

The Book of Ephesians
Learning to Use God's Armor, Part 4
Ephesians 6:10-17
August 22, 2010
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During the Second World War, C S Lewis wrote a series of letters that were published in a Christian magazine. He wrote the letters as if they were written by a demon named Screwtape. Screwtape writes this series of letters supposedly to his nephew a younger demon named Wormwood. And Wormwood was getting advice from Screwtape because he needed to know better how to accomplish his diabolical mission in the life of one particular young man, who was his assignment. The letters that Lewis wrote for this Christian publication were eventually combined into a book that we now know as *The Screwtape Letters*. Lewis' plan was to write these letters in sort of a back handed way to reveal to the Christians who read it the real activity of Satan and his demons in their lives.

And Lewis was very effective, in fact one of my favorite stories, sort of as a follow up to this is one of the people who received that Christian publication and read those letters sort of misunderstood the whole thing and wrote and asked the magazine to remove his subscription, to cancel his subscription. He said because much of the advice given in these letters is not only erroneous, but positively diabolical.

In the book the second letter to Wormwood, Screwtape writes to his nephew, in these words. "I note with grave displeasure that your patient has become a Christian. Do not indulge the hope that you will escape the usual penalties. Indeed in your better moments I trust you would hardly even wish to do so. In the meantime we must make the best of the situation. There is no need to despair. Hundreds of these adult converts have been reclaimed after a brief sojourn in the enemy's camp and are now with us."

Of course he's talking about those who profess some faith in Christ, but it's not genuine faith. As John says, "they were not of us so they went out from us." He's referring to them. In another letter though Screwtape gets to the heart of what his nephew Wormwood should be doing with this now Christian young man that is his assignment. Here's what Screwtape writes. "Do not

allow any temporary excitement to distract you from the real business of undermining faith and preventing the formation of virtues.”

It's really extremely insightful by C S Lewis, because that really is Satan's goal for every Christian sitting here this morning. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, there is a literal personal center of evil, his name is Satan, and he would like nothing better than for you individually to have your faith undermined and for there to be no formation of values, that is to prevent the formation of real likeness to Jesus Christ. That is his great desire for you and for me. And he will use whatever means necessary to accomplish that goal, and so if we're going to be successful in the spiritual war in which we're engaged literally a war for our souls. If we're going to spiritually survive then we're going to have to understand what Paul explains in Ephesians 6 about being prepared for the battle.

I invite you to turn with me again to Ephesians 6 and to this passage about the armor in which we are to be prepared for the battle. Ephesians 6 let me read it for you again 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 will 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 and 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.

As we've already discovered the theme of this paragraph is that in the war of the Christian life, we can only stand firm in the strength of Christ and in the armor of God. As Paul develops that theme, these eleven verses can be divided into three parts. In verses 10-13, I've entitled that section *Understand Our Orders, Understand Our Orders*. Verses 14-17, *Put on God's Armor*, and verses 18-20 *Think Like a Soldier*.

If we're going to stand firm in the war that is the Christian life, first of all, we must understand our orders. As soldiers in the Lord's army we've been given specific orders. In verses 10 and the first part of verse 11, our orders are explained with a sort of overarching command. We've already looked at this, We are to be strengthened in the Lord. Be strong with the strength of someone else, in the strength of His might. How do you do that? How do you put on Jesus' own strength? You do it by putting on the full armor of God. That is, God's own personal armor we have to put on. That's the overarching command.

Verse 11 goes on to give us the objective of our orders, verse 12 the enemy that we're fighting as we carry out these orders. and verse 13 sort of summarizes what our orders are, So we're looking at this section, this part: understand our orders. If we're going to be successful in the battle this has to happen.

Now we find ourselves considering the objective of our mission down in verse 11. "Put on the full armor of God, so that" here is what our orders really have as their intention, as their objective. "So that you will be able to stand firm." Here, as we learned last week, we're not told how to attack Satan, but how to withstand his attacks. We are to stand firm. We are to hold our ground. Our great General has defeated Satan at the cross, and we're to hold our ground until He returns and finishes the mopping up operations in the future. We're to stand firm, not in our own strength, but in the strength of Jesus. How can we put on Jesus strength? By putting on the armor that's outlined here that we'll look at in the weeks ahead.

Now what exactly is it we're to put up such a firm defense against? What are we to stand firm against? Verse 11 tells us. "Against the schemes of the devil." The Greek word for schemes is the word from which we get the English word "method." Stand firm against the methods of the devil. In light of the military image here it's probably best to translate this word as "strategies" or "tactics." And notice schemes is plural. That implies not only that they are continually coming at us, but there are a great variety of strategies that he has at his disposal. That's why in 2 Corinthians 2, Paul says don't be ignorant of Satan's schemes.

Now we've already considered Satan's strategies toward unbelievers. Ultimately he wants to keep them blinded, 2 Corinthians 4:4 to the truth of the gospel. He wants to keep them enslaved, and how does he do that? Well he promotes human philosophy and ideology. He promotes false religion. He prevents the spread of the true gospel. He produces false believers in the church and makes unbelievers think they're truly believers when they're not. Those are the primary ways that Satan keeps people spiritually blind, spiritually enslaved.

But what about believers? How exactly does Satan set about to undermine our spiritual life? Last week I mentioned just one strategy he has toward believers. Just in passing really, to prepare our hearts for communion, and that is he accuses us. He accuses us to our own consciences and to God. While that is a strategy of Satan, it's not one of his primary strategies, and it's not one of his most effective strategies as we ended last time Romans 8 says an accusation before God will never stand against us because Jesus is there to defend us.

What I want to do today and the next time we study together as well is begin to examine Satan's primary strategies or tactics against believers. What are his primary strategies, his primary battle plans against believers? It's absolutely crucial that we understand the tactics of our enemy. Now if I had to summarize it, I would say this – when you look at Satan's objective in reference to God, what is Satan trying to do in reference to God? He is trying to undermine God's eternal plan and destroy His works. God has this great eternal plan of redemption. Satan has tried at every point he can, and he's still tries to undermine that plan. And he tries to destroy everything God sets out to do.

In reference to unbelievers, Satan's objective is to keep them blinded as we've seen and enslaved to sin. But in regard to Christians, if I had to summarize his objective in regard to us, I would say that it is to undermine our faith, to sabotage our growth and to prevent our growing in likeness to Jesus Christ. He wants to undermine our faith and to sabotage any growth in holiness and likeness to Jesus Christ. He can't keep us from being ultimately rescued by God, but he can do everything in the meantime to destroy our progress and to mar the plan that God has laid out for us.

You see this in several passages. I want you to look at Matthew 24. Matthew 24 is part of the Olivet discourse. It's on Tuesday of the Passion Week. Jesus is teaching His followers what will come in the future. And in the context of this He gives us a little insight into Satan's plan and strategy. Verse 23, let's start in verse 22, speaking of the great tribulation that's coming,

“Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. 23 “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ (here’s the Messiah) or ‘There *He is,*’ do not believe him. 24 “For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders,”

Here at the very end during the great tribulation period there will be believers on earth, those saved during the great tribulation. We read about them this morning from Revelation 7. And during that time Satan will produce false Christs and false apostles and notice the end of verse 24, “so as to mislead, if (it were) possible, even the elect.”

Here you see just a glimpse. Satan not only wants to use these false Christs and these false apostles to undermine unbelievers to keep them locked in their spiritual blindness, but he also wants to use it if it were possible even to mislead the elect, to have them pursue another Christ and follow false apostles. Well that’s true on the large front, on the overarching front. But this is true even for individual believers. This is Satan’s strategy with every individual.

Turn over to Luke 22. In Luke 22 you see it up close and personal when it pertains to Peter. We’ve just fast forwarded two days. The passage we saw, the Olivet discourse was on Tuesday of the Passion Week. This one is on Thursday night of the Passion Week, just before our Lord’s death on Friday. And in the upper room, verse 31 of Luke 22, Jesus says to Peter, “Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.”

What does that tell us about Satan’s intentions toward Peter? What did he want to accomplish in Peter’s life? He wanted his faith to fail. He wanted to destroy his faith. And it was only by the intervention of Christ Himself, as He does for us, who will not allow it. He says no one will be snatched out of My hand or out of My Father’s hand. Because of His intervention it doesn’t happen, but that was Satan’s goal with Peter to cause his faith in Christ to utterly be destroyed, to fail.

It’s the same with you. Satan would like nothing better than to see your faith destroyed. You see it again in 1 Peter. Peter learned the lesson well when he writes his first letter, he reminds us that there was a time when he thought he could stand on his own strength. You remember what he said to Christ, when Jesus told him he would deny Him? Uh oh, you know all those other guys, they might, but not me. I will never deny you. I’m resolved. Peter learned his lesson.

Look at 1 Peter 5:8, “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

Now we’ll talk about what tactic he’s using here in a coming week. What I want you to notice right now is his end goal. What is he trying to do? He is seeking a Christian to devour. He wants to destroy. He wants to undermine the faith, to sabotage the growth. That’s his goal, that’s his objective.

So how exactly does Satan set out to accomplish this mission in our lives? We better know his tactics. If we’re going to be successful, we had better understand how it is this second most powerful being in the universe intends to destroy our faith, intends to undermine it and to create havoc in our spiritual lives. Clearly just like with unbelievers as we saw last week, back of all the numerous strategies he can have toward us as unbelievers, there is one unifying method – it is lying and deception. And so as we look and sort of unpack over the next couple of weeks the strategies and tactics of Satan, behind it all will be that one unifying element. They will all be about lying and deception. That method permeates all his tactics.

But what exactly are his primary strategies toward us, to undermine our faith and to sabotage our growth and likeness to Jesus Christ? The first and greatest strategy or tactic of Satan to sabotage the spiritual health of Christians is this – to attack the word of God, to attack the Word of God. And let me just warn you we’re not going to get any further than that this morning. This is the first strategy because it is unquestionably Satan’s chief strategy with Christians and with the church. And you would expect it to be wouldn’t you?

What is God’s primary tool to help you and me grow in spiritual likeness to Christ? What’s the primary tool? The Word of God. The Word of God. There is no growth without that. What did our Lord pray in His High Priestly prayer in John 17? ‘Sanctify them through the truth, Your Word is truth.’ It’s the only way, and so if Satan can attack the Word of God successfully in our minds, then he can do the very thing he’s trying to do which is undermine our faith and sabotage our spiritual growth. And so this is where he comes, he attacks the Word of God.

It makes sense doesn’t it? In every human war the tactics always include some measure of deception about the truth. Several years ago now I read Stephen Ambrose’s book on D-Day, and Ambrose tells the story that in the months leading up to D-Day, Churchill and Eisenhower both worked very hard to get Hitler to believe that the invasion of Europe was coming from somewhere other than the beaches of Normandy.

So in the north toward Norway and in the south they set up these massive campaigns of deception. They literally had fields that were filled with paper mache and rubber tanks. To all the air fields in those areas north and south they added dozens of twin engines bombers that were all made out of wood by the American and British movie industry. They sent communications officers to Scotland, and these communication officers filled the air waves with the kind of radio chatter that would come from a huge force of men who would assemble there, when in reality there were only two dozen of them.

This same kind of distortion of the truth occurs in every human war. There's propaganda, there're double agents, there's the feinting of troop movements, there's deception about the number of troops. This is what happens in war. And the spiritual war in which we are engaged is no exception. In order to try to win this war, the devil routinely attacks the truth, and the truth in this case is the Word of God. This is his strategy, this is his master strategy.

Now there are a variety of ways that he carries out this attack on the Word of God. Let me just identify a couple of them for you. One way he attacks the Word of God is by denying or questioning the truthfulness of Scripture, by denying or questioning the truthfulness of Scripture. This was the approach Satan took the very first time he tempted a human being. Turn back to Genesis 3. You remember the story, the story of the fall that Moses describes for us here in Genesis. Verse 1 of chapter 3, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman.

Now watch how he begins to question, 'Indeed, has God said,' Did you really understand it right? Maybe you're not understanding God properly.

And then he magnifies what they're not allowed to do. Is it true that "You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?" God's really keeping all of this from you? This is a master, subtle, crafty way to magnify the prohibition. God's keeping something from you.

"The woman said to the serpent, 'From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'"

Now she adds "you will touch it" probably it's possible God said that, and it's not recorded for us in the previous text. It's also possible that Adam told her that as an added prohibition to

protect her from sinning in that way. It doesn't appear that she's sinning yet, she's not beginning to doubt God herself here it doesn't appear yet.

But in response to that the serpent becomes bold; the devil becomes very bold, he says to the woman, "You surely will not die!" He began by questioning the word of God, and then he denies it outright.

Satan used this tactic in his very first encounter with humanity, and it worked beautifully. And so it is still one of his most successful tools today. He still attacks God's Word by either denying or questioning its truthfulness. Listen, today there are scores of Christian colleges, scores of seminaries, churches, and denominations who either deny or question the truthfulness of Scripture in a variety of ways. The big name that we put on this idea is liberalism. Let me just give you a thumbnail history of where this came from.

Liberalism grew out of a pre-conceived anti-supernatural bias from a group of German theologians in the early 1800's and early 1900's. They said we don't believe God ever intervenes in the world. We don't believe He ever comes and personally interacts, and so whatever's in the Bible that seems super-natural, it's got to be excised. It's got to be cut out or in some way denied. And so they taught that the Bible was kind of like a patchwork quilt, assembled by editors who lived a long time after the events, and they identified these editors by J, E, D, and P speaking of how they used different names of God.

A man named Julius Wellhausen popularized these views. In fact, if you've read much at all, you've come across the Graf-Wellhausen theory of higher criticism. The theory got a lot of press from the editor at that time from the Encyclopedia Britannica. He bought it hook, line, and sinker and began to spread it through that encyclopedia.

They started by attacking the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament. Listen to how one of their own, Otto Kaiser, explains their view. "The picture familiar to everyone from the Biblical narrative of Israel which started from the twelve sons of Jacob miraculously became a numerous nation in Egypt, escaped from servitude under the leadership of Moses, was delivered at the Red Sea, taken into covenant with God at Sinai, and finally after forty years wandering was led by Joshua into the Promised Land," here's the key "is for us no longer part of history." They just removed it from history. It's not history. They said no it was written by these editors who lived a long time afterwards, and they embellished the stories, and they added all these supernatural things just to make us feel better about how God intersects with history.

That view represents what all liberals have believed since the early 1900's. Oh, there have been modifications, and there've been changes of various kinds, but that's the basic idea. They deny the first five books were written by Moses. They deny that the contents were truly factual. They deny that they were written when they claimed to be written. In fact in the case of the Pentateuch, some argue that it was written as much as a thousand years after Moses. And what they did to the Pentateuch, they eventually ended up doing to the rest of the Scripture. They denied or questioned every supernatural element. And listen, this was very effective.

In the 1920's, okay in the 1920's almost a hundred years ago, George Betts completed a survey of 1500 pastors and 200 seminary students. So it was a wide sampling. The fifteenth question on his survey was this. "Do you believe that the Bible was written by men chosen and supernaturally endowed by God for that purpose and by Him given the exact message they were to write?"

It's pretty straight forward question, and I think most of us here today would affirm that. But in the 1920's 43% of the pastors surveyed said no, 91% of the seminary students said no. That is what we call the main lined protestant denominations. You open up your phone book and you look for all of those large old denominations that have been around for several hundred years, and if you go to one of those churches, you will find men standing in the pulpits, or women, who believe exactly what I've just explained to you. This is what they embrace.

That same trend continues to this day. Luther was right when he said when you look for the devil; don't forget to look in the pulpit. And if you think this is a long way away, visit any one of those churches in our area who are part of the main line protestant denominations, and you will find a man or woman who believes exactly what I just explained to you.

And it begins to affect our own congregation. There's a family in our church that sent their daughter off to a college that had something Christian in its name, certainly in its heritage, thinking that their daughter would be safe there, and on the first day of Bible class the professor stood up and said to his entire student population sitting out there in front of him, when you leave for Christmas break you will question every thing you were taught in your churches.

There are thousands of men and women like that in churches and seminaries and colleges disguising themselves as Christians, Christ said they are wolves in sheep's clothing. They deny the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. They deny an exclusive gospel that there's only one way to be saved and that is through believing through Jesus Christ. They deny a literal six-day

creation. They deny that homosexuality is a sin. They deny that the Scripture teaches male leadership in the home and in the church. Listen if you want to see Satan today, don't look at the drug houses and the prostitution rings. Look in the Bible departments of many Christian schools. Look in the old main line seminaries, and look in their pulpits. This is a brilliant strategy on Satan's part. He denies, and he questions the Scripture. And well meaning people attend those churches, attend those seminaries, attend those colleges, and they hear their faith being constantly undermined - sucked out all the life. Satan attacks the Bible by denying or questioning its truthfulness.

He also attacks the Bible secondly by questioning the sufficiency of the Bible, questioning its sufficiency. This was exactly what was going on at the church in Colossi. Turn back to Colossians, and I don't have the time to take you all the way through chapter 2, but let me just sort of point out some things.

What's going on in Colossi is an early form of gnosticism, a false teaching. The false teachers there apparently taught that you needed to believe in Christ and the Scripture, but they weren't enough. Instead you needed to add some things. For example in verses, in chapter 2 verses 8 through 10 you need to add philosophy, so Paul says, "See to it that no one takes captive through this philosophy and empty deception; according to the tradition of men, according to these elementary principles of the world," They're misleading you. You don't need to add that Paul says.

A second thing they thought they needed to add was legalism. In verses 11 through 17 they wanted to bring back in the keeping of the Mosaic Law. You still need to do those things they said. You need to add some mysticism, verses 18 and 19. So you need visions and see angels. You need to add in asceticism verses 20 to 23, that is the torturing of the body, the punishment of the body to achieve some spiritual value. And so Paul says in verse 20,

"why do you submit yourself to these earthly elementary decrees, 21 Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" [When in reality, verse 23], they look good, they have the appearance of wisdom but you're talking about self made religion, and it's of no true value against fleshly indulgence.

The bottom line though is, these false teachers were saying to the believers in Colossi, oh have Christ, have the Bible yes they're important. But that's not enough.

Sometimes Satan's attack on the Bible is not a clear frontal attack. He doesn't deny its truthfulness; instead, he takes the subtle approach of saying that we should use the Bible. It's a wonderful book, many helpful things there. But he finds ways to convince Christians that it's not enough. That it's not sufficient.

There are so many examples of this in today's Christianity. A couple that jump immediately to my mind, one is what is called integrationism, and that is when there's the teaching that we ought to integrate secular psychology into the teaching of the Bible in order to truly help Christians. The Bible's good, it's helpful, has some good ideas, but does it really give us the full understanding of humanity that secular psychology has given us? And there're just so many things there that can be helpful. You're not going to be so simple as to just help somebody from the Bible are you? No, we need to include these other ideas.

Or the charismatic doctrine which teaches there's ongoing revelation from God and thereby unintentionally undermining the sufficiency of Scripture. Oh, listen the Bible's great, we need the Bible, but did you know God will actually speak to you? God will reveal truth directly to you. That undermines the sufficiency of Scripture. It causes believers to look elsewhere and ultimately that is a tactic of Satan.

Or there's the issue of creation and evolution. Oh the Bible's got some good things in it, great theology, but the Bible's not a book of science. We really need to overlay what we have learned to be true from science, trying to integrate the conflicting explanations of the universe's origins with what the Bible clearly teaches.

Listen, Satan often attacks the Bible by questioning its sufficiency. Listen, the Bible's helpful he says, so far as it goes, but it's not enough. You need to add psychology, or ongoing revelation, or science or something else – you fill in the blank. This is a tactic of Satan. The Bible is enough. You have been given, according to Peter, you've been given all things according to life and godliness. How? Through the Scripture and through the Spirit. You don't need anything else.

There's a third way Satan attacks the Bible, and that's by perverting the meaning of Scripture. He not only attacks the truthfulness of Scripture and the sufficiency of Scripture, but he attacks the meaning of Scripture as well. He perverts it. You know what's amazing? Satan had the hubris, the unbridled arrogance to try this approach on none other than our Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at Matthew 4. Matthew 4 in the second temptation that's recorded of the three representative temptations during that forty days, in the second one, verse 5.

“The devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,” [The highest point overlooking the Kidron Valley] “and he said to Him, “if You are the Son of God” [Or perhaps more literally translated], “since You are the Son of the God,” [we'll assume that's true], “throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning You; on their hands they will bear You up, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.’”

Now do you notice in the New American Standard that all of verse 6 the largest portion of it is in caps? That's because it's a quotation from the Old Testament. The devil is quoting a couple of verses from Psalm 91 to Jesus. Now this shows just how crafty Satan is because when Jesus responded to the first temptation in verse's 3 and 4, He quoted Scripture, and He sighted His trust in God for God to care for Him. Satan turns right around in the second temptation and uses both of those against Jesus. He says okay, You want to use Scripture? Okay, You trust God to care for You? Then let me tell You the Scripture says go ahead and jump. Satan's trying to say, listen if You're the real Messiah, then the smallest injury is impossible for You. The angels will not allow You to even stub one of Your exposed toes in Your sandal.

But what I want you to see here is the devil used Scripture as the source of temptation, only he misinterpreted it. He misapplied it. Satan not only does this directly and personally with Jesus Christ, but this continues to be his approach through his demons and through the human pawns they use. Look at 2 Peter, 2 Peter 3. Peter talks about Paul's letters in verse 15, 2 Peter 3. He says

“... our beloved brother Paul according to the wisdom given him wrote to you, as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things,” [I've just been describing,] in which are some things” [In Paul's letters] “are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures to their own destruction.”

[And not just to their destruction but notice verse 17,] “You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of [undisciplined men or] unprincipled men [rather,] and fall from your own steadfastness.”

Peter's saying, listen, there is a real danger. Satan is using as he did with Jesus, the Scripture through unprincipled men to deceive you. Satan took this approach with Christ, and he'll do the same with us. He quotes the Scripture.

Listen if you doubt this turn on any religious television program that you get on your television. While there might be a couple here and there that are speaking the truth, there'll be like, as one old preacher said, like fragrant gardenias in a trash heap. Most of them that you will find will be taking some Scripture, quoting it, pulling it out of its context, even as Satan did to Christ, and making it say what they want it to say. Listen, that is the devil. Just because somebody is standing there quoting Scripture, don't you for a moment imagine they have a right relationship to God. The devil quotes Scripture.

I don't know if it's happened to you. It's happened to me. He's encouraged me to twist Scripture to do what I want to do. It's what he did with Christ. He does it to all of us. He twists it, he distorts it, he misquotes it, he misapplies it, he takes it out of its context, he mixes just enough truth with error to make it appear plausible. So, fifty thousand people sit in some great arena and hear somebody talk about their best life now.

He convinces people to use the Scripture to their own advantage. On many occasions I have heard hurting spouses twist and distort passages that provide legitimate Biblical grounds for divorce in an effort to justify their own unbiblical decision to divorce. Or, I've heard people use the Scripture to point out the sin in other people's lives as they ignore the great sin in their own life. Satan loves to use the Scripture, and he does it all the time. Satan attacks the Word of God by perverting the meaning of Scripture.

Another way that Satan attacks the word of God, a fourth way is by promoting our disobedience to the Scripture, by promoting our disobedience. Look back in Revelation 2 as the Apostle John writes to one of the seven churches there in Asia Minor, this would have been a church very close to Ephesus, in Thyatira. Notice what he writes down in verse 18, Revelation 2.

“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire,” [In other words, Jesus has eyes like a laser that penetrate and see into the hearts,] ... “His feet are like burnished bronze,” [This is what He says]

‘I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. ‘But I have *this* against you, that

you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess,” [Here was a woman in the church who called herself a prophet, prophetess] ‘and she teaches and leads my bondservants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.’ [Here is a woman in the church who is somehow using Scripture to lead people to disobey the Scripture. And where did this come from?]

Verse 24, ‘ ... I say to you, the rest of you who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them - I place no other burden on you. ‘Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.’”

In other words there was a relationship between what this woman taught and Satan. Because Satan uses people, evil people like this woman in the church in Thyatira, to cause people to disobey the Scripture. As one writer said, what you have in this passage is demons trying to convince professing Christians that what the Bible forbids is in fact acceptable. It’s okay, you can do it. It’s a form of antinomianism.

Satan would like nothing better than for Christians to embrace antinomianism. You say, what is that? Anti means against, nomos is the word for law. Against the law. Antinomianism describes the teaching that because believers are under grace, because they’ve been forgiven, they can sin all they want with impunity. It’s okay, ultimately grace will cover it all. It’s the theological position that Paul attacks in Romans 6 when he says, "shall we sin because we’re not under law, but under grace? God forbid, may it never be.”

A person who embraces this perspective could enjoy the twisted version of the Old hymn, "saved from the law, O happy condition, sin all I want, with easy remission.” Satan is behind, encouraging disobedience to the Scripture. We excuse our sin, and he helps us do it. We find a way to pervert and twist the Scripture so that we can somehow justify our sinful choices.

Puritan Thomas Taylor defined what our attitude should be. He said, “The liberty of a Christian man is not liberty from obedience to the law, but liberty from disobedience to it.” We’ve been set free from disobedience not from obedience. These are Satan’s master strategies as he attacks the Word of God.

Let me ask you, have you allowed Satan to successfully attack the Word of God in your mind? Remember where's the battle between God and man, or between God and Satan rather in the mind of man. It's right there between your ears. Have you allowed Satan to successfully attack the Word of God in your mind?

Have you allowed him to cause you to deny or question the truthfulness of Scripture? Have you listened to some author, read some book, heard some television preacher, gone to some seminary or Christian college where the truthfulness of Scripture has been questioned or denied and have you bought into it?

Are you allowing him to lead you to question the sufficiency of Scripture? Do you think something else needs to be brought along side; something else needs to be added. Scripture's great, but you know it's just not quite enough. We need to add psychology, we need to add science, we need to add whatever.

Have you allowed Satan to get you to listen to his perversion and misquotation of the meaning of Scripture, taking it out of its context and wrenching it to say whatever it is you want it to say? Have you allowed him to encourage your disobedience to the Scripture? You've somehow justified your disobedience, maybe even using the Scripture as was going on in Thyatira to do what you want to do? Listen that is Satan himself. Be warned. He is trying to destroy your soul. He wants to undermine your faith and sabotage your spiritual life.

You and I can't stand alone against the attacks Satan brings against the Word of God. We can only stand by being strong with the strength of someone else, with the strength of Jesus Christ. How do we get His strength? We put on the armor that's described in this passage. As we work our way through it we'll learn how to stand in His strength. But understand the tactics, understand the strategies. Satan's master strategy is to attack the Word of God, and he'll do it in any way he can. Don't believe it.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we are so prone to listen to the lies of Satan, to allow our minds to embrace what the culture around us says which is nothing but the offspring of the poisonous thinking of Your great enemy, Satan himself. Father protect us from the devil's lies. Keep us rooted and grounded in the truthfulness of Scripture, in the sufficiency of Scripture, in an effort to determine the true meaning of Scripture, taking Scripture in its context to understand it.

And Father may we have hearts that long to obey it and to do what it teaches. Lord guard and protect us, help us to stand in the strength of Christ against these attacks, and Father help us to remember that we are in a war and that all around us Satan is using this strategy to destroy the faith of Christians. Father may we always be on our guard in the strength that You supply.

Father, I pray for the person here this morning who is still enslaved and entrapped by the devil's lies. Mmay this be the day when You remove the blinders, when You say "let there be light" in their hearts. May they see the glory of Christ, the beauty of His gospel and may they want nothing more than to follow Him and to serve Him with their life. May You do this, O God, for Your glory and the glory of Your Son so that the Lamb who was slain may receive the reward of His suffering. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.