What Are satan & the demonic Trying To Do To Believers
Ephesians 6:10-11

Last week we asked a simple question: **How do you view this world? Do you view this world as a battleground or playground?** As we started looking into Ephesians 6 we saw that there is a real spiritual battle going on around us. We can’t get away from it or pretend it isn’t happening without a lot of unnecessary pain, frustration and messing up in life.

Our real enemy is the devil or satan. The devil was a powerful angel God created who rebelled against God because he felt he should be at least equal to God if not higher. The devil’s influence led to around 1/3rd of the angels rebelling against God. These are now known as demons. Forget about the pictures you have in science-fiction or the fantasy world – we can not see them and they are in conflict with any and all who side with Jesus. Neither the devil or this group of evil spiritual forces are equal to or the opposite of God. satan’s equivalent would be someone like the archangel Michael in the angelic world. While we are not given details, there is some kind of organizational hierarchy and coordination of their fight against God’s work, God’s people or God’s actions. The devil & the demonic are who we should consider our real enemies, not the humans around us. Our enemy is not flesh and blood. In fact, Jesus calls us to be peace-makers and to love our enemies. So there is a spiritual battle going on around us – we can not see it – but God provides the needed resources and divine protection for victory. We are not trying to subdue satan & the demonic but to stand firm in faith in the midst of the turmoil around us. This week we want to tackle “what satan and the demonic are trying to do to believers” in a general sense. We will briefly look at 5 additional verses outside our key passage in Ephesians. Next week we want to look at what victory really looks like which you may be surprised at.

We may question why God allows satan to roam somewhat free in our world today along with a number of the fallen angels (other demons are imprisoned and won’t be released until the final years before Jesus’ physically returns called the Great Tribulation). But we do know this is a temporary time and that there are some things we need to learn from this spiritual struggle so we will flourish in heaven. There are some godly virtues to be developed, some skills to be honed, some faith to be strengthen, some love to be purified and some hope to be held on to, which couldn’t happen without an encounter with our real enemy. In other words, God wants us to learn how to fight – not physically but spiritually – so we will be more ready to co-rule with Jesus for eternity.

**PROPOSITION:** The devil tries to get back at God by corrupting, enslaving, and rendering useless God’s spiritual children in our different areas of life.

I. The demonic work hard to render us ineffective for the Lord & His work (Ephesians 4-6)

**READ v 10.** Why do we need to “be strong in the Lord”? Why do we need to be strong “in the Lord’s mighty power”? Why must our strength come from our relationship with Jesus as well as using the spiritual power He provides for us? Here in v 10 we don’t yet
know anything about the spiritual battle or our enemy, but we do know we are to live life in the position of God’s strength, (that’s “be strong in the Lord”), and make use of Jesus’s supernatural power, protection and resources, (that’s “be strong in the Lord’s mighty power”).

READ v 11-12. As we mentioned earlier, we have a genuine, real spiritual enemy – the devil and the demonic. But if Jesus has freed us from slavery to the Kingdom of darkness to be brought into the Kingdom of the Son – if satan has already lost us to Jesus, what are satan & the demonic trying to do. READ v 13. The devil and the demonic are trying to make us “fall”. The opposite of “stand” is to fall. Again we will see more specifically what “standing” means next week, but for today just remember that God wants us to stand while satan wants us to fall. The demonic are working hard to render us ineffective for the Lord & His work here on planet earth. He wants to make us unproductive in the tasks and witness Jesus calls us to. He wants us to disgrace God. That ineffectiveness may come from disobedience or quarrelling or quitting the battle or not putting effort in or hiding away. This passage in Ephesians 6 doesn’t tell us all the ways the evil spiritual forces around us want us to fall, but what precedes these verses in the letter to the Ephesians does seem to show us some of the areas we will face the battle. READ v 10. The word “finally” in v 10, ties this section to what has come before this in the letter. As we go backwards we see at least 5 major areas satan will try to get us to fall and not stand for Jesus.

A. At work

Look at Eph 6:7. READ. In Ephesians 6:5-8, God calls all to do our work in a way that will please Him. Even those people who had no rights and got no pay for their labor could glorify God through their efforts. In Eph 6:9, God challenges those who have all the power & rights to willfully restrain those for the Lord’s glory & benefit of others.

You are going to face spiritual warfare at your work. And remember “work” as we have defined it for years here is not just a paid job, but it is that which is your primary temporal responsibility currently whether it is a paid job, going to school, raising kids, overcoming disability or helping others. Do you believe how you go about your work is an important part of the spiritual battle that is going on around us? Do you believe that what you do now, God can use powerfully in the spiritual battle around us? Do you believe God is protecting you supernaturally in your work even if you have no outward rights like the slaves at that time? You & I can bring glory to God in even the worst situations.

B. In family/marriage

Now let’s look at Eph 6:4. READ. This is in a section about family and marriage. It goes from Ephesians 5:22-6:4. Do you think spiritual warfare ever impacts a marriage or a family? Absolutely it does. Just take what sometimes happens when a family or a couple just try to go to a church service to worship and focus on God. Problems come out of nowhere, nothing goes smoothly, bickering starts, conflict arise and when the
family arrives at church they are in little mood to praise God or fellowship with others. I think we have a cartoon coming up at some point like that – in this case, it is a child who is an angel all day or all week until the worship service starts. If the demonic cannot keep us from joining with other Christians in praise, then they can at least take our focus completely off it.

C. Interpersonal relations

Ephesians 5:21

But I am single or my family has grown and moved away. READ Eph 5:21. The devil and demonic can use any personal relationship to try to take our focus off loving God first and foremost and loving others as ourselves. Jesus calls every one of us to submit to one another. That’s hard. There is a lot of spiritual warfare going on that tries to exploit cracks in any interpersonal relationship. If you look around I think you will agree that our main work – whether working job, school, family, doing as much as we can with a disability or serving to the end of our lives even when we can’t get out of bed AND our marriages, our families and our personal relationships are all areas we can see may be under spiritual attack here in our country.

D. How we live

Ephesians 4:17-5:20

Let’s take two earlier passages in Ephesians 5. READ Eph 5:15-16 & Eph 5:1-2. These are both part of a section where God is encouraging us to live life as Christians different than people are naturally inclined to do. This section starts at Ephesians 4:17 and goes through Ephesians 5:20. My particular Bible uses the heading “Instructions for Christian Living” for this section. Ephesians 5:15-16 clearly warns us & wants us to be prepared to face evil pressures. READ 5:15-16. We aren’t to go into a defensive or hiding away posture in spiritual warfare, but to make the most of every opportunity that arises in those times. If it was our responsibility to defeat satan and the demonic then we would have to come up with battle plans & strategies to conquer in Jesus’ Name which has been attempted in history but without much long term success. Instead God gives us the privilege to help out the spiritual battle that is going on around us by simply living our daily lives different. READ 5:1-2. It is like we are giving our pathetically insignificant actions of love, obedience and care for others, which God then uses or multiplies for a much greater result in the spiritual battle around us which we can’t even see. This involves the actions, thoughts and attitudes of everyday life!

E. Unity in the church (local & universal)

Ephesians 4:1-16

The final area here in the Ephesians letter is unity in the church. READ Eph 4:3-4. Make every effort to keep the unity of peace that the Holy Spirit has already provided. This applies to both the local church, like the Ephesians church this letter is going to and the universal church of all true believers everywhere which is especially highlighted in the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians.

Step back a moment and look at these 5 areas – work, marriage & the family, interpersonal relationships, how we carry out everyday life and keeping the unity of...
the Spirit in the church. Did you notice how every day and at any time most of this list is. We don’t primarily engage in the spiritual warfare around us by coming up with special ministries, trying to identify the evil spiritual attackers nor do the attacks primarily come when we are gathered together as Christians to worship, serve, teach or share Jesus as a group. And the context doesn’t limit spiritual warfare to just these 5 areas, but it is clear that spiritual warfare has been on the apostle’s mind all through Ephesians 4-6 – in fact in later weeks we will find some of the clear indications of how the spiritual battle around us works from these sections.

II. The devil and demonic are specifically trying to …

While we see that spiritual warfare goes on in some pretty normal life happenings rather than some specialized battlefield, we still haven’t answered our main question – What are satan & the demonic trying to do to believers. From Ephesians 6:10-18 we know they are trying to keep us from standing – they are trying to get us to fall. Let’s expand on that. Turn to John 10 (John is the 4th book in the New Testament – Matthew, Mark, Luke, then John.)

A. Keep us from an abundant life (steal, kill and destroy) John 10:10

This is Jesus speaking. READ John 10:10. So we are given a contrast here. Jesus has come so His followers can have life and have it to the full. If we follow Jesus He leads us to an abundant life. So what are the devil and the demonic – pictured as thieves here – trying to do? They are trying to keep us from an abundant life. Right from the start in the temptation of Adam & Eve, satan promised that which he had no intention of delivering. Drugs & alcohol aren’t going to deliver to young people what they claim. Having more money or possessions isn’t going to make your life more significant. The devil and the demonic just want to steal, kill and destroy God’s people – they don’t care for anyone but themselves. No matter how good things look, if it comes from the devil and demonic it will NOT lead to an abundant life. No matter how hard things look to the follower of Christ, we will be led to an abundant life.

B. Turn us away from our devotion to Jesus II Corinthians 11:3

Turn now to II Corinthians 11:3. What are satan & the demonic trying to do to believers here? READ II Cor 11:3. satan & the demonic are trying to lessen our devotion to Jesus. They are trying to turn us away from our sincere and pure devotion to Christ. That is interesting. When we normally think of Eve and the serpent we immediately think satan & the demonic are trying to get us to disobey God. And indeed that is what the serpent did. But the devil & the demonic are also perfectly happy just moving us away from having Jesus be first in our life – getting us to be more ho-hum about our faith. The goals God gives us are not primarily negative – don’t do anything wrong; but they are primarily positive – put Jesus & His ways first in your life. Adore Jesus. See the great value of Jesus’ ways. Be thankful for the gifts of God. The two greatest commands are first of all to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and then secondarily to love others. These are positive goals. Positive goals will ALWAYS require us not to do something opposite, but when we lose our sincere and straightforward desire to simply honor...
Jesus – it takes and makes our faith in God susceptible to being turned to a heavy burden, an unrealistic set of rules or drudgery. You can probably think of some times in your own life where you didn’t suddenly turn and do some awful sin, but other things just slowly crowded serving, giving or worshiping Jesus. The infamous American line – “But I believe in God” – yet there are no actions of faith or devotion in our lives, is right out of the playbook of the devil and the demonic. They aren’t trying to get everyone to be the worst they can be – they just want to slide us further from simple, sincere devotion to Jesus alone.

C. Make our current concerns more important than God’s concerns Matthew 16:23
Let’s turn back to Jesus’ words – this time in Matthew 16:23. (Matthew is the first book of the New Testament). What are satan & the demonic trying to do to believers here? READ, satan and the demonic are trying to get us to make our current concerns more important than God’s concerns. He will try to get us to forget or down-play God’s key calls to us. Our worries, fears or other concerns can actually make us forget God’s main goals. Peter couldn’t imagine the King of Kings – the coming Messiah – having to suffer. In trying to “protect” Jesus, Peter was actually trying to hinder Jesus from the purpose the Father sent Him – to die on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin. satan had already tried and failed in the wilderness to get Jesus to skip the cross – and take an easier path to ruling the world. Peter was trying to keep the Lord from dying, but that was a primary reason why Jesus came into the world. Jesus came to save sinners – no matter how dangerous, no matter how risky, no matter how inconvenient that is, we must keep reaching out to those who are spiritually lost because that is a key priority of God. And that will be hard, which is why Jesus follows with such strong teaching about needing to deny ourselves and take up our cross to follow Jesus. Picture that you are being ask to bring something important to someone but they live in a bad neighborhood. A little concern actually helps us – we will lock our car, be vigilant as to what is happening around us and maybe even ask someone to come with us. But a lot of concern – I may get hurt, someone may rob me, my car may be damaged can actually led us to give up on the important task we were given totally – that package has to be delivered today to help. The devil & demonic know they are victorious if they just get us so focused on our concerns that God’s call for us is no longer the highest.

D. Devour believers (turn us from the faith) I Peter 5:8-9
Turn to I Peter 5:8-9. A fourth thing that the devil and the demonic are trying to do is “devour believers” – that is, turn us from our faith. READ I Peter 5:8-9. What are satan & the demonic trying to do to believers? They are looking to pounce on us like a lion to devour us – that sounds bad. In the verses right before this God shows favor to the humble and lifts them up. He encourages us to cast all our cares on Him because He cares for us. Now we learn there is another spiritual being that is interested in Christian believers – only it is not to help but to destroy! The devil & the demonic are constantly looking for an opportunity to viciously attack us – so that we will turn from our faith.
READ v 9. We can and should resist the devil. This is why our Ephesians 6 passage has been encouraging us to recognize the real danger around us and get our strength & power to resist from our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! When satan and the demonic strike they want to turn us from our faith. That can be by doubting God’s goodness in this broken world, denying Christ, getting mad at God because things aren’t going our way, hiding our faith because of fear, or turning to false claims for an abundant life. It can also come where we refuse to believe God can forgive us, use us or renew us. It can be where we believe the lies that we are no good to God or anyone else. Because one of the main attacks of the demonic is to use persecution, problems & slander, God wants us to know that is happening all around the world to Christians. Those things are not a sign of defeat, but that the spiritual battle is going on around us. Victory doesn’t come from avoiding problems or persecution, but victory comes by simply resisting and standing in our faith! As we will see this more clearly next week. God doesn’t call on us to do some super-hero thing for Him, but simply remain in Jesus – to continue to live in faith knowing God cares for us, loves us and is transforming us into Christlikeness.

E. Corrupt the culture/people through deception Revelation 20:3
Turn to the end of your Bible – to Revelation 20:3 where we will just mention this next one. What are satan & the demonic trying to do to believers? READ Rev 20:2-3. Even when the devil & demonic aren’t attacking us personally, they are constantly seeking to do is to corrupt the culture around us. And doing a fairly good job in our day. As the book of Revelation plays out and the greatest deception of culture happens under the future antichrist, victory comes in a different way than we think. As Rev 12:11 says, “They triumphed over him (the devil) by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” We triumph by holding on to the gospel of Jesus and sharing how God has transformed our lives through Jesus’ death and resurrection – and keeping these as more important than even whether we live or die. Making our concerns more important than God’s concerns.

So our spiritual battle will not primarily be out on some important battlefield or significant world event – but that battle will touch us far more in our everyday life and relationships. satan & the demonic are corrupting society around us & trying to devour Christians – turns us from our faith. But they are also just as likely trying to keep us from an abundant life, lessen our devotion to Jesus or become over focused on our current concerns so we don’t keep bringing the good news of Jesus to all.

Overcoming in the power of Jesus sometimes will look different than our natural pictures of victory which we will tackle next Sunday, Lord willing!