

INSIGHT

Think of the most powerful enemy anyone could have: invisible, deceitful, unexpected, and capable of making you believe he's on your side. You would need some major weapons to fight this kind of enemy! Who is your enemy? Who wants to prevent you from building relationships that will edify, encourage, strengthen, spur you on, and build up your faith in Jesus? There are many people in the world that have given themselves already to this common enemy, that is, Satan, because they simply refuse to believe he exists. He already has them in his hand at this point! Even those of us who believe in the devil, who know he exists, can easily be deceived by his powerful temptations and unexpected assaults. The encouragement we receive from the Scriptures, however, holds us accountable to be aware of Satan's schemes:

If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven--if there was anything to forgive--I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. 2 Cor 2:10-11

From what we are learning in the Scriptures, we know that sincere love has to be at the center of our relationships, especially between us and the Lord. Any attempt by you to undermine or threaten these relationships is a victory for the devil (**James 4:1-4**). He is a destroyer of relationships and represents the exact opposite of everything God teaches in the Bible.

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Eph 6:11-12

We just need to keep in mind that whatever struggle we have in this world is a struggle against the devil's schemes, not a struggle against your boss, your co-workers, your spouse, or even your brothers and sisters. Recognize who is in the midst of breaking relationships and who gives us the victory over any of Satan's schemes. It is also important to recognize that we cannot blame the devil for everything that goes wrong. The devil tempts us and entices us through our own evil desires:

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. James 1:13-14

Therefore, you need to put your mind on heavenly things (**Heb. 3:1; Col 3:1-3**) and allow the Holy Spirit to *renew* your mind (**Rom. 12:1-3**).

Spiritual Warfare

Satan's Master Strategy for Destruction

Key Text: **Ephesians 4:17-19**

"So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more."

Theme:

Spiritual warfare is a battle of the mind and of the heart. This is Satan's master plan of deception. This is the cycle he's going to try to catch you in. The results of it in this life are a mind filled with shame and guilt. If something is not done about the shame and guilt the conscience becomes seared as with a hot iron. (**1 Tim 4:1,2**)

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Don't harden your heart:** (**Prov 28:14**) Blessed is the man who always fears the LORD, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble.
2. **Don't be ignorant!** Don't think that because you know the Scriptures you are immune to Satan's schemes. Don't be futile in your thinking (thinking about vain things—unproductive). Be sure you are not lacking in God's Wisdom, which is pure and comes from the Scriptures. (**James 3:17**)
3. **Seek the fellowship!** Don't avoid your brothers and sisters! Seek their encouragement and their spurring on! Separation from fellowship is the first sign of being trapped by the Devil's scheme. (**Heb 10:23-27**)

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Spiritual Warfare

I. Last Week: Appreciating Differences

Romans 12:3-10

1. Each member has his/her function
2. Value the differences
 - a. Appreciate the good qualities
 - b. Strengthen whatever is lacking in our personality
3. Maturity comes when each others' good qualities are balanced in our lives

II. Satan's Master Plan of Destruction

A. The essence of Spiritual Warfare

1. *Ephesians 6:11-12*

- a. It is a battle of the heart and mind.
- b. It is falsehood vs. Truth.

B. The Artist of Deception

1. Satan is good at deception. He tries to catch you in his cycle of deception. (*Ephesians 4:17-19*):
 - a. Hardening of the heart
 - b. Ignorance
 - c. Darkening of understanding
 - d. Loss of sensitivity
 - e. Indulging in sensuality
2. The Devil cannot force you to fall into his trap. He tries to convince you. *2 Thess 2:10-12*
 - a. Don't buy his lies!
 - b. If you delight in his lies God will give them to you!
3. He appeals to your weakness. *James 1:13-15*
 - a. You are not immune
 - b. Don't give him a foothold!
 - c. Renew your mind (*Rom 12:1-3*)

III. Conclusion:

1. Don't be unaware of his schemes! Equip yourself with God's Word.
2. Seek out fellowship and encouragement from the brothers and sisters during troublesome times.
3. Pray fervently to persevere in the knowledge and wisdom of our Lord Jesus.

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Mention an area of weakness in your life. Share how you struggle to be accountable to God in that area.

See To It

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

- 1- How will Satan try to influence people? Is it going to be by presenting himself as a mean, ugly, red devil?
- 2- What kind of people are deceived by Satan's schemes? Why are these people in the condition they're in? (Look specifically at verse 10)
- 3- Does God give these people what they want? Explain.
- 4- What do you think got these people caught up in their delusion in the first place? Who were they really seeking?

Seeing It Closer

- 1- How has Satan tried to deceive you? Be specific.
- 2- What kind of sign, or wonder, or counterfeit miracle has he tried to pull on you?
- 3- How can you prevent from being caught up in a delusion that exists only in your mind?
- 4- What does this passage teach us about trusting in physical things as opposed to spiritual things?

Getting To It:

Satan knows that he will only be able to get us if he appeals to our senses. Jesus guards our hearts and minds (*Phil 4:7*) in His peace. Therefore if you persevere in filling yourself up with the spiritual, with the things that come from above, from God; then you will be promoting maturity in the Spirit as opposed to fulfillment of the flesh. The thing that gets us is the reality of the desires of the flesh. They are real and they cry out! However, we must remember that discipleship involves crucifying these passions and desires (*Gal 5:24*) so that we let the Spirit cleanse us and renew our hearts and minds. Put on the armor of God! (*Eph 6:11-20*)