

Sermon Notes, November 26, 2017

Strategies of Darkness, Ephesians 6:10-13, 1 Peter 5:8-9

We've established over the last few weeks that a Christian realizes and experiences a fight. Christianity is a fight. We are in a war zone. Christians see life is a fight. C. S. Lewis rightly said, "There is no neutral ground in the universe. Every square inch, every split second is claimed by God, and counterclaimed by Satan."

There's this battle going on every day for your very soul.

So, Paul reminds us that "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood ..." We're fighting against powers and principalities. The Scripture actually teaches here there are really only two kingdoms. There is the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light. In Col. 1:13 Paul says, "For he (God) has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves ..."

Every square inch of the world is claimed and counterclaimed by God or by the Enemy. You either are living for God, or you're falling under the influence of supernatural evil. So, Paul is saying here, "If you're going to engage in this battle, you're going to have to put on the full armor of God, and first you have to assess your Enemy." You're not going to be able to prepare for a battle unless you have an assessment of the Enemy, what the Enemy is capable of, what the strengths are of the Enemy.

We're going to look at three things I think we see here.

One is *the Devil is mighty*. Secondly, *the Devil is wily*. Thirdly, *the Devil is vulnerable*.

If you forget any one of these three things, you lose. So, let's look at these.

1. The Devil is mighty

Where do we get that from? "We wrestle ... against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

There is a plurality of powers. They are the *rulers over this present darkness*. These are beings of an angelic order. These are beings of a far greater capacity than we have. The word there for cosmic powers is *kosmokrator*, which means ruling powers, gods of this world. We cannot deal with them in our own strength. And here's what we know. It's the nature of the demonic to set up gods (idols) and try to get you to worship them. There are forces of supernatural wickedness that are trying to get you to worship something besides Jesus, make your righteousness something besides Jesus, make your security something besides Jesus.

There really are gods out there. There really are.

2. The Devil is wily. "Wily."

I use this word because in 2 Cor., Paul, speaking in the context of forgiveness says, "in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes ... we are not ignorant of Satan's wiles." This is also the word in Eph. 6:11. "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." That word is literally *methodeia*, which is where we get our word *methodical* or *methods* from. The idea here is Satan is not just impulsive.

Over the millennia Satan has been perfecting his methods and his strategies. He is very willing to work for years in a person's life to make sure the methods are set up, the strategies are set up, and the traps are set up, so they come ensnare you.

What are these strategies according to the Scripture? This morning I am going to outline the basic one. There's one basic one, and out of that one basic one come three sub-strategies. The one basic is the Greek word for *devil*, the word *diabolos*, means *deceiver*. The thing Jesus most often says about Satan is he is a what? He's a liar.

The ordinary way Satan tries to exercise his power is not through trying to scare you. C.S. Lewis says there are two equal and unhealthy opposites into which you can fall about Satan, two errors. I mentioned this last week. They're opposite errors. One is to not believe in him at all. The other is to have an unhealthy and exaggerated interest in him.

There are two ways Satan can deal with you. One is to make you think he has more power than he does, and the other is to make you think he has less power than he does, by making you think there is not really a personal evil at work. At least in Western culture, he likes it better when he is not blatantly obvious, and he is working behind the scenes.

The real power of Satan is the lie. He's always scheming, inserting ideas and twisting the truth.

How does Satan come to Adam and Eve in the beginning? He questions God's Word. He exaggerates. He deceives. He creates doubt in their minds about God's word. The picture the serpent paints of God is a misrepresentation. God offered nothing less to Adam and Eve than the privilege of freedom and the joy of dependence upon a loving God and his goodness. But Satan labels God as a tyrant. He's exaggerating. He is misrepresenting the truth.

Maybe people have said things that you have bought into, believing the lies, and it has created tremendous problems in your life. Until you root out those lies, until you find it and see the power it has, until you replace it with the truth, and the only way to replace those things is with God's truth, until you do that, you are under the control of the lie, and, therefore, you're under the control of the *kosmokrator*. You're under the control of the evil hierarchy.

The basic thing Satan does is he injects distorted perceptions of yourself, of the world, and of God into your heart. That's the main thing he does, and that's the reason why in 2 Timothy 2:25, Paul says, and to me this is the secret of the whole thing, "God may grant that they repent, and see the truth, and escape the snare of the Devil." There it is. You have to saturate your heart with land mines of the truth of God's Word, so as soon as Satan steps in there, he's blown up.

3. The Devil is vulnerable

The Devil is vulnerable. It says in Colossians 2:15 you must see that Jesus Christ, when he was on the cross, made a parade of the powers and principalities. Jesus says in Mark 3, "I came to bind the strong man and to break his power." Do you realize Satan can't make you, as a Christian, as a believer, do anything other than what he makes you believe you have to do?

Yes, the devil is wicked, evil, and scheming, as we have seen. But he is still a created being, NOT equal in power or authority with God. So, in one sense, you could say, there is no drama in the battle between good and evil.

Now, we've been talking about the fact that there IS a drama. But there's no drama in the fact that the outcome is not in doubt. There is ultimately no drama between this great conflict between good and evil. In fact, not only do we know that God will win, but that he has won. He defeated the devil at the cross.

Christ has dealt a death blow, and he will deal a final blow to the evil one.

We must not underestimate God or overestimate the power of the devil.