

1. Introduction (205)

Last week we started a sermon series called “Suit Up”, in Ephesians 6:10-20. Many know this passage as the Armour of God: not armour that God puts on, but armour that God gives us as Christians to wear in the battle against Satan and sin.

I introduced the series last week by saying that we should not be like the drunk man getting on a horse. The passage does not allow us to understand the origin and operation of evil purely physical, scientific, psychological and sociological terms – our battle is not against flesh and blood; rulers, authorities, powers of this dark world, spiritual forces of evil. Nor should we think of everything as Satan and his demons – we are in a hand to hand wrestle with the world, the flesh and the devil (1John). Don’t overestimate Satan and don’t underestimate him.

If anything our error is to underestimate his schemes. So, before we get to the specific pieces of armour, I want to look again at verse 11. An understanding of verse 11 will clarify why God has given the armour that he has.

2. The devil’s schemes

The word for devil in verse 11 means ‘false accuser’ or ‘slanderer’ or ‘liar’; and he has schemes which ‘methods’ or ‘strategies’ of deceit, craft, trickery. This aligns with what Jesus said of the Devil in John 8, “When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” Paul will go on to say:

- “that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.” (2Corinthians 2:11)
- But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (2Corinthians 11:3)
- And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. (2Corinthians 11:14)

3. This is the main way that Satan works (not by overt possession and oppression)

4. Two categories of deceit

Thomas Brooks (17th C) put it like this, “Satan loves to sail with the wind”. He will find how your sail is set and blow a gentle breeze. In other words he will find a temptation that resonates with your particular bent (weakness or strength) and use that in his soul-killing plots.

- If your inclination is towards affluence he will tempt you to deny God;
- if you find yourself in hardship, he will tempt you to distrust God;
- if you like order he will tempt you to be legalistic;
- if you like freedom he will tempt you to be permissive;

- if you have had 31 quiet times in a row he will tempt you to become proud;
- if you have had none he will tempt you to think you're a failure;
- if you are bold he will tempt you to be over-confident;
- if you are timid he will tempt you to give up.

He exploits the weak points and aggravates the sinful inclination that is already in you with lies (temptations and accusations). He says things (not literally) he stimulates talk that goes on in your heart.

A. Temptation

Temptation – have too high a view of yourself so that you go and do what you want. He diminishes God's holiness and plays God's love: I am so loved and embraced by God that you give yourself permissions to sin.

B. Accusation

Accusation – have too low a view of yourself so that you do what you shouldn't. He diminishes God's love and plays up his holiness and judgement towards sin: I am such a pathetic sinner, how could God love me and you give yourself permission to wallow in the doldrums of defeat.

Temptations and accusations are two different categories of lies in which Satan IS going to move against you in your life.

C. How does Satan tempt us?¹

1. By showing you the bait and hides the hook:

Look at short term pleasures and hides to long term misery that will flow from committing that sin. It is probably the most common and therefore not surprising that it is how he tempted Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen 3:4-5). In the letter of James he says that we are "dragged away and enticed". Satan is a liar and is not telling me the truth.

2. By getting you to rationalise sin and seeing some (false) goodness in it

I'm not a nosey gossip I'm just concerned; I'm not selfish, I'm thrifty; I'm not greed I'm enjoying God's bounty; I'm not an alcoholic I'm just sociable;

3. By showing you the sins of Christian leaders

S/he did it too so no one is that pure! But he hides the misery that the sin bought in their life and the process of repentance and restitution. You may be able to sin with David and Peter but can you repent and reconcile with David and Peter?

4. By convincing you that it is just a little sin

¹ Outline and content of 12 points form Keller and Brookes

He attempts to convince you that the sin is only a small, little insignificant sin. But the stolen look at Bathsheba led to adultery, murder and the death of an innocent child.

5. By overstressing the mercy of God so that you say to yourself

“Do it! God will forgive you. That is his job!”

6. By making you bitter over suffering

“I have suffered so much I deserve this small indiscretion”. This is why so many powerful and prominent men say to themselves, “no one knows what pressure and hardship I carry I deserve this affair”.

7. By showing you how many ‘bad’ people are having great lives

“I may as well do it, playing by the rules doesn’t pay off”. Christians are so often afflicted, abused and scorned by others. Faithfulness is HARD, it costs! Sin would not be as attractive to us as it is if it was not so (temporarily) satisfying. But the hardship of faithful Christian living is

8. By getting you to compare one part of your life to another.

“I am so good over here and here and here, sure it is okay if I indulge in this area.

D. How does Satan accuse us?

1. By getting you to look more at your sin than at your Saviour

Parenting books = 4/5 compliments for every 1 criticism. For every one look at your sin you need to take 4/5 looks at your saviour

2. By causing you to obsess over the damage of past sins that cannot be undone

Satan loves to keep the fire of past failures smouldering, just to blow back to flame

3. By making you think that the troubles that you are going through must be punishments

“this wouldn’t have happened unless God was angry at me”

4. By making you think that your inner struggles and feelings real Christians would never have

“You are the only one who faces this struggle, who has fallen to this sin, who has been trapped by this sin for so long”, “

Do any of those sound familiar? There are two things we need to do if we are going to fight off the lies of temptation and accusation.

E. Two things to fight successfully

1. Know the devices that Satan uses on you

Do you know which ones he uses on you? Perhaps this morning you identified for the first time that what is happening in your head and your heart are an attack from Satan. Identify it. Call it as

such. Say, “Satan I know what you are trying to accuse, you are trying to tempt me. But you are speaking your native language - lies it is”

Do you know where you leave yourself open to attack. But also remember that Satan move around – if you shut one avenue down he will attempt another!

2. The gospel IS the armour

Temptation: he gives you an overblow sense of God’s love so you do whatever you want and think everything will be okay, but actually it is a disaster. It squashes your sense of guilt.

Accusation: he gives you an overblow sense of God’s holiness so that you hate yourself, so that you are crushed by your guilt.

But the gospel demolishes the power of **temptation** because you don’t have to exploitation the love of God. You don’t have to exploit the love of God so that you give yourself permission to do what you like – and is so doing undervaluing the great work of salvation that Jesus accomplished on the cross. He love you so much that he was ready to give his life so that you could be reconciled to the Father.

And the gospel demolishes the power of **accusation** because you don’t have to avoid holiness and perfect justice; you don’t have to avoid the fact that you are a sinner. Why? Because He also sent Jesus to die on the cross to you. And on the cross Jesus completely satisfied the judgement of God on sin so that you are no longer under condemnation! He is so serious about sin that he sent his Son to die so that sin might be done away with.

5. Conclusion

You don’t have to deny the seriousness of sin and the holiness and judgement of God; nor do you need to deny the depth of love that has been shown to us by God. That is the power of the gospel to overcome both temptation and accusation.

Questions

1. Where are you most aware of the work of Satan in this world?
 - a. What does this tell you about your preparedness to “stand firm”? [especially if most of the answers are about evil in the world e.g. wars, murder, media content etc.]
2. What does verse 11 teach us about the avenue of attack that Satan will use?
3. How does Satan, “love to sail with the wind” in general?
 - a. In your life?
4. How did Grant differentiate between temptation and accusation?
5. Go through the 8 points on temptation and 4 on accusation and share your vulnerabilities to each one
6. How is the gospel the armour: discuss how the gospel demolishes temptation and accusation