

Christians in Spiritual Warfare

Course: The Armour of God

Lesson 3

Lesson Title: Beware the wiles of the devil

Text: 'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil' (Ephesians 6:10-11).

Theme: We must be aware that the devil seeks opportunities to defeat those who belong to Christ and we must be ready at all times to stand against him.

Introduction: Satan uses bait to trap people.

1 Corinthians 11:3 'But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.'

The word 'beguile' means 'to catch with bait'.

Eve was beguiled by the clever words of the devil. She was deceived by the words 'you shall be like God'.

The bait Satan uses is the 'exaltation of self' and he does this through the influence of friends, close personal relationships or through false teaching.

- Friendship with people who lead us away from Christ.
- Relationships that prevent us from living fully for Christ.
- Teachers who lead people away from the truth of the scriptures into error.

We are most gullible when we are young, full of energy, and inexperienced.

Satan seeks to lead young people away from Christ through the attractions and excitement of the world. We must be able to stand against it.

Introductory illustration: Setting a trap

A hunter will set a trap in such a way that the animal is unaware that there is any danger. Everything needs to look as normal as possible and the trap must be well hidden. The animal will then not be ready for the danger and will have no opportunity of preventing itself from being caught. The animal can be led into the trap by the smell of food but this is not always necessary as an animal that is unaware of danger can easily walk into the trap. Camouflage is also essential so that the trap appears to be part of the normal environment. This will prevent the animal from having any warning that it is in danger.

Satan traps people in the same way. He works in the dark so that his traps are well hidden and then he seeks to kill, steal and destroy. He uses camouflage to disguise himself and through deception he seeks to entrap people. Satan traps people by anaesthetising the mind. He can trap people who do not think. Many Christians have been deceived by the clever wiles (schemes) of the devil because they were unaware of the danger.

The word 'wiles' is the Greek word 'methodeia' (Ephesians 6:11). It refers to the devil's clever methods in the art of cunning, deceitfulness, craftiness, and trickery, and we must be aware of his schemes. The way to overcome Satan's schemes is by knowing his methods and being 'strong in the Lord and in the power of His might' by putting on the whole armour of God.

Main Points:

We must be able to discern Satan's methods of deception.

1. He disguises himself to deceive the church.

Illustration: Fifth columnists - the enemy within. Those who claim to be leaders of the church but are working for the enemy.

- He masquerades as an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:13-14) 'For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.' Spiritual warfare concerns the building up of the Church. When the Church is being built up, spiritual warfare will take place, but the gates of hell will not prevail against the *ekklesia*, Matthew 16:18.
- The devil's ministers come to deceive the body of Christ as the ministers of righteousness, (2 Corinthians 11:15) 'Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works'. Those who follow the ministers of Satan will be led astray. We must not accept everything that is said in the name of Christ, but we must discern truth from error. (Ephesians 4:14) 'That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive'.

True ministry will bring freedom. The ministries in the body of Christ are for building up the body of Christ in the truth of the scriptures. (Ephesians 4:11-12) '...for the edifying of the body of Christ'.

False teachers and leaders seek to bring the people into bondage to themselves.

2. He roars to produce fear

- Satan seeks to silence the Church through fear. The body of Christ must be careful and watching because the devil comes as a roaring Lion to produce fear, despair and discouragement. (1 Peter 5:8-9) 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour'. We are in a spiritual warfare, the devil roars to make us afraid of the fight. He wants to make us afraid of living for God in holiness then we will become an easy prey for the enemy.
- He seeks to make the church afraid to preach the gospel. Fear will stop us from being witnesses to Christ. Afraid because the message of the cross is foolishness to the world. If we are ashamed

of the gospel then we will replace it with a more acceptable message - modernism and liberalism. Afraid because of the reaction of the people. Fear of ridicule and being regarded as strange.

- He seeks to make the Christian afraid of serving Christ. He aims to produce fear, despair, and the feeling of utter hopelessness in the child of God. This can come in the form of thoughts in the mind, or through circumstances. He roars ‘who do you think you are?’ He attacks the child of God by making them look at themselves. ‘You call yourself a child of God – if people only knew what you are really like’.
- We can only overcome by our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. ‘Resist, steadfast in the faith’, 1 Peter 5:9. We need to stand firm upon God’s Word in the power of the Holy Spirit, ‘This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith’, (1John 5:4).

3. He lies to bring bondage.

- He lies to bring the body of Christ into bondage. The body of Christ must know the word of God because the devil is a Liar perverting the truth. We must learn to be able to discern truth from error. At times the devil appears to be a friend, but he is always a liar because this is his nature. If he tells the truth it is for the purpose of deceiving. He wears different masks, but his aim is the same: to steal, to kill, and to destroy (John 10:10).
- He lies to enslave people. He lied to Eve in the garden ‘you shall not die’, Genesis 3:4. Jesus said the devil was by nature a liar and the father of liars, John 8:44. Lying is the devil’s nature. Jesus recognised that the religious leaders were followers of the devil because they followed his lies, John 8:44. In contrast to the nature of the devil, Jesus said ‘I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father but by Me’ John 14:6.
- ‘The lie’ stands in opposition to the truth. (2 Thessalonians 2:11) ‘And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie’. The lie enslaves; the gospel sets people free.

4. He comes as a friend to lead us astray. The devil tries to cast doubt on God’s word by approaching us in a friendly manner and offering an easier path.

- The devil comes as a friend to make us avoid the cross. Jesus discerned the devil was speaking through Peter when he was trying to be nice to Him. (Matthew 16:22-23) ‘Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from you, Lord: this shall not be unto you. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get behind me, Satan: you are an offence unto me: for your mind is not on the things that be of God, but those that be of men.’ Behind the friendly words that Peter spoke was the temptation to go against the Father’s will and take an easier route. Note: God did not spare His own Son from going the way of the cross because there was no other way that we could be saved. Isaiah 53:10, ‘Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he has put him to grief: when You shall make his soul an offering for sin.’
- He comes as a friend to rob us of the friendship of the Holy Spirit. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; (John 14:16). The body of Christ must know the friendship of the Holy Spirit to keep from being deceived by the friendship of the enemy. The Comforter, the Holy Spirit is the True Friend who will guide us in Truth. (John 16:13) ‘Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.’

- The Holy Spirit has been given to us as our inheritance in Christ. Ephesians 1:13-14 'In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.' The devil seeks to rob us of our eternal inheritance. In this respect the devil is also working with eternity in mind. The devil is not only working to stop people getting saved, he is seeking to stop Christians from receiving an eternal reward that will glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. 'Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' (2 Peter 1:10-11)

The devil comes to steal, to kill, and to destroy but all the might of hell cannot stop the *ekklesia* (the body of Christ) when she has put on the whole armour of God and is strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

We must be wise by knowing the scriptures; we must be watching at all times for ourselves and one another by being prayerful; and we must be ready by applying the armour of God in our daily lives.

Summary:

Beware the devil's methods:

1. The devil comes to deceive as an angel of light. The armour of the belt of truth will protect us.
2. The devil comes as a roaring lion to silence the body of Christ through fear. The armour of the shield of faith will keep us from fear.
3. The devil lies to bring us into bondage. The sword of the Spirit is our means of defence.
4. The devil comes as a friend to steal our inheritance in Christ. The whole armour of God enables us to stand against him.