen and heard and experienced from God, they cannot be deceived by Satan's lies which seek to convince them that God's work of justification and sanctification is not authentic. We must testify, both to ourselves and to others, concerning the reality of the work of God in our lives (**1 Timothy 1:12**).

Affliction

Job 1:13-22

13 Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house,

14 and there came a messenger to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them,

15 and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

16 While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

17 While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

18 While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house,

19 and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped.

21 And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”

22 In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

Job 2:4-10

4 Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life.

5 But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.”

6 And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.”

7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

8 And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.

9 Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.”

10 But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Brothers and sisters, affliction is part of living in this world. All believers will suffer heartaches, injuries, disappointments, lack, rejection, and sickness, whether our affliction is the work of Satan directly or not. Whatever the origin of our affliction however, we must remember Paul’s encouragement in **2 Corinthians 4:7-12** and **15–18**. The **New English Translation** renders the passage in the following way:

7 But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that the extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.

8 We are experiencing trouble on every side, but are not crushed; we are perplexed, but not driven to despair;

9 we are persecuted, but not abandoned; we are knocked down, but not destroyed,

10 always carrying around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our body.

11 For we who are alive are constantly being handed over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our mortal body.

15 For all these things are for your sake, so that the grace that is including more and more people may cause thanksgiving to increase to the glory of God.

16 Therefore we do not despair, but even if our physical body is wearing away, our inner person is being renewed day by day.

17 For our momentary, light suffering is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison

18 because we are not looking at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen. For what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

Afflictions remind us that this world is not our home. When we keep our focus on that truth, the grace of God will help us to endure any affliction.

Deception

Genesis 3:1-6, 13

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,

3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

4 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.

5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

John 8:44

"You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

2 Corinthians 11:1-3

1 I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me!

2 For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:12-15

12 And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do.

13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

R.C. Sproul made the following remarks concerning the “craftiness” of the devil:

“Satan, the enemy of God and His people, frequently appears in the Old and New Testaments to harm the covenant community, lead people astray, and do what He can to take away from the Lord's glory. From its beginning (**Genesis 3**) to its conclusion (**Revelation 20:1-10**), the Bible is clear that evil is not an impersonal force but the disposition of personal beings — the Devil and his servants...

Genesis 3 features the first appearance of Satan in Scripture, telling us how he worked through a serpent to tempt Adam and Eve. The Enemy is called 'crafty' (verse 1), which translates the Hebrew word **arum**. This quality is not itself bad, for the same term is translated 'prudent' in **Proverbs 12:16**. It is an ability to deal with people with subtlety, a quality that can be used for good or, in Satan's case, evil.

The Devil's craftiness is seen in that he does not present himself as an adversary; rather, he gets Eve to question God's goodness. He quizzes Eve in a way that emphasizes what the Lord has forbidden (**Genesis 3:1**), painting Him as strict and overbearing. Satan could have asked about the blessings God has generously given to mankind, but instead he asks what the Creator has told Eve not to do. Similarly, he intimates that the Lord God is jealous (in a bad way) and out to keep people down for His own sake, without any regard for their well-being (verse 5).

Matthew Henry comments, 'It is the subtlety of Satan to blemish the reputation of divine law as uncertain or unreasonable, and to draw people to sin.' Today, the Devil employs the very same tactics with us, so let us be careful lest he lead us astray into the violation of our Savior's will."