

The Book of Ephesians
Learning to Use God's Armor, Part 3
Ephesians 6:10-17
August 15, 2010
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Well I invite you to turn with me again to Ephesians 6 as we continue our study of really the most famous passage, I think, in the entire letter, a passage that's often described as the believer's armor. I mentioned a couple of weeks ago that I was working my way again through Ken Burns award winning series on the American Civil War. If you're familiar with that portion of American history, you know that one of the most famous men in the conflict was a man named General Thomas Jackson.

At the first battle of Bull Run, Jackson earned the nickname Stonewall. After that he quickly became one of Lee's favorite officers and often found himself in the thick of the battle at Lee's command. In fact, when eventually Stonewall Jackson was accidentally shot by one of his own soldiers in the left arm, they had to amputate the arm, thought that would save him. He developed pneumonia and eventually died from the wound. Upon his death, Lee wrote, he has lost his left arm, I have lost my right.

Military historians still look at Stonewall Jackson as one of the most gifted commanders, one of the most gifted tacticians in United States history. His campaign in the valley as its called, the Valley Campaign, as well as what he did at Chancellorsville are still studied to this day by those who study military tactics. It was incredibly innovative. Here's how Stonewall Jackson summarized his own approach to military tactics. "Always mystify, mislead, and surprise the enemy if possible. And when you strike and overcome him, never let up in the pursuit so long as your men have strength to follow. For an army routed if hotly pursued, becomes panic stricken and can then be destroyed by half their number."

Stonewall Jackson goes on to write, "War means fighting, the business of the soldier is to fight. Armies are not called out to dig trenches, to live in camps, but to find the enemy and strike him, to invade his country and to do him all possible damage in the shortest possible time. This will involve great destruction of life and property while it lasts but such a war will of necessity be a

brief continuance and so would be an economy of life and property in the end.” Jackson lived out those tactics.

Stonewall Jackson was actually a Christian. He was a deacon in the Presbyterian Church and almost certainly a man that we will see in heaven regardless of what his political views may have been. But in those quotes he was borrowing his strategy from the devil’s own field manual of operations. Mystify, mislead, and surprise. And when the enemies running, never let up, relentlessly pursue him, and you will destroy him.

We’re learning in Ephesians 6 that we too are in a battle. We are foot soldiers in the infantry of a war between God and Satan. And Satan takes these very same tactics, his great mission, his tactics on the battle field are to mystify, mislead, and surprise. He constantly, relentlessly wars against us, and the battle that he wages against each of us is primarily a battle fought in our minds. If we’re going to survive spiritually, we have to understand our enemy’s tactics. We have to understand what Paul explains in Ephesians 6 about being prepared for the battle. Let me read for you again this text, Ephesians 6 beginning in verse 10.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you [may] ... be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, **HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE;** in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. And take **THE HELMET OF SALVATION,** and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Now the theme of this paragraph is simply this, in the war of the Christian life we can only stand firm in the strength of Christ and the armor of God. As Paul develops that theme, these eleven verses that I just read for you divide into three basic parts.

The first part is verses 10 - 13 which I've entitled "Understand Our Orders." Here Paul gives us a sort of general explanation of what our orders are in this war. The second part is verses 14 - 17, I've entitled this section, "Put On God's Armor." Here he gives us a detailed explanation of the pieces of armor which we are to put on. The third part of this paragraph is in verses 18 - 20, and when we get to it I'll argue for why it should be included in this section, and I think there are strong, really insurmountable arguments that this is intended to be part of this armor section. And I've entitled this last section in verses 18 - 20, "Think Like a Soldier." Here Paul tells us that we have to develop a proper mindset or attitude for the battle for which we are engaged. So then, if we're going to stand firm in the war that is the Christian life, we must first understand our orders.

This whole passage is built on this metaphor that we are soldiers in the Lord's army and as soldiers we've been given very specific orders. And in verses 10 - 13 Paul presents us with what our orders really are: in verses 10 and the first part of verse 11, the overarching command; in verse 11, the second part of verse 11 the objective or the mission behind our orders. What is it we're supposed to be accomplishing?; in verse 12 the enemy that we will face in fulfilling our orders; and in verse 13 a summary of our orders as he pulls it all together.

Now last week we looked just at the very first part of understanding what our orders are, the overarching command. Look at verse 10. "Finally, be strong in the Lord." As I noted last time, these are the instructions really that summarize everything that's been said in Ephesians. These instructions are how to do everything that we have read and studied in the rest of the letter. The only way to be and to do what we have been commanded to be and to do, is by heeding Ephesians 6 and this passage, and the key is in the verb in verse 10, "be strong."

Literally as we saw last time that's a passive. Be strengthened. In other words Paul isn't telling us to sum up our own strength to sort of summon our own strength from within and do this. He's saying cooperate in some way so that an external strength, a power outside of us can come in and make us strong. Be strengthened. The verb is in the present tense meaning this is to be a habit of life; this isn't something you do once. This is something you do every day. You must be strengthened. Where does this spiritual strength come from? "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." But throughout the rest of Ephesians the word Lord here refers to Jesus Christ. So the source of our spiritual strength is Christ. Ultimately it is that word that ends verse

10, “His might.” His inherent power and that might or power that is inherent in Him manifests itself in strength. The Greek word translated strength there speaks of ruling or sovereignty. So if we sort of put everything there together we learn that the believer is to find the strength he needs to live out the Christian life in Christ’s power to act, a power that has its source in Christ’s own inherent unlimited power.

You say that sounds great. I’d love to have that functioning in my life. I’d love to be strengthened, to be able to respond to temptation with the same strength Christ did when He resisted Satan and said “no.” But how? How does His strength actually become my strength? Well verse 11 tells us, “put on the full armor of God.” Here’s how to gain the strength of Christ. Paul doesn’t just come out and tell us in prosaic Greek or English. Instead he tells us how to make Christ’s strength our own in an extended metaphor.

I asked my girls a week or so ago what a metaphor was, over the breakfast table we were talking about several different things and I find myself successful as a father when I can get my kids to say the word dad in four syllables. Daaaad! And that morning I was in that mood, a mood to do that. And so I said what’s a metaphor? And they started giving me these pretty accurate answers as to what the English figure of speech is and I said no, no. What’s a meadow for? It’s a place where you put cows and horses. Actually they were right. A metaphor is an extended comparison that doesn’t use the word like. Where there is a comparison of one thing to another to give you insight. It’s an extended illustration, if you will. That’s what he’s doing here. He doesn’t come out and say “here’s how you become strong with Christ’s strength.” Instead he tells us in this extended metaphor. “Put on the full armor of God.”

The Greek word for full armor refers to complete body armor of a heavily armed infantry soldier. But in this case it’s not our own army. You know some people refer to this passage as the believer’s armor. And in one sense that’s true obviously, we’re to put it on but the emphasis here isn’t on that. The emphasis is on the fact that this is God’s armor that we put on.

Now today we continue to unpack just the first part of this passage, verses 10 - 13 and Paul’s explanation of our orders. We’re still trying to understand our orders. Last time we saw the overarching command, we’ve just reviewed that. This morning I want us to move on to the next part of our orders, and that is the objective, the mission, if you will. A soldier, every soldier has a mission, they’ve been given an objective and so are we. Look at verse 11, “put on the full armor of God, so that.” This speaks of purpose, here’s why. “So that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.” There is the heart of our mission, the heart of our

objective as soldiers. So that you will be able to stand firm. And just in case you missed it. Paul emphasizes this again and again as our mission in this passage.

You see it in verse 11, “stand firm.” Look down in verse 13, he uses a synonym, “resist,” it literally means “to withstand in the evil day.” Verse 13, “having done everything to stand firm.” And then verse 14, “stand firm therefore.” Three times he uses the same word and once he uses a synonym all to communicate the same idea. Our mission, our objective is to stand firm. The Greek word literally means to stand, and when it’s used in a military context like this it means to hold out in a critical position on the battlefield; to withstand the attack of the enemy, to hold one’s ground. As Muehl the commentator writes, “The present picture is not of a march or an assault but of the holding of the fortress of the soul and of the church for the heavenly King.” Now folks, this is very, very important. When this word is used in a military context as it is here, it’s not talking about an attack, it’s talking about withstanding an attack.

In fact let me show you how this word is used in one place in the Old Testament in a military context. Go back to Daniel, Daniel 11 and of course the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew a couple of hundred years before our Lord lived it was translated into Greek. That Greek translation is what was used for the most part in the first century, and the apostles often quote from it etc.... That Greek translation is called the Septuagint. When you hear me refer to the Septuagint, that’s what that is. It is a Greek translation from the original Hebrew done a couple of hundred years before Christ.

Now in the Septuagint they use this word, in Daniel 11:15 and I won’t give you all the context, suffice it to say there’s a description here of ongoing battles between the Ptolemy’s of Egypt and Syria. Basically you have a battle for the Promised Land, for Israel, back and forth for several hundred years between these super powers who gained their strength after Alexander the Great’s death. But notice verse 15. Here we’re talking about Antiochus Epianhanes if you’re interested in that, one of the Syrians.

“The king of the North will come, he will cast up a siege ramp and capture a well-fortified city; and the forces of the South” [Here’s our word] “will not stand their ground, not even their choicest troops, for there will be no strength in them” [Here it is again] “to make a stand.” That’s the picture of the word in Ephesians 6.

This word does not describe an offensive campaign but rather holding your ground, holding your position against an attacking enemy. The language is not one of an offensive war but a defensive

war. In other words in Ephesians 6, we are not told how to attack Satan, but how to withstand his attacks.

You see, Christ already has won a good portion of the victory that will ultimately be His. He won it at the cross when He defeated Satan. And now we are merely the army that He has put in place to hold the ground He has gained. We're not here to gain more ground on His behalf, that's not the mission of the church. We're standing firm. Yes we're sharing the gospel; we're seeing new souls captured for His kingdom. But we're standing firm on the ground He's already conquered, and some day He will return again, and He will continue the rout of His enemies. That's the picture.

This certainly contradicts the approach of many of our brothers and sisters in the charismatic movement. You see what began here in Ephesians 6 as a metaphor of being strong in Christ eventually became, instead of a metaphor, a movement called the spiritual warfare movement. The imagery of Ephesians 6 became the way to define everything in Christianity, everything in the Christian life. It's all spiritual warfare, not in the sense of defending ourselves against the attacks of Satan, but in the sense of taking our attacks to Satan.

This became the key to evangelism, if you want to see some a place evangelized they taught, then you first have to bind Satan. You hear that language, bind Satan or binding Satan. It has to do with this whole movement called the spiritual warfare movement. As a result of that there were events and continue to be events like prayer marches around cities and towns and regions and even countries. There're lots of books written, there're journals that have been written. There're men whose whole ministry is about binding Satan.

The academic mind behind this movement was a man named Peter Wagner from Fuller Seminary. He talked about binding territorial demons etc.... We'll see a little more about him and his views next week. The most famous popular level presentation of this spiritual warfare movement was really from the pen of a novel writer named Frank Peretti back in 1986 he published a book called *This Present Darkness*, and he followed it with a sequel called *Piercing the Darkness*. All of this was about this spiritual warfare movement, and at its root it's about binding Satan; it's about attacking and being on the offensive against Satan.

One charismatic author describes how to do this. He begins by quoting Luke 10. "Behold I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy and

nothing shall by any means hurt you.” Which of course was a promise to the apostles, not to every individual Christian. And then he urges people to pray a prayer like this.

You want to bind Satan in your life, he says here’s how you do it. “By the power and authority of the holy name of Jesus of Nazareth, a name above all names, I now rebuke all the works of the enemy Satan and all his principalities and powers and rulers in dark evil places. I now with the power and authority you give me Jesus, cast Satan out of every area of my life. I command every demon in my life or circumstance to leave now. Satan, I bind you now in every area of my life and circumstances.” [And then in parenthesis say specifically what areas.] “I ask for the Holy Spirit and the angels of God to perform the will of God now and the words of my mouth. I thank You Jesus for hearing and answering my prayers and for giving me the power of the Holy Spirit, your name and the blood you gave as the Lamb of God to prevail over all the works of Satan, Amen.” Every demon in my life, every onslaught in my life I bind them, I restrict them where they can’t operate is what this is all about.

Benny Hinn captures the heart of what this movement is all about when he wrote back in 2008, “We have authority over the enemy who is controlling and binding the lives of our loved ones. We have authority to dominate the dominator. We have authority to torment the tormentor. The Lord tells us that we must bind the strong man, and God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power. Today refuse fear, embrace boldness, attack the enemy, and engage in spiritual warfare.”

Now what about all of that? Listen folks, the spiritual warfare movement as a whole is patently unbiblical. Jesus did give His apostles, His specially identified ones and sent ones, who were His legal representatives on earth, he gave them His power to cast out demons, and they did. But there is no evidence that even they ever bound demons or Satan. In fact the only two times in Scripture that Satan is bound is number one by Jesus during His ministry. They love to quote those passages they’re in Matthew, Mark, and Luke where Jesus is accused of casting out demons by the power of Satan himself. And He says no you’ve got it all wrong, if you’re going to steal a strong mans goods you first have to bind that strong man, and then you can plunder him.

What was Jesus saying? He was saying that’s what I’m doing when I cast out demons. I have bound Satan, and I am therefore able to cast out the demons. So Jesus did it, and the second time in all of Scripture when we’re told that Satan will be bound is in Revelation 20 when an angel does it, not a human being when he’s bound for a thousand years during the millennial period. And then he’s loosed again at the end of that period. That’s it. And in fact, we are told not to have a direct confrontation with Satan in the sense of on the attack, on the offensive against him.

In Jude 8, Jude the second to last book in the New Testament, Jesus' half brother writes about false teachers, and he says these false teachers, verse 8, "they defile the flesh." They're all into their flesh and the fleshly pursuits, they give this aura of spirituality, but in reality they're all about pursuing their own fallenness. They reject authority. They're their own authority, and verse 8, "they revile angelic majesties." They think they have power over supernatural beings.

Instead, verse 9, even Michael, the archangel, the most powerful holy being in the universe next to God, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, this is the only place we're told about this. Apparently this happened when you remember Moses died and was privately buried, and apparently Satan somehow wanted his body, maybe to make it an object of worship to make it idolatry for the children of Israel, we're really not told. "Even Michael when they disputed about this did not dare pronounce against Satan a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you"! But these men revile the things they do not understand." They don't even know what they are doing. They have no idea what they're involved in.

Peter says the same thing over in 2 Peter: 2:11. Again in verse 10 he describes these false teachers as reviling angelic majesties. Hey listen, mark it in your book, that whenever you find somebody who's taking on supernatural beings you have a false teacher. Twice we're told they're the ones who revile angelic majesties, who take it on themselves to do that. "Whereas" verse 11, "angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord." This is all patently unbiblical.

What Ephesians 6 is calling on us to do is not to attack Satan, not to go on the offensive against him, not to bind him, but to stand firm against his attacks, to withstand his attacks against us. It's like the image, I mentioned Stonewall Jackson earlier, it's like the image of what happened there at the first battle of Bull Run when he received his nickname. The confederate lines began to crumble, and he and his unit, his brigade, were to be the crucial reinforcements there on Henry House Hill. And of course he'd greatly disciplined his men. He knew what his job was. He knew that this was the key point in the battle. He came in, and as he always did he was right in the middle of the battle sitting on his horse. A pretty high target, sitting up right in the middle of his men, and as they fought around him, he had this habit of raising his left hand.

Likely it was his way of sort of doing what Moses had done, we was a religious man, a spiritual man. What Moses had done lifting his hands during the battle and praying. Likely that's what he did. During that battle he actually took a piece of shrapnel to his finger, was wounded, continued to sit there on his horse and tell his men to stay their position, to hold the line they had

been given. During the middle of all of that as this incredible onslaught was going on Brigadier General Barnard Elliott Bee exhorted his own troops who were beginning to retreat to reform. And he pointed up to Jackson sitting on his horse up there with his hand raised, blood trickling down his hand, telling his men to stay there. And Bee said to his men, “There is Jackson standing like a stone wall. Let us determine to die here, and we will conquer. Rally behind the Virginians.” That day Jackson lost more men from his brigade than any other brigade that was fighting that day, but he held his line, and because of that the battle was victorious.

That’s the spirit in which you and I are called to battle. We’re to hold the ground that our Lord Himself has claimed. We’re to stand firm. Not in our own strength, but in His strength. So what exactly are we to put up a firm defense against? What are we to stand firm against? Look at verse 11 again. “That you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.” The key word here obviously is “schemes.” You may have grown up if you grew up in the church hearing the King James translation of that word which is “wiles.”

The Greek word is a word you’ll recognize. It really comes straight out of Greek into English. It’s the word *methodeia* from which we get the English word *method*. It’s used only two times in the Bible. Back in chapter 4 verse 14 where it refers to the schemes of false teachers, false teaching, and here of Satan. The word originally meant a process or a procedure for doing something, a method. But eventually in Greek it primarily took on the bad sense of deceptive, cunning, crafty methods or schemes. In light of the military image that sort of permeates this whole passage, I think Paul may want us to translate it something like “strategies.” It may be a good word; tactics, strategies.

Notice the noun *schemes* is plural, that means both that they’re constantly repeated. He keeps attacking. He keeps looking for soft places in the line. And I think it speaks of a variety of schemes, a variety of strategies. He doesn’t just have one way to attack us. He has countless ways to attack us. And we need to know what they are. In 2 Corinthians 2 Paul says that he acts in such a way so that no advantage is taken of us by Satan for we are not ignorant of his schemes, different word but same idea. We’re not ignorant of his schemes. Tragically I think most Christians today are absolutely ignorant of his schemes. They have no idea what Satan’s strategies against them really are. They are merely cannon fodder in the war between God and Satan.

Listen Satan is very cunning, and as we will see he has many different strategies he uses. But back of all of that variety, if we could sort of boil down every method he uses, every tactic, every

strategy into a common source behind it all the unifying method is deception. This has been his basic method from the beginning. Jesus said, "He is a liar and the father of all liars." That's what he does. He lies. He deceives.

He did this in the very beginning, in fact look back at 2 Corinthians 11. Second Corinthians 11, Paul is concerned about the Corinthians and he points back to Eve and he says this is what happened in the Garden. Second Corinthians 11:3, "I am afraid, that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be deceived and led astray (by the) from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." He says I'm concerned that you are going to be deceived just like Eve was deceived. This is how it always works. This is what underlies his approach.

In Revelation 12:9, he's called the one who deceives the whole world. This is who he is. So clearly back of the innumerable strategies and tactics he develops is this one unifying method; lying and deception. Do you understand this? Satan wants to deceive you. Rarely does Satan come with a frontal attack where it's clear what's going on, it's always as Stonewall Jackson said, "To mystify, to mislead, and to surprise." That's his tactic. It's never, or hardly ever, a front on attack.

In the rest of our time together this morning I want us just to begin to identify Satan's primary schemes or devices or strategies – tactics. I want to start with Satan's strategies or tactics toward unbelievers, toward unbelievers. Paul tells us that Satan's primary objective for unbelievers according to 2 Corinthians 4:4, "is to blind their minds to the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ." That's his primary objective, 2 Corinthians 4:4, "to blind the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ." Now how does he do that? How does Satan blind people to God's great plan, to salvation?

Well the New Testament seems to emphasize several strategies he uses with unbelievers and I looked at these in detail when we were back in Ephesians 2:2, so I'm not going to do that here. If you want to study these in a little more detail you can go back and listen to the message on Ephesians 2:2. But let me just briefly remind you of them here.

Number one, here's his strategies, primary strategies toward unbelievers. Number one; he promotes human philosophy and ideology. He promotes human philosophy and ideology. There are a number of passages we covered when I went through this before, but just look at Colossians 2:8. Paul is concerned about the Colossians, he says, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception; according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." He says listen there are

ideas and philosophies that are out there and Satan, even you as believers, would love to entrap you in this. This is his scheme to get unbelievers, but he'd love to snag you up in it as well. We saw in 2 Corinthians 10, last week that Satan has created these speculations and lofty ideas raised against the knowledge of Christ.

Our world is dominated by philosophies. Ideas and philosophies like evolutionary naturalism, post modernism, anti-super naturalism, feminism, radical environmentalism, and a whole lot of other isms. All anti-God, anti-Biblical ideologies are spawned and promoted by Satan himself to blind people to the glory of Christ. I mean, think about it. Sinners today can actually feel pretty good about themselves if they recycle their trash. It's the gospel of today. I'm a good person if I reduce my carbon footprint. Where did that come from? It came from Satan himself to blind the minds of people to their true condition and to the glory of the gospel of Christ.

Secondly, with unbelievers, he promotes false religion, not just ideologies and philosophies, secondly false religion. This, I think, is Satan's greatest strategy with unbelievers, he promotes damning false religion. The Old Testament is permeated by the worship of false gods. And in both Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 106 we're told by the writers of Scripture that behind every one of those idols was a demon. The same is true in the New Testament, and the same is true today. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:20 that the idols, that when people worship idols they are in fact worshipping demons.

And when Satan eventually in the future has full sway over this world, what does he do? He sets up a great false religious system under the antichrist and the false prophet. Read 2 Thessalonians 2. Read the book of Revelation. Satan promotes false religion of every kind from moralism to pagan idolatry, from the millions of gods of Hinduism to the environmentalist's worship of mother earth. Apart from the worship of the true God revealed in the pages of Scripture, listen closely, there is not a single religion that is not energized by Satan and his demons. That's what the Old and the New Testament teach. Religion is not a seeking of God, it is a desertion of the true God and what He has revealed about Himself, and it is promoted by and scripted by and empowered by Satan himself.

Number three, he prevents the spread of the true gospel. Here's another tactic with unbelievers, he prevents the spread of the true gospel. First of all he does it individually, in individual hearts. A fascinating passage in Matthew 13 where Jesus presents what's called the parable of the soils. One of those soils you remember is like a path that people have walked on again and again. It's a heart that's hard, and the seed of the gospel falls on that ground and you remember it can't get

through, it can't pierce. And Jesus said the birds of the air come and snatch that seed away. Later when He explained it to His apostles, He said this is what I meant. I meant that when that hard heart has the gospel fall on it, they read the Bible and see the gospel they hear it, you communicate it, maybe an unsaved family member or friend, or they sit in a service like this one, and they hear something true. It doesn't penetrate. And then Satan finds a way, usually through circumstances that happen during the service, after the service, after they finish, put the Bible down – he finds a way to snatch that out of their minds so they never think deeply about it.

Not only does he do it individually, he does it locally and regionally and nationally and internationally. He obstructs world missions. Paul mentioned this in 1 Thessalonians 2, he said “we wanted to come to you, I, Paul more than once, and yet Satan hindered us.” Listen Satan does anything he can, whether it's through corrupt politicians, evil governments, corrupt customs officials. Anything he can do, he will try to obstruct the spread of the gospel through world missions. This is his mission.

Number four, he produces false believers. This is a brilliant strategy. In Matthew 13, Jesus gives the parables of the tares, you remember? There's real wheat, and then there're tares that look like wheat, and somebody comes along, and here's this field of real wheat growing, and at night somebody comes along and sews tares in it. And the tares grow up and for a long time they look like the real thing, they look like wheat. This is Jesus' description of unbelievers who profess Christ growing up along side true believers in the context of the church and other environments.

Why does that happen? Listen to Jesus' explanation. In Matthew 13, He says the enemy, Satan has done this. This is Satan's strategy. If he can't keep a person entirely away from Christianity, he gives them a false dose so that they're inoculated against the truth. And they sit in churches like these, and they read their Bible, and they do things Christians do, and they've never bowed their knee to the lordship of Jesus Christ. That's his strategy. Those are the primary ways Satan keeps people spiritually blind.

But Ephesians 6 isn't really about his strategy with unbelievers, it's about his strategy with believers. What are Satan's strategies or tactics with believers? There are many different strategies and tactics Satan uses against us, and next week Lord willing we'll look at the primary ones. But in preparation for communion, I want you to just think about one strategy with me, that's only partially successful. One strategy of Satan is he accuses us to our own consciences and to God. He accuses us to our own consciences and to God.

Here is I think one of Satan's greatest devices, and it's hinted at, implied here in Ephesians 6:11. Notice the word devil, the Greek word is diabolos. It means slanderer. He is by nature a slanderer. He accuses, he slanders, he attacks, he accuses us to our own hearts doesn't he? If you're a Christian you've experienced this. You know what this looks like. He wants to discourage us. He wants us to stay away from God.

And so Satan has two different lies, one before we sin and one after we sin. Before we sin, he says, "Oh listen, it's not really that big a deal, it's okay. God won't mind too much, and you'll enjoy it. It's not a big deal." And then after you sin what does he say? "Oh, how could you profess Christ and do that? Listen God doesn't want to see you, don't even think about going to God and seeking His forgiveness." David felt that didn't he? In Psalm 32 he describes for those nine months he stayed distant from God after he committed that horrible sin, and he felt the heavy weight of that sin but still he wouldn't go.

It reminds me of the second verse of the song we sing often, *Before the Throne of God Above*. "When Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of the guilt within." If you're a Christian you know what that is, you've sensed that. You've experienced that. The song goes on. "Upward I look and see Him there who made an end to all my sin. Because the sinless Savior died, my sinful soul is counted free, for God the just is satisfied to look on Him and pardon me." So Satan accuses us to our own hearts, often with a great measure of success. But Satan even, are you ready for this, accuses us before God. You realize that? Satan accuses you and me before God. Look back, I won't have you turn there, Revelation 12:10, describes Satan as the "accuser of our brethren who accuses them before our God day and night." Did you hear that? He accuses them before God day and night. You say what does that look like? Turn back just for a moment to Job 1. Here's what it looks like. And I wish I had time, I had planned to go through this passage in a little more detail with you but my time is gone. Let me just point out a couple of verses. Job 1: 8, Satan shows up before the throne of God, apparently a very routine thing that he does, God allows him to come. The Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered Job? There's no one like him on the earth," Nobody else like him. And so how does Satan respond? Watch this.

Verse 9, Satan answered the Lord, "huh, well of course, look at what You've done for him? Does he fear You for nothing? He doesn't really love You and fear You. It's all about what he gets from You." This man was the most righteous man on the face of the earth. And Satan's accusing him before God. Do you think you escape that? Verse 5 of chapter 2, he comes back to the same thing, verse 4 you know at first he's able to attack him on a variety of fronts but not on his body, and he comes back in verse 4,

4 he says “skin for skin! Yes all that a man has he will give for his life.
5 Put forth Your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh and he will curse You to
Your face.”

He doesn't love You. He loves all the stuff You give him. Satan accuses us before God.

Second to the last book in the Old Testament, Zechariah, one more passage, actually two more, I lied. Zechariah 3, Zechariah has these series of visions. In the fourth one he sees Joshua verse 1 of chapter 3, the high priest. This is the high priest who came back under Zerubbabel, came back out of Babylonian captivity, and he sees him standing before the angel of the Lord, that's before Christ. So here's like a courtroom scene. Christ's on the throne, and this this man Joshua standing there and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

The Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you Satan! Indeed the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"
3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel.
4 He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, "Remove the filthy garments from him" ... "I have taken your iniquity away from you and I will clothe you with festal robes."

Here's a picture of a man in sin who deserves to be accused before God, and God clothes him in His own righteousness. But Satan was there to accuse. Here's the good news, here's one tactic of Satan that will never succeed. He will never be able to accuse you before God successfully.

One last passage, Romans 8, this is the point Paul makes here, Romans 8: 31.

“What shall we say to these things?” To God's great eternal plan of redemption in your life. “What shall we say if God is for us who is against us? He didn't spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” [Now watch verse 33,] “Who” [Can successfully is the idea] “will bring a charge against God's elect?” [God is the one who declares you righteous.] “who is the one who [can] condemn[s] you? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who ... intercedes for us.”

He is our heavenly advocate and whatever accusation Satan may bring, however true they may be, and they probably are. They will never succeed before God because our advocate stands on our behalf and pleads our case. That's what we celebrate in the Lord's Table.

Let's pray together.

Our Father we thank You for the powerful reminder that the Lord's Table is to us of both Him and His sacrifice. Lord seal these things to our hearts. Remind us of our enemy, and yet remind us that our enemy has already been defeated at the cross and will someday be utterly routed and condemned to eternity in the lake of fire.

But Father until that day help us to stand firm. We thank You that his accusations against us in Your presence is a tactic that will never work. You will never listen because Your Son stands in Your presence interceding on our behalf pleading the very wounds which He received on Calvary for us. We thank You, O God, in Jesus' name, Amen.