

Ephesians 6:10-13

SI: We’re spending 12 weeks or so looking in depth at a few verses at the end of Ephesians, chapter 6 verses 10-20.

Paul begins this passage with the word, Finally.

That’s not just a signal he’s about to wrap up the letter.

He’s making a point that everything he’s said about the Christian life so far in the letter has a context. The context is warfare.

As you live out your Christian life and identity, you’re in a combat zone.

Your enemy is the Devil and the demonic forces and government at his disposal.

Those forces of evil are trying to make you crash and burn in every one of the areas and relationships where you are trying to live as a Christian.

INTRO: In the early 1980s my church youth group wrote letters to the Proctor and Gamble Co. threatening to boycott them because they donated money to the Church of Satan.

One of the proofs was that on every Proctor and Gamble product, if you looked carefully on the packaging you would find a little symbol.

It appeared to be an old trade mark from 1800s of the man in the moon—but it was really—we were told—a symbol of Satan himself.

I read years later that everything about that was completely false.

It was just Christian hysteria. Fake news.

And it wasn’t just a waste of our time writing those letters, apparently the company spent lots of money and effort trying to clear it up. Wasted shareholders’ money.

Just a few weeks ago in the news some Christians were claiming that

Chelsea Clinton is a Satanist.

Their proof was that she responded to the Church of Satan in a Twitter exchange.

She was asked if she was a Satanist and she said: No, I’m a Methodist.

I’m sure there are real Satanists.

I’m sure there are people who carry out occult practices to try to have direct contact with demons and so forth.

But when Apostle Paul writes about taking our stand against the Devil’s schemes, that wasn’t the sort of thing he had in mind.

And any time Christians spend too much time investigating or getting worked up about Satanism and the occult, at best it’s a waste of time, at worst a diversion.

As we saw last week, the Devil’s major weapon is the lie.

He's a liar and the father of lies. When he lies he speaks his native language.

That's what the Lord Jesus Christ said.

The Devil insinuates lies into minds of people.

Lies believed give the devil a foothold to manipulate the rest of the person's life.

His schemes are simply different variations of life.

There is a whole library of Christian literature, in which thoughtful Bible scholars have attempted to list and categorize Satan's lies.

For example: Thomas Brooks, English Puritan 1600s has three big categories.

Satan's schemes to draw Christians into sin—12 sub categories

Satan's schemes to keep Christians from holy duties—8 sub categories

Satan's schemes to keep Christians in a sad, doubting, questioning, and uncomfortable condition—8 sub categories.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Westminster Chapel London, mid 1900s. Different categories

Satan's schemes against the church in general—3 sub categories

Satan's schemes against the individual Christian, divides into attacks on the mind, attacks on experience, attacks on practice—with numerous sub-points.

So what I'm going to do, since I don't want to spend six months, is try to present the schemes of the Devil under just three big headings, three classes of lies.

They are accusation, temptation, and deception.

We'll look at them today and the next two Sundays in that order, and then we'll be moving on into the actual armor of God.

So accusation first. And there's a reason for that.

Accusation is Satan's most effective weapon against believers. It's his favorite.

Name Satan means Adversary, but another nuance is Accuser, Prosecutor.

He bring charges against God's people in order to harm them.

Just like we read in Zechariah, Satan accusing the High Priest Joshua.

Satan accusing Job. Does Job serve God for nothing?

Satan wanting to sift Peter like wheat. Which he did. Temptation and accusation.

Three points:

1. The goal of accusation
2. Several variations of accusation
3. The defense against accusation

MP#1 The goal of accusation

We've all heard of the one-two punch. What is that? What is the one-two punch?

Let me read you some definitions. First from Webster's dictionary.

A combination of two quick blows in rapid succession in boxing; especially a left jab followed at once by a hard blow with the right hand.

Here's a longer definition from Wikipedia.

In boxing, the one-two combo (also called the old one-two) is a nickname of a jab and cross combo. The jab is designed to get the fighter in range while effectively blinding the opponent and hiding the cross. Generally, the jab is thrown with 60% power while stepping forward into range, and the cross follows at full power.

Something from a boxing website.

Many old-timers will tell you that the jab is the can-opener and the right hand is the spoon. I can tell you after all these years that they are definitely right. At the beginner level, you can pretty much win any fight just by masterfully throwing the good'ole 1-2 over and over again.

Now here's my point. When we think of Satan's schemes against us, we tend to think that tempting us to sin is his most powerful weapon. We think that the most powerful lie and the most devastating lie we can believe is to fall into temptation. But the fact is that temptation is just the first punch in Satan's one-two combo.

It's the jab, it's left-handed weaker punch that's designed to blind us, weaken us, open us up. It's the can-opener.

Satan's right hand, his strong hand, his favorite punch is the second one.

It's the one we don't see coming. And that's accusation.

Temptation and accusation are both lies, but opposite and complimentary lies.

In temptation the lie is: This is not so bad. What's the harm?

Everybody's doing it. I deserve it. Just this once. I can always repent later.

Nobody will know. And on and on. Lot's of variation of temptation.

But when you fall for it, then accusation follows.

How can you call yourself a Christian? Your life is ruined. Unforgivable.

You're guilty. You're dirty. You're worthless. You cannot change.

Satan tries to make you take your sin so seriously that you forget the grace of God.

He tempts so he can accuse.

He gets you to believe one lie—sin isn't so bad—so that you believe another—

I'm beyond God's grace.

I've blasphemed the Holy Spirit. I can't change and my walk with God is over.

I read this quote last week from Thomas Brooks.

Wrote this in his book called "Precious remedies against Satan's devices"

"Though [Satan] can never rob a believer of his crown, yet such is his malice and envy, that he

will leave no stone unturned, no means unattempted, to rob them of their comfort and peace, to make their life a burden and a hell unto them, to cause them to spend their days in sorrow and mourning, in sighing and complaining, in doubting and questioning.”

Satan accuses you because he wants, more than anything else,
to keep you from experiencing the grace of God.

There is no way that he can rob you of God’s grace—eternally secure
“Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“No one can snatch them from my Father’s hand.”

The devil knows the Bible and he certainly knows that

He can’t rob you of God’s grace, but he can rob you of your experience of it.

He can rob you of your enjoyment of God’s grace

His most powerful weapon for doing that is accusation

When we lived in St. Louis were told about a mother and adult daughter who lived
homeless on the streets.

They pushed shopping carts, panhandled in grocery store parking lots.

But they were millionaires.

I can’t remember the whole story. I’m sure there was mental illness.

But my point is that they illustrate exactly where the Devil wants you spiritually.

He can’t rob you of your millions but he wants you to live like a pauper.

He wants to manipulate you into a position where the treasure and identity

of God’s grace in Christ is not something you are experiencing and enjoying.

Chances are some of you here feel that way.

You have been robbed of comfort and peace, your life, at least your spiritual life
is full of sorrow, mourning, sighing, complaining, doubting and questioning.

That’s not what God wants for you.

He loves you and accepts you in Christ and he wants you to experience that
and enjoy it.

MP#2 Several variations of Accusation

Before we are done, do need to look at some specific variations on this strategy.

No way to come up with an exhaustive list—I've just read lists of others
Martin Lloyd-Jones lists 7 variations

(doesn't call these accusation but "Attacks upon assurance)

Thomas Brooks lists 8 variations

("Satan's devices to keep saints in a sad, doubting, questioning, and uncomfortable condition)

I want to list four that I have gathered from these godly men.

1. Satan takes the past and brings it to mind.

Past sins, past failures, past bad decisions, regrets—very real things in your past
he brings them to mind along with some sort of terrible accusation
you can't be a Christian, never be of any use to God, life is ruined,
you may be saved, but your life is on plan B, or plan C, or plan D

Presenting the lie—Grace of God is not sufficient to make all things new,
the lie that God not sovereign, not working all things for your good

MLJ tells story of a man in 70s saved in his church

Had lived a reprobate life, came under conviction of sin, gloriously converted
Westminster Chapel had communion Sunday evening service

First communion, face was radiant, everyone was moved

Early the next morning, Dr. Lloyd-Jones still in bed, awakened by pounding
this elderly man, sobbing, beside himself—gone to bed, full of joy

In the night he woke up and a scene from his life 30 years earlier flashed in mind.

He was in a pub, talking about religion, and he made a vile, blasphemous
comment about Jesus Christ.

Thought came that it could never be forgiven.

My friend, that is the devil's lying accusation to rob you of experience of grace

2. Satan causes you to misinterpret God's dealings with you.

Accusation makes you look at trials in your life and say—I'm being punished.

Since we're all inherently self-righteous, when things are going well we tend to
think because I'm doing right. God is rewarding me.

So when things go bad, when suffering, figure must be my guilt. God punishing.

Because if you look at your life you can always find something!

So the sorrow and pain is made worse because on top of it is added a load of guilt.

Job's friends were used by the Devil in this way.

They told Job, you must be suffering because you're prideful, or self-satisfied,

or because you're guilty of a secret sin. What is it? Confess it.
They were good-intentioned but they pulled him down.
It's easy to do. I've done it. I've pulled people down this way. Could it be you?

But Christians have the love and acceptance and goodness of God.
Christ was punished. We aren't. We might be disciplined.
God might take us through trials for some greater good.
But Satan attacks your conscience and makes you think it is because of this or that particular failure or sin you are being punished. More this later. Subtle.

3. Satan takes variations in your Christian experience and makes you doubt.
A Christian person notices that he or she doesn't feel the same way he used to feel.
Not as eager about Bible study, worship, fellowship, prayer.
There is a spiritual dryness that you just can't overcome.
So it makes you doubt your relationship with God.
And perhaps it's made worse when you encounter other believers who are living their lives in a kind of joyful openness about their faith.
Instead of their words and experience encouraging you, it depresses you.

4. Satan takes a recurring sin and says see—You have no spiritual life.
If you knew Christ you would have victory.
“Says Satan, Your heart is not right with God; surely your estate is not good; you flatter yourself to think that God will ever eternally own and embrace such a one as you are, who complains against sin, and yet relapses into the same sin, who with tears and groans confesses your sin, and yet ever and anon falls into the same sin.”
Do you see the crafty nature of that lie—look at your sin, look at your failure.
Where does he not want you to look at? At your Savior.
So he keeps you from experiencing the grace of God when you need it most.

We could list more. Is there ever a voice that makes you feel that God is far away?
That you do not belong to God, that you could not belong to God?
When you do think about God, it's only his anger and judgment, not his grace.
You're probably under attack.
In a strange way that should encourage you.
The only people Satan does not accuse are those who are so self-righteous and hypocritical, and who think so highly of themselves that they are totally under his control.

MP#3 The defense against accusation

Put on the armor of God, we will study in more detail in later sermons

But let me give you two thoughts.

1. You must learn to recognize Satan's accusing voice.

Because you are a Christian you are sensitized to sin.

Your new nature, the divine nature inside you, is opposed to it
So, when a voice says: Look at that sin in your life.

Look everything you've wasted that God has given you.

Look at what you've done that deserved to be punished.

How do you know if that is the voice of Satan or the Holy Spirit?

Because the Holy Spirit also points out sin.

This is the difference:

When the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin he points you to God's grace.:

Don't you see how much Jesus Christ loves you? How can you treat Him this?

He died for your sins. You've died with him. How can you keep sinning?

The Holy Spirit is not necessarily gentle. His words can crush you

But he begins with Jesus Christ, his righteousness, his atonement, his love.

He shows you your sin is the worst possible sin because it's a sin against love.

That pushes you to Christ. I am so ashamed, Lord. After all you've done.

You long to come back to him. That's the Holy Spirit.

When Satan accuses he says: Look at yourself. Look at your sin.

He focuses on your sin and makes you doubt the love of God.

He makes the Lord seem threatening and distant.

Never: Confess, repent, come back to the Father.

But shame, hiding, covering. Think Adam and Eve covering with fig leaves.

So if that's the primary voice, reject it and resist it.

Identify the voice of accusation and then . . .

2. Put on the armor of God

Putting on the armor means appropriating the benefits of the Gospel.

Gospel means Good News.

Bringing the Good News to bear against Devil's accusations.

Why am I feeling like God is so far away?

What am I being accused of?

Then, must search the Scriptures, read, believe, appropriate to yourself.

Let me end with a great example from Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

He's addressing here a particular form of accusation.

Christians paralyzed with regrets about the past.

Because of this or that foolish decision, I've wasted years, wasted opportunities.

My life is not following God's plan A. Probably not even B. C or D!

Listen to what he says:

Let me give immediate relief to any burdened unhappy souls who have been looking back across wasted years, a wasted life, and wasted opportunities. In the Name of God I say to you, realize that it is always the devil who makes you look back, and the reason he does so is that he wants to spoil the present and the future. He know that as long as you are looking back you will have no pleasure in the present, you will not be able to do your work properly in the present, and you will not be able to do your work in the future. Regrets are useless. You cannot undo the past; there is nothing you can do about it. If you had no other reason for not looking back, that would be enough. Do not waste your time, but realize that it is the devil attacking you. To be downcast because of your past means that you are downcast in the present; and as 'the joy of the Lord is our strength' it is obvious that while you are unhappy you cannot be functioning properly. So for this reason alone, refuse to look back.

But let me give you a better cause for encouragement. The devil says, 'It is all wasted, irretrievable, you will never have an opportunity again. The years have gone and gone forever, life has been a sheer waste.' Turn to him and say, 'I remember the words of my Lord who said that you are a liar and the father of lies, a liar from the beginning, and I see that you are still a liar, for what you are saying is not true. God says to me: 'I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten' (Joel 2:25). Thank God I agree. The word of God is the only word in the universe that can speak to you in this way. And God can do it! Do you realize that in the hand of God you can do more in five minutes than you could have done in fifty years on your own? Do not listen to the devil. The past is not altogether hopeless, it must not mortgage the present or the future. God delivers you, makes you a new creation; you are a new man in a new world. Leave the past. Never look at it again. It is always the devil that makes you look back. Refuse it, set your face steadfastly towards the future, that glorious future that is before you!

That's identifying the accusing voice and putting on the armor of God.

Maybe that will be your promise—Joel 2:25. Or some other that meets your need. And maybe it is someone else who needs this word from you.

Satan's favorite lie is accusation. Don't believe it.