

SPIRITUAL WARFARE
PART 3
**“THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL...
AGAINST THE CHURCH”**
EPHESIANS 6:10-13
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As Christians we can be confident that **the gates of hell will never prevail against the Church of Jesus Christ**. In Jesus, we are more than overcomers in Jesus, but there are still battles that must be waged against our enemy.

Christians are called to take up Jesus' armor, the armor of God, so that we can stand against the deceptive evil onslaught of our enemy the devil as we live in this world.

The decisive victory of the war has been won and Jesus has conquered, disarmed, and defeated our ancient foe, but we must endure until the final Day, standing strong in Jesus, and in the strength of His might.

We are the church militant on the march that must be courageous by God's grace.

^{ESV} Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

The devil is real.

There is a PERSONAL EVIL; EVIL IS PERSONAL: A personal devil and his fallen angels: “Spiritual forces of evil.”

The devil and his demons are schemers.

Last week we looked the devil's schemes toward individual Christians primarily.

Evil is Complex

There is evil inside.

There is evil outside.

There is evil above us.

Evil is psychological.

Evil is sociological.

Evil is demonological or “spirituallogical”

The World, the flesh and the devil (1 John 2:15-17).

While some merely focus on world: “out there” and some on the flesh: “in there” and some on the devil: “up there” we are to be more biblically balanced and realize that evil works in concert to deceive us and draw us away from service to God.

All need to be emphasized; the world, the flesh, and the devil work in concert as evil against God’s people!

Today, we will focus on the devil’s schemes toward the Church of Christ, or Christians corporately.

We are the “Church on the March” or the “Church Militant” here in this world.

We will consider the devil’s schemes of “bullying” the Church today.

“Methods” and/or “Schemes (6:11):

Know the Devil’s “Trickery”! [“Wiles” “Schemes” “Methods” (meqodeiaj) “Snares”]

“Bullying” the Church- Persecution/tribulation through the world system of evil.

Why is the world attractive to us? Especially if we are constantly attacked by it?

We need courage and resistance by God’s grace.

What to Expect in the Christian Life?

Struggle.

Conflict.

Fight.

“Wrestling” – “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood” (6:12)

“Standing (as in hand-to-hand combat)”- “To stand” (6:11); “withstand” or “stand against” (6:13a); “stand conquering” or “to stand firm” (6:13b).

Thlipsis- Tribulation – yet with great joy and hope of becoming beautiful like Jesus!

ESV John 16:33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

ESV Revelation 7:13-14: Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?"¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

The "great tribulation" is the time period between the first and second coming of Jesus Christ.

The time of tribulation is the time period before Christ's return that is characterized by struggle and conflict.

Why? So that sinners will become holy; the selfish become selfless; the proud become humble; the self-centered become gracious; the evil become good and righteous in Jesus.

Why does the devil persecute the church?

Answer: The Church is identified with Jesus Christ (Acts 9; Colossians 1:24)

Acts 9:4-5: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"⁵ And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

ESV Colossians 1:24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church...

Jesus prays as he goes victoriously to the cross:

"[Father] I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15).

God's people are to live in the world; but we need protection from the evil one who rules over the evil system of the world.

What is "the World" in Scripture?

ESV 1 John 2:16-17: For all that is in the world - the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions - is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

ESV John 17:15-17: I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them¹ in the truth; your word is truth.

*ESV James 4:4 You adulterous people! **Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.***

“The World” in Scripture is not “world” as created world; not the created world that God made good (see Genesis 1-2).

“The World” is the evil world system that is opposed to God’s Word and will.

We are not to love the “world” that is characterized by opposition to God’s Word and will.

The world system of evil is against the Word; the world is bent on defeating the proclamation of God’s Word.

We are to be not taken out of the world, but to be kept from the evil one.

Why? The evil one schemes and tries to seduce us with the world. Bullies Christians into fearing those who oppose them.

“Organized Evil” as “the World”

UNBELIEF

- Paganism
- Atheism

STATISM

- Roman Empire

FALSE RELIGION

- Islam
- Papacy

“The consolidated empire for so many centuries of Paganism, the persecuting edicts of Imperial Rome, the rise and brilliant success of Islam, the corruptions of the Papacy, and the widespread desolations of

modern infidelity and unbelief, can never be adequately understood without contemplating them as parts of an organized system of evil, of which the gigantic intellect of the devil is the author, while men have been the guilt and unwitting instruments. They have answered his ends and played obsequiously into his hands, while they vainly supposed that they were accomplishing purposes of their own.” –James Henley Thornwell

*ESV John 15:17-20: These things I command you, so that you will love one another. ¹⁸ **"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.** ¹⁹ **If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.** ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.*

The World says to Christians:

- “Give us what we want and no one gets hurt.”
- “Join us”
- “Resistance is futile”
- “Surrender! Become like us!”
- “Give up!”
- “Put them to death if they’ll not join us!”
- “Break their will!”
- Make them an offer they can’t refuse!”

We are to take courage.

It is the world, and the evil system of the world that has been the devil’s means of bullying Christians throughout the ages.

Book of Revelation presents two images of the evil behind this world (read Revelation 13-19):

- 1) Prostitute- Attractiveness/Person Evil
- 2) Babylon “the Great City”- Organized City of Man against God’s Word and Will (filled with false religion, statism, power, possessions, lust, and furious in persecuting the church).

The Apostle Paul refers to the devil as the “god of this world”- -the demonic ruler who has tried to take over God’s world for his own evil will:

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 4:4** In their case the god of this world 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.

Because the world opposes Christ and His Word, we must be ready to stand in the evil day (Eph. 6:13).

- *...Because of that...* **Suffering is to be expected; persecution will come.**
- *...Because of that...* **Sanctification: Suffering is the means through which God makes us more like Christ; we endure, we grow in confidence of his love for us, we grow in our faith!**
- *...Because of that...* **Martyrdom- “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church”**

The Church grows through conflict and suffering:

From the very beginning, the Church has been threatened by the devil’s schemes.

It all started in Genesis 3; it continues throughout redemptive-history!

When Christ came to earth in the incarnation in the fullness of the times, the 12 he chose to be his disciple-learners were often more interested in knowing who was the greatest among them, than hearing the words of the Savior.

Oftentimes, the 12 were being bombarded with their own sinful selfishness and pride. Without Christ and His faith in them, His faith in God, his prayers, the church of Jesus would have never been established!

The Devil as the Dragon- “The Great “Bully” (who used organized evil of the world against the Church)

The Devil “Bully” as the Ferocious Lion.

Revelation 12:4-5 (Summary statement of all of redemptive history):

“ [The Dragon’s] tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.

She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne...”

- The Woman (Eve, Mary/Church as “mother”)
- The Dragon stands ready to devour the child
- Incarnation (“Male child was born”)
- Jesus who was to rule all the nations...
- Jesus resurrected exalted to God’s right hand and seated on His glorious throne.
- Jesus not only escapes the Dragon’s fury, but conquers victoriously over Him in His powerful resurrection!

The Dragon in the World- “the Great Tribulation” or “Time of Tribulation” or “the Evil Day” (Eph. 6:13).

Read Revelation 12:5, 12-13, 17: *Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because **he knows that his time is short!**”¹³ And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.*

....Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. *And he stood on the sand of the sea.*

Because Christ is on His throne (Rev. 12:5), the devil has been thrown down from any heavenly access (12:10).

The devil the Accuser of the brethren, is not allowed to come before God’s throne with accusations against us because Christ is there as our Advocate, Defender, Mediator ***in our flesh!*** (Heb. 2:14-18).

But the devil schemes furiously against the “rest of her offspring” which is the Church to seek to discourage, hurt, harm, hinder God’s people from trusting in Him (Rev. 12:13, 17).

^{ESV} Ephesians 6:13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

This is the “evil day”- -right here, right now.

The “evil day” is not merely those days that are much more difficult with temptation and evil than others.

The “evil day” is the entire time period between the first and second coming of Jesus Christ.

The “evil day” is NOW.

Today, right now, we must learn to stand.

We must learn to be able to stand firm by trusting in the LORD; we must be constantly alert, watchful and ready for anything the devil through the world throws at us!

...Including martyrdom!

This is why constant and growing faith in God is so vital; trust in God is so important.

Will you be able to stand?

This is why it is so important to be identified with Jesus Christ first, then draw your identity as a member of His Church second.

We are part of a great people; a great society; greater than any ethnic heritage, or family name; our names are written in the Lambs Book of Life!

Our creed/confession as courageous in Jesus!

^{ESV} Revelation 12:11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

God’s people conquer by the Blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

We must seek to be willing to count our lives as unimportant compared to serving, worshiping, making Christ known, resisting the world and the devil.

Peter

Peter was the “ROCK” the foundation (Matthew 16), and so the foundation itself was attacked from the very beginning.

ESV Luke 22:31 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you (pl.), that he might sift you like wheat,³² but I have prayed for you (sg.) that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

- "Peter, Satan prayed for you...DEMANDED you!"
- To "sift you like wheat" –violently turn your world upside down (inside out- -"rock your world" as we might say).
- "Peter, I have prayed for you..."
- "You will make it; your faith will not fail."
- You'll grow strong and then strengthen others.

This is the pattern of Christ's Church: suffering, being sanctified, being eventually even martyrdom.

Jesus told Peter:

John 21:18-19: Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go."¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

Peter was crucified upside down on a Roman cross.

History of Martyrdom in the Church for Jesus' Sake

Stephen against False Religion (Pharisaism)

ESV Acts 7:54-8:1: Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him.⁵⁵ But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.⁵⁶ And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."⁵⁷ But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him.⁵⁸ Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.⁵⁹ And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."⁶⁰ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

8:1 And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Martyrs in Hebrews 11 against False Religion/Unbelief/Statism

Hebrews 11:32-40: For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets -³³ who through faith

conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶ Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, ¹ they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated - ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy - wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. ³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Polycarp- 2nd Century Pastor of Church of Smyrna against Statism/Paganism- The Roman Empire

“Now, as Polycarp was entering into the stadium, there came to him a voice from heaven, saying, Be strong, and show yourself a man, O Polycarp! No one saw who it was that spoke to him; but those of our brethren who were present heard the voice. And as he was brought forward, the tumult became great when they heard that Polycarp was taken. And when he came near, the proconsul asked him whether he was Polycarp.

On his confessing that he was, [the proconsul] sought to persuade him to deny [Christ], saying, Have respect to your old age, and other similar things, according to their custom, [such as], Swear by the fortune of Cæsar; repent, and say, Away with the Atheists. But Polycarp, gazing with a stern countenance on all the multitude of the wicked heathen then in the stadium, and waving his hand towards them, while with groans he looked up to heaven, said, Away with the Atheists. Then, the proconsul urging him, and saying, Swear, and I will set you at liberty, reproach Christ;

Polycarp declared, Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can blaspheme my King and my Saviour?”-

Martyrdom of Polycarp

Martyrs during the Reformation against False Religion/Statism

- **Jan Hus (15th c.)- Hus(s) burned at the stake for his opposition to the Papacy and propagation of the Gospel Truth of the Reformation.**

The executioners undressed Hus and tied his hands behind his back with ropes, and his neck with a chain to a stake around which wood and straw had been piled up so that it covered him to the neck. At the last moment, the imperial marshal, Von Pappenheim, in the presence of the Count Palatine, asked him to recant and thus save his own life,

but Hus declined with the words "God is my witness that the things charged against me I never preached. In the same truth of the Gospel which I have written, taught, and preached, drawing upon the sayings and positions of the holy doctors, I am ready to die today." He was then burned at the stake."- Schaff, *Jan Huss*

- **Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley (16th c.)- These Reformed Brothers in Christ were burned at stake under "Bloody" Queen Mary.**

Latimer said: "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out." Ridley said: "It may come in my days, old as I am, or in my children's days, the saints shall be taken up to meet Christ in the air, and so shall come down with Him again."

- **Palissy (16th c.)**

*Palissy, a Huguenot potter, was a prisoner in the Bastille for his adherence and stand for the Protestant faith. The King of France came to see him in his dungeon and told him that if he did not comply with the established religion of Roman Catholicism, he would be forced to leave him in the hands of his enemies. He replied: "**Forced, Sire!?** This is not to speak like a king; but they who force you cannot force me. I can die." Palissy stood and became a martyr for his faith; he overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of his testimony to the truth. Death is no deterrent for those who have life in Jesus Christ!*

Present-Day Martyrs for the Faith against False Religion/Unbelief/Statism

- **Jim Elliot (20th c. 1956)- Missionary to Ecuador while evangelizing the Waodani People. He was killed with four others in January 1956.**

His journal entry for October 28, 1949, expresses his belief that missions work was more important than his life. "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

- **August 2, 2010- Two Christians martyred in Pakistan for denial of Mohammad's teaching.**
- **Martyrs of Nag Hamadi- killed by Muslim militants.**

Why does the Devil persecute the Church? (Furthermore...)

- The Church is the Place where the Kingdom and Rule of God is Established as an Outpost in the Present Age
- The Church is the Place where God's Word is Made Known

- The Church is where the truth of God’s Word has been deposited and is to be securely guarded and kept.
 - The Church is the Place for the Release of the Captives
 - Those Under Sentence of God’s Judgment
 - Those Who are In Bondage to Sin, Death and the Devil (Eph. 2:1-3).
 - The place where true love and unity is revealed in the people.
 - The Church is what the world should be- -but isn’t- -and cannot be without Christ!
 - The Church is the Place for Truth of God, the World and Ourselves
 - The Church is the Place for the True Worship of God

Answer: Courage in the face of tribulation

Endurance

“If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.... Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.” – Book of Revelation

The world is an organized, anti-god, anti-christ evil system ruled over by the devil. The world is nothing to be flirted with, nor is it to be envied or enjoyed too much!

Do you not hear? Friendship with the world is enmity/hatred against God! Don’t become partners/companions with:

- 1. Prostitute- Attractive/Seductive**
- 2. Babylon the Great- Organized/Powerful/Daunting/Overwhelming**
 - **Do you want to be associated with the world system that blasphemes the Name of Christ?**

- **Do You want to be counted as “Cool” and “important” and “significant” by this world system that has killed your brothers and sisters?**
- **Do you hear the blood of the martyrs crying out from the ground: “How long, O Lord?!”**
- **Be brave and strong in Christ, the LORD says!**

Interestingly, the cowardly are destined for hell:

^{ESV} **Revelation 21:8** *But as for the cowardly*, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

But the brave, the strong, the courageous in JESUS ARE MORE THAN OVERCOMERS!!

Suffering → Victory/Resurrection/Exaltation

The Gates of Hell will never prevail against the Church of Jesus Christ!

Remember Jesus to Simon Peter?

^{ESV} **Luke 22:31-32:** *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you,¹ that he might sift you like wheat,³² but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."*

How glorious the thought that so much evil has been turned to good in our lives because of the prayers of Jesus for us (Luke 22:31-32)!

What could have caused us to stumble, has only made us stronger because of His prayers on our behalf!

“[Father] I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one” (John 17:15).

How many evil things were meant for our destruction but God has brought glory to Himself and good to us through His wisdom --all glory to HIM!

ESV Romans 8:28-29: And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

What makes the important difference between a Judas and a Peter is the fact that Jesus prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail in the end.

How do we stand firm as the Church? How do we withstand in the evil day?

- **Jesus' Promises:**

“The Gates of Hell will never prevail.”

“I will never leave you nor forsake you...”

“I am with you to the end of the age.”

- **Jesus' Prayers for us:**

“Father...I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.”

“I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail you.

- **COURAGE- Stand**

- **RESISTANCE- Withstand**

This is the EVIL DAY.

ARE YOU CLOTHED IN CHRIST ALONE?

DO YOU TRUST IN CHRIST ALONE?

CHRIST HAS OVERCOME FOR YOU, IF YOU'RE A BELIEVER.

*IN HIM YOU CAN OVERCOME BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB
AND BY THE WORD OF YOUR TESTIMONY.*

LOVE CHRIST MORE THAN YOUR OWN LIFE, COME WHAT MAY!

^{ESV} 1 John 5:4-5: For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world- our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

^{ESV} Revelation 17:14 [Believers] will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."

CRB