

## Ephesians 6:10–20 and Resisting the Devil

### Prayer

### Introductory Questions

- Why do so many people deny or underemphasize the reality of the devil? Why do others become preoccupied with him?
- What strategies does the devil use against non-Christians? Against Christians?

### Introduction

Ephesians 6:10–20 explains how Christians can stand strong against the devil (a word that means “slanderer”; Eph. 6:11). The Bible also refers to him as Satan (a word that means “adversary”; Zech. 3:1–2), the tempter (Matt. 4:3), the evil one (Matt. 6:13), the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4), and the ruler of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2) (Storms, *Understanding Spiritual Warfare*, 31–35). He is a fallen angel, who opposes God and seeks to harm people—by leading them *away from God* and, if possible, *to an eternity in hell*. What else do we know about him?

1. **He tempts people to doubt God and disobey his Word:** “1...[The serpent] said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any tree in the garden?’”” (Gen. 3:1).
2. **His deception of Eve led to humans’ death in this life (for all who sin) and in the life to come (for all who finally reject God):** “4 “No! You will certainly not die,” the serpent said to the woman” (Gen. 3:4; cf. Rom. 5:12; Heb. 2:14; Rev. 21:8) (*ibid.*, 35–42).
3. **He is the source of some, but not all, evil, destruction, and illnesses:** “38 God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he went about doing good and healing all who were under the tyranny of the devil...” (Acts 10:38).
4. **He blinds people to the gospel, which contains and displays the glory of Christ:** “4...the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:4).
5. **He can possess non-Christians, which does not remove their responsibility:** “27 After Judas ate the piece of bread, Satan entered him...” (John 13:27). Judas’s greed + demonic possession led him to betray Christ, which ended in Judas’s suicide (Matt. 27:5).
6. **He plants and intensifies sinful thoughts and desires within people:** “3 “Ananias,” Peter asked, “why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the proceeds of the land?”” (Acts 5:3; cf. Matt. 16:21–23).

Ephesians 6:10–20 teaches us how to resist the devil, a passage we organize into three sections: (1) Strength in the Lord (vv. 10–13), (2) Armor from God (vv. 14–17), and (3) Prayer in the Spirit (vv. 18–20). We conclude this lesson by summarizing how to resist the devil and his schemes.

## 1. Strength in the Lord

**10 Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by his vast strength. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. 12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens. **13** For this reason take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand. (Eph. 6:10–13)

In verses 10–13, Paul directed his readers to the Lord as the source of their strength and the armor of God as the means of utilizing his strength. Christians must rely on the Lord's vast strength, not their own (v. 10). The LORD wears armor as the divine warrior: "17 He put on righteousness as body armor, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and he wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak" (Isa. 59:17). And he commands us to put on *his armor* in order to stand against the schemes of the devil (v. 11).

### What are the goals and "schemes of the devil" (v. 11)?

The devil has two main goals: (1) he *does not* want us to center our lives on God and align ourselves to his Word, and (2) he *does* want us to center our lives on other so-called "gods" and to disobey God's Word. The devil will use any strategy to accomplish those goals. He tempts people:

1. to believe that God has not revealed himself in creation, in the Bible, or in Jesus.
2. to believe that God does not exist or he is not who he says he is (Creator, Lord, etc.).
3. to deny or distort what the Bible teaches about the nature of sin and its consequences.
4. to try to earn their salvation and deny the necessity of the gospel for salvation.
5. to deny or distort the importance of both repentance and saving faith in Jesus.
6. to pursue self-centered goals for their lives, not "make disciples of all nations."
7. to not gather and participate within Christian community.
8. to not study the Bible and pray, whether privately and publicly.
9. to undermine God's design for leadership within the home, church, and society.
10. to believe that sinning is ultimately more pleasurable than God.

Additionally, the devil slanders, accuses, humiliates, discourages, oppresses, terrifies, and sows discord among people. His hatred of Christians is particularly intense (Rev. 12:17).

While our struggles in life often involve other human beings, our ultimate struggle in life comes from demonic forces (v. 12). Therefore, we must put on the full armor of God to resist the devil in "the evil day" (*the days when we are attacked* by the devil, or *all the days* between Christ's first and second coming; cf. 5:16)—to stand *against* the devil and *for* God (v. 13).

- How do you believe the devil has attacked you, your family, or your neighbors?
- How can you respond to those attacks?

## 2. Armor from God

14 Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest, 15 and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace. 16 In every situation take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit—which is the word of God. (Eph. 6:14–17)

In verses 14–17, Paul outlines the armor of God, which we must wear to stand firm against the devil's attacks. What is this equipment we need? **(1) Truth**, which is any belief or statement that corresponds to God's reality, particularly as revealed in his Word and focused on Christ (Eph. 4:21), **(2) righteousness**, perhaps referring both to God's gift of righteousness (justification) (Rom 3:21–22) and to our growth in righteousness (Eph. 4:24), **(3) the gospel**, which is the good news of Jesus's death and resurrection to save sinners (Eph. 1:13), **(4) faith**, which is trusting God and clinging to his promises (Eph. 2:8), **(5) salvation**, which is deliverance *from* God's judgment and *to* a relationship with God (Eph. 1:13; Rom. 5:9–11), and **(6) the Word of God**, which is God's revelation of himself and his will in the Bible (Eph. 5:26). This armor protects us individually and collectively.

- How does each of these pieces of equipment protect us against the devil's attacks?
- How can we utilize this equipment collectively (not simply individually)?

## 3. Prayer in the Spirit

18 Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints. 19 Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. 20 For this I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I might be bold enough to speak about it as I should. (Eph. 6:18–20)

In verses 18–20, Paul addresses one of the most important strategies to stand firm against the devil: praying in the Spirit. To pray in the Spirit means that we pray while in relationship to him, guided by him, and empowered by him (v. 18). Paul then requests his readers to pray for him—for clarity about the gospel and boldness to make it known (vv. 19–20). Spirit-led prayer should include praying for fellow Christians in order to lead non-Christians to Christ!

- What is prayer? How does prayer help us in the spiritual battle?
- What is boldness? What prevents you from being bolder in sharing the gospel?

## Sound Doctrine: Resisting the Devil

Below we summarize how to resist the devil and his schemes (James 4:7).

1. **If you have not already done so, become a Christian while there is still time.** “26 Then they may come to their senses and escape the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will” (2 Tim. 2:26). No Christian is under the power of the devil, and no Christian will spend eternity with him in hell (Eph. 1:13–14; 2:8–9; Col. 1:13–14).
2. **Do not underemphasize or overemphasize the reality of the devil and other demons.** C. S. Lewis said: “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them” (*The Screwtape Letters*). Denying or underemphasizing their existence blinds us to their attacks, while overemphasizing them takes our eyes off God and his mission—both of which please the devil greatly.
3. **Focus your life on God the Father and Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.** Jesus taught us the greatest commandment: “30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). The Spirit guides us to love, worship, glorify, trust in, and hope in God and Jesus Christ. Centering your life on our great triune God is the ultimate strategy for resisting the devil.
4. **Dress for battle and stand with God’s resources.** “14 Stand, therefore, with *truth* like a belt around your waist, *righteousness* like armor on your chest, 15 and your feet sandaled with readiness for *the gospel of peace*. 16 In every situation take up the shield of *faith* with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of *salvation* and the sword of the Spirit—which is *the word of God*” (Eph. 6:14–17).
5. **See the horrifying connection between demonic activity and idolatry. Consistently identify and turn away from idolatry in your life, and turn back to God in faith.** “20 The rest of the people, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands to stop worshiping demons and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood, which cannot see, hear, or walk” (Rev. 9:20; cf. Deut. 32:17; 1 Cor. 10:20–21).
6. **Rebuke the devil in Jesus’s powerful name.** “9 Yet when Michael the archangel was disputing with the devil in an argument about Moses’s body, he did not dare utter a slanderous condemnation against him but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”” (Jude 9).
7. **Know that Jesus has already defeated the devil (so do not fear!), and yet we still must wrestle in a spiritual battle until we are with Jesus.** “14 Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, Jesus also shared in these, so that through his death he might destroy the one holding the power of death—that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14).

- What comments and questions do you have about this lesson?
- What is one thing you can do in response to this lesson?

## Prayer