



The Battle for the Mind

Ephesians 6:10-18

D DAY LANDINGS

I expect most of you recognise this picture. It's the D Day landings that were commemorated last month at the 65th anniversary. Few of us have or will ever experience the horrors of war. Or will we. Our passage this morning reminded us of the fact as Christians that we find ourselves in the middle of a war zone when we become Christians, with the aim being that we are shifted away from God as far as possible. Over the last few weeks we found that both the world and our flesh draw us away from God and we saw last week how hangups, prejudices, compulsions, and past experiences are strongholds in our lives that if not dealt with can destroy our relationship with God and rob us of the confidence, acceptance, security and significance that God has given us in Christ.

It isn't just the world and the flesh that we're up against; Jesus also says we're against the devil whom Jesus calls "the father of lies" (John 8:44). The good news that this is the most resolvable of the three because Jesus came to destroy the devil's work (1 John 3:8).

In our modern society we tend to dismiss the spiritual world and even if we acknowledge it, we act as though it doesn't matter. I'm quite familiar with African spirituality where there is a much more immediate sense of the kingdom of darkness and the spiritual world – almost to the point where the devil is blamed for everything and people don't take responsibility for their own actions.

So where does the truth lie – you've guessed it – in God's Word! **TARGET** Don't feel tempted to think that as you're a Christian that the devil can't get you. Look at what we read this morning: Eph 6:10. You've got it – you are a target and the devil is the one aiming at you and he'll do anything he can to wreck your relationship with God.

And if you're not a Christian this morning? What I am going to say doesn't apply to you. If you don't know Jesus, you are already in the grip of his power and he controls your life whether you recognise him or not. And without Christ, you will never defeat him or be free from him.

OSTRICH Don't ignore the spiritual battle by not thinking about it. Ostriches hide their head in the sand – they may not see their adversary, but he sees their massive body as an exposed target!

So let's understand the battle. **CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE** Look at this picture. It's the Charge of the Light Brigade. When we look at this picture it reminds us of bravery. It is the famous picture of the small detachment of men nobly fighting against overwhelming Russian forces. Often we like to think of ourselves as the noble minority fighting in a land that is mostly non-Christian. But we don't battle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers.

Do you know what happened to the Light Brigade – they were decimated by the Russians – blown off their horses by their cannons and finished off on the ground by their infantry. In God's battle, we aren't the defeated Light Brigade, but the Russians; packing awesome fire-power!

Look at the balance of power **GOD 1**. We are the people of God – we are on His side. He's omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient – if you need that in English **GOD 2** He's All powerful, all present and all knowing.

SATAN ISN'T

What is Satan? He's the Deceiver. The Liar, The False Accuser. He's a con artist. He's like the Light Brigade – colourful, threatening, intimidating; but is nothing compared to God.

And he's beaten: **And when he had disarmed the rulers and the authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in the cross. Col 2:15 (ISV)**

SATAN THE DECEIVER

So, he's a deceiver, a charlatan a crook. He's massively inferior to God, and like us, he's a created being. Even in comparison to human beings, whilst they ran the Earth and he slithered around as a snake (Gen 3). But Adam and Eve handed over the rights that God gave to them to him when they sinned. That's why Jesus calls him "the prince of this world" (John 12:31) and Paul describes him as "the ruler of the kingdom of the air" (Eph 2:2) and we're told by John that the whole world lies in his power (1 John 5:19).

There's more, satan isn't like God. He's like, us created, limited, fallible and defeated. Unlike God, he isn't omnipresent. He's not present everywhere all the time. But he's still a personal devil because he's got a whole network of agents who do the work for him so he gets coverage as it were. In the Bible these are called demons, fallen angels or powers and authorities.

Satan's power and authority are nothing compared to God's – Jesus has thoroughly trounced him and Jesus is far above all powers and authorities.

The next item is interesting too. He doesn't know everything. He's created. He's not God. In the Bible, all interaction between angels and people, or by demons and people was done out loud. In Daniel 2 King Nebuchadnezzar demanded that his sorcerers reveal the content of his dreams before interpreting them so he could validate the divine source of their interpretation. Except Daniel of course because God revealed it to them. These sorcerers could not do this because their normal source of information (demons) could not read the king's mind.

That said, he is able to put thoughts into our minds and thousands of years experience of observing human behaviour has meant that it isn't too hard for him to work out what's going on in people's minds.

HOW SATAN WORKS

Which brings us on to how he works. I guess I've already said it. He works through a well organised network of agents – demons – Paul said: **12 For we are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age.**

We don't know much else about how they are organised because the Bible doesn't tell us because if we're properly protected by God's armour and equipped with God's weapons, we're safe.

I've already mentioned that satan's main mode of attack is by putting thoughts into our minds. Paul says this: **1 Tim 4:1 Now the Spirit says clearly that in the last times some people will abandon the faith by following deceitful spirits, the teachings of demons.**

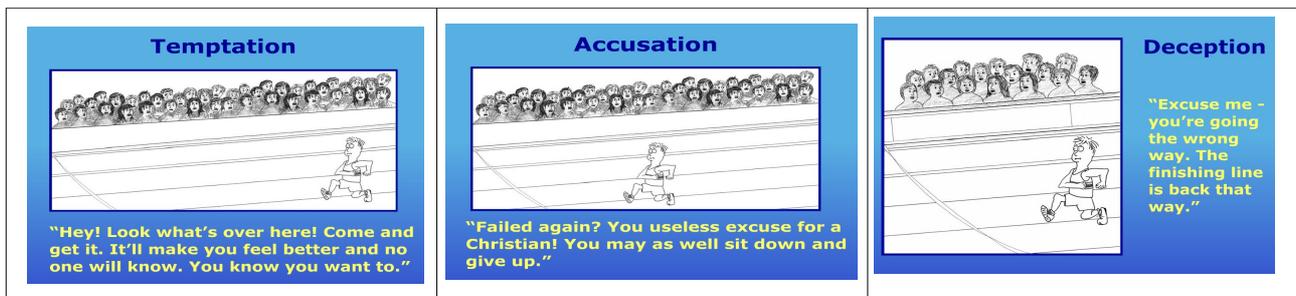
So Christians can be deceived to abandon their faith. Look at the real world and you'll find that to be the case, but here's three Biblical examples:

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| <p>Putting Thoughts Into Our Minds</p> <p>Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel 1 Chronicles 21:1</p> <p>The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus John 13:2</p> | <p>Putting Thoughts Into Our Minds</p> <p>Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?" Acts 5:3</p> |
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If satan could put thoughts into people's minds at significant points in history, so he can do with us. In fact, that's exactly what he does. Ephesians 6 – fiery darts.

HOW SATAN WORKS 2

He does it by temptation, accusation and deception



How many of us have experienced some form of temptation in the last week?

How many of us have struggled with the voice of the accuser?

How often has satan deceived you? Deception is satan's primary strategy because the mark of a good con-man is that it can be quite a while before you realise you have been conned.

HOW SATAN WORKS 3

By gaining footholds. We thought about strongholds last week. Satan wants to get a foothold in our lives. There are obvious ways – through the occult and through taking an interest in horror stuff. They are doors to our imagination that satan can use to fill us with fear of him. Or worse, people think that it's all so stupid that the devil is an object of ridicule so the truth is concealed that way. Then the devil gets the foothold in the Christian easily because the shield is dropped and the armour is not worn. I remember an incident a few years ago of a policewoman who was murdered in a knife attack in Tottenham. All police in London are issued with stab vests. So what went wrong. It was a hot day and the WPC did not think she was going into a dangerous situation so she took the uncomfortable vest off. She was stabbed once by a man who did not look dangerous – but he had a concealed knife. Never underestimate the enemy.

The devil gets easy footholds with Christians. You might never have seen a ouija board, read a horoscope, gone to a spiritualist church but the devil has no problem getting a foothold in honest to goodness Christians. **FOOTHOLD SCRIPTURES** Here are Paul's words. Eph 4:26-27: **26 And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 for anger gives a foothold to the devil.**

Anger itself isn't sinful, but bitterness and grudge turns it into that and gives the devil an opportunity to hang on and influence our lives. People look for works of the devil in massive evil outbursts, but once he has a foothold, it's often in the simmering resentment or grudges we have. Let me give you another verse: **10 If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, 11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.**

One of the biggest access points for satan is unforgiveness. We'll do more in a later week, but understand this: unforgiveness is like swinging the door of your life open and asking satan to come on in and have a good time. Any sin gives the devil a foothold – he then exploits it so things get worse.

DEMONS AND CHRISTIANS

Here's an aside which some Christians often ask about. How can demons influence Christians?

First of all, they don't possess Christians **1 Peter 1:18-19 18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.**

If you're a Christian, that applies to you. You are now God's possession. However if we fall for satan's tricks then as we have already realised, he gets a foothold and gets influence in our lives and can blind us to the truth of God. If he can't have us, then he can get a foothold and kick us into touch spiritually and we may live with all the unbelief, confusion, fear and other problems that come along with him; usually habitual sin or even worse things which I don't have time to get into this morning. If we recognise that has happened to us then He who is in us – the Holy Spirit – is greater than he who is in the world. As I've mentioned previously, there is a process I'll introduce to us to a little later on in the series that can help, but if you know there are issues that you need prayer for today, then please do ask someone to pray with you

OUR DEFENCE

I said earlier that satan is an easier problem than the world or the flesh. The reason why is that in Christ we are secure and we are under the authority of Jesus. His name is the one that is above every name and it's that name that send the devil running.

Jesus the name high over all
In hell or earth or sky
angels and men before it fall
and devils fear and fly.

Charles Wesley

Let's give ourselves some scripture.

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| <p>Christ's Position</p> <p>That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.</p> <p><small>Ephesians 1:19-22</small></p> | <p>Our Position In Christ</p> <p>God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.</p> <p><small>Ephesians 2:6</small></p> <p>"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations."</p> <p><small>Matthew 28:18-19</small></p> | <p>Our Position In Christ</p> <p>Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.</p> <p><small>Ephesians 6:10</small></p> <p>Put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.</p> <p><small>Ephesians 6:13</small></p> <p>Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.</p> <p><small>James 4:7</small></p> |
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OUR DEFENCE 2

Do not be frightened. The devil works by speaking lies at us to make us afraid. Don't be afraid of him, we belong to Jesus. **SPRAY** He can only do harm to us if we think that we're weak, whereas in the name of Jesus we yield all the authority and power necessary to resist him and make him and his demons flee from us.

OUR DEFENCE 3

Guard ourselves. I've already mentioned that satan gets into our lives through footholds. Steer clear of that which is obviously religion but not of God and according to His word. It does damage Christians. Beware.

OUR DEFENCE 4

Turn on the light. Satan only gets control because he can lie and get away with it. I get hundreds of junk emails a day. All of them are trying to trick me out of money. All disappear into my spam folder and are deleted never to be seen again. Why? Because I know their tricks. I've done my reading up, I've done my homework. I've been caught before and learned my lesson too. Our defence to satan is **TURN ON THE LIGHT**. What do I mean. We can either fill our minds with darkness or fill it with the knowledge of God, who is light. How do I do that. Here. By His Word. Everything I have said this morning is in the Bible. That's how we expose satan and his works. But in knowing the Word of God, we are also wise to his lies and his ways. We don't get caught. We don't let him get a foothold.

Here's something you see in shops – it's a counterfeit note detector. Why do we need them? Because forgers today are very good and what seems OK to us isn't when the light of the counterfeit machine hits it. Satan has had thousands of years to perfect his lies. We haven't. How do we tell his lies from the truth – by shining the light of God on it – through knowing His Word and being guided by His Spirit. And that's freely available to each one of us – we needn't fall for any of the devil's cons.

Prayer - that God will start to give each of us a greater hunger for His word and for His presence daily – because that keeps us happy and healthy as Christians.

6 Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. 7 And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.

8 In conclusion, my brothers and sisters, fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honourable.

Preached by Mark Reid, 12/7/09 MRBC Felixstowe
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