

## Introduction

- What if there were some unseen force that had influence over almost every part of our lives?
  - Influenced the quality of our marriages...
  - Influenced our emotional health...
  - Influenced our relationships with family, friends, acquaintances...
  - Influenced our confidence, resolve, and faithfulness...
  - Influenced our temptation and our strength to withstand that temptation...
  - Influenced our spiritual vitality and hunger for the things of God...
- I contend, this morning, that the Bible says that is exactly the situation we live in.
- Many people would dismiss that idea as being a myth of a long-ago time.
  - They would say, "If you cannot see it, measure it, poke and prod it, then it is not real, and it has no influence."
  - To that, I would respond, some things can only be seen with the right lens.
    - Sometimes it is not a matter of if something is real or not, but a matter of what lens you are looking through.
    - **Let me share the story of the bubonic plague, the Black Death.**
      - **The bubonic plague was the most feared catastrophe in the ancient world.**
        - **In 1347, the plague killed 1/3 of the human population.**
          - **Started around the Caspian Sea.**
          - **Spread along the Silk Road.**
          - **People tried to flee the disease and inadvertently spread it.**
          - **Population in England went from 7 million to 2 million.**
        - **In 1665, it killed over 100,000 in London.**
        - **In 1720, it infected Marseille, France (one of the largest cities in France) and killed almost everyone.**
      - **No one knew what caused the plague.**
        - **Most common notion: bad air.**
          - **So, people sealed their homes and buildings.**
          - **Burned noxious materials in their fireplaces.**
        - **At the same time, open sewers ran down the streets.**
          - **Rats were everywhere.**
          - **Fleas were a part of life.**
          - **No one connected the rats and fleas to the plague.**
      - **So, what caused the plague?**
        - **Yersinia pestis**
          - **A Gram-negative rod-shaped facultative anaerobic coccobacillus**
          - **Named after the man who discovered it: Alexandre Yersin.**
        - **The photo you see from an electron scanning microscope at a magnification of just over 20,000X.**
          - **It is completely invisible to the naked eye.**
          - **It is completely invisible under a magnifying glass.**
          - **It is completely invisible under most microscopes.**
        - **It lived in the digestive tracts of fleas that lived on rats.**
      - **What's my point?**
        - **If someone would have suggested that all of this death was caused by something that was essentially invisible, they would have called you crazy.**
        - **The common belief was that since germs could not be seen, smelled, touched, heard, or tasted, they could not be causing so much trouble.**
      - **Yersinia pestis is real.**
        - **It just takes an electron scanning microscope lens to see it.**
    - Spiritual warfare is real.
      - It just takes a Bible lens to see it.
  - So, let's take a look through our Bible lens and learn how this influence works...
    - Read **Ephesians 6:10-12.**

- Notice three critical spiritual truths...
  - We will walk backwards through those three verses...

## Spiritual Warfare Facts

### I. Our struggle is with evil spiritual forces.

- Look back at **Ephesians 6:12**.
  - This is an important lesson to learn!
- Often, we completely miss judge the source of our struggles.
  - We believe we are fighting against flesh and blood.
    - **We think the problem is our spouse, boss, coworker, relative, friend...**
    - **We stand in line at the grocery store and begin to lose our peace and we think the problem is the cashier...**
    - **We get depressed and we think the problem is the economy, our health, people bringing frustration and stress into our lives...**
    - **We think our biggest problems are certain people...**
      - **If that person would just...**
      - **If didn't have to be around that person...**
      - **If I had a different...**
        - **Spouse**
        - **Kid**
        - **Parent**
        - **Coworker**
        - **Supervisor**
  - That kind of thinking is a part of Satan's deception.
    - Satan knows the best way to win a battle is to trick your opponent into fighting the wrong enemy.
- Our struggle is with evil spiritual forces!
  - **Ephesians 6:12b** | ... *against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.* (CSB)
  - Just that realization changes everything.
  - Once we quit blaming people and begin to recognize that "evil spiritual forces" are at play, then...
    - We remove the conflict from the equation.
    - We begin to fight the right opponent.
  - Let's breakdown the description of these forces in **Ephesians 6:12b**.
    - *Rulers, authorities, cosmic powers...*
      - This speaks to some organized structure to evil forces, demons.
      - People have written whole books on how the demon forces are organized and arrayed, but honestly, most of those books go way further than Scripture does.
      - It is enough for us to know this...
        - There is an organized strategy, concerted effort, focused attack being waged against you.
    - *Evil, spiritual forces in the heavens...*
      - These forces have malevolent (evil) intent.
      - What is their evil intent?
        - Keep you from knowing Christ.
        - Keep you from walking with Christ.
        - Keep you from influencing others for Christ.
        - Keep you from honoring the Lord.
        - Rob you of the abundant life.
          - **John 10:10** | *A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.* (CSB)
  - So, exactly how do these evil forces do what they do?
    - Let's look back to **Ephesians 6:11**.

### II. The devil has developed specific schemes to war against you.

- **Ephesians 6:11b** | ... *schemes of the devil.* (CSB)
  - The devil has schemes!
- What does it mean that the devil has schemes?
  - The Greek word is μεθοδεία.
    - Method.
  - A scheme is...

- A. Designed to be effective and to accomplish a goal.**
- B. Personalized.**

### C. Focused on the long-term objective.

- So, what are the “*schemes*” or methods of the devil?
  - We have to find this answer in the Bible.
  - Not...
    - In our imaginations...
    - In literature...
      - *Dante’s Inferno*
    - From movies...
- The devil doesn’t possess or haunt buildings, work through charms, or even manipulate physical objects.
  - (The fact that the devil cannot manipulate physical objects is a sophisticated Bible study that requires a good working knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, but trust me for the time being that the Bible never supports that kind of “*scheme*.”)
- Schemes of the devil
  - (List of 15 schemes... Visit NoelDear.com for more information...)

### A. He Tempts people to Sin.

- **1 Thessalonians 3:5 ESV** *For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.*
- **Mark 1:13 ESV** *And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.*

### B. He Hinders through Others.

- **1 Thessalonians 2:18 ESV** *because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us.*

### C. He Distracts from the Conviction of the Word.

- **Mark 4:15 ESV** *And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.*
- **Matthew 13:19 ESV** *When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.*

### D. He Uses Obstacles.

- **2 Corinthians 12:7–9 ESV** *So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

### E. He lies to us.

- **John 8:43–45 ESV** *Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.*

### F. He Enables False Teachers.

- **2 Corinthians 11:13–15 ESV** *For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*
- **Acts 13:9–10 ESV** *But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, “You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?”*

### G. He Uses Deception.

- **2 Thessalonians 2:9–10 ESV** *The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.*

### H. He Sows Discord.

- **2 Timothy 2:23–26 ESV** *Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.*

### I. He Tempts People to be Lazy and to Gossip.

— **1 Timothy 5:11–15 ESV** *But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. For some have already strayed after Satan.*

**J. He Traps People into Disgracing God and Themselves.**

— **1 Timothy 3:7 ESV** *Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*

**K. He Exacerbates Anger.**

— **Ephesians 4:26–27 ESV** *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.*

**L. He Confuses Unbelievers.**

— **2 Corinthians 4:4 ESV** *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.*

**M. He Works Through Unforgiveness.**

— **2 Corinthians 2:10–11 ESV** *Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.*

**N. He Tempts Through a lack of Married Sex.**

— **1 Corinthians 7:5 ESV** *Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

**O. He Tempts Through Greed.**

— **Acts 5:3 ESV** *But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?”*

— Do you recognize some of those schemes?

— I certainly do.

— So, what do we do to keep from being defeated by these schemes?

— Let’s look at **Ephesians 6:10-11**.

**III. The means of victory are the strength and armor of the Lord.**

— Before we look closely at what the means of victory are, let’s notice what they are not...

— They are not focused on human effort and personal resolve.

— Making a list of ten New Year’s resolutions based on your personal strength and determination ignores the fact...

— That the war is not against flesh and blood...

— That this is a spiritual battle...

— I just want to briefly point to two means of victory as the starting place for your battle.

— (The plan is to look at more specific actions next week as we study **Ephesians 6:13-20**.)

**1. The Lord makes his vast strength available to us for the battle (**Ephesians 6:10**).**

— So, the key is to abide (remain) in Christ.

— **John 15:4** | *Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. (CSB)*

— **John 15:5** | *I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. (CSB)*

— **John 15:6** | *If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. (CSB)*

— **John 15:7** | *If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. (CSB)*

**2. The Lord makes defensive weapons available to us for the battle (**Ephesians 6:11a**).**

— Don’t live without the defensive armor!

— **Ever noticed a police officer wearing his body armor (bullet-proof vest) on a hot, sunny day when there seems to be no threat?**

— **Why does he do that?**

— **Because you never know when a threat might occur!**

— We must put on the armor of God every day!

— Let me give you the two most basic pieces of armor...

— Let your New Year’s Resolutions focus on these...

**A. God’s Word.**

**B. The Church.**

## Conclusion

- The ultimate victory over the devil happened on the cross and in the tomb...
- [Gospel message.]

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## Outline ideas...

- Openings...
  - What do people find the hardest to believe in the Bible?
  - When we talk of spiritual warfare (Satan, demons, angels, etc.), many “smart” people roll their eyes.
  - What if there were some unseen force that had influence over almost every part of our lives?
    - Influenced the quality of our marriages...
    - Influenced our emotional health...
    - Influenced our relationships with family, friends, acquaintances...
    - Influenced our confidence, resolve, and faithfulness...
    - Influenced our temptation and our strength to withstand that temptation...
    -
- #1
  - The Lord’s strength (**10-11a**)
  - Schemes (**11b**)
  - Rightly directed struggle (**12**)