

(Ephesians) the Wiles of the Devil

by Brian Brodersen

The devil attacks the mind through thoughts of condemnation, doubt, fear, evil thoughts, depression, and discouragement, but believers can resist his attacks by putting on the armor of God and seeking God's guidance and wisdom.

Duration: 59:28

Scripture: Matthew 16:16, Ephesians 6:10-13, Ephesians 6:16, 2 Timothy 2:3

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Faith Trust"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by thanking God for being the good shepherd and for watching over us. He encourages the listeners to trust in God and not be discouraged by Satan's attempts to hinder their faith. The speaker then shares about a recent event where various musical groups from around the world came together to share their music and testimonies. The event was attended by a thousand people, most of whom were not Christians, providing an opportunity to share the gospel. The speaker also references John Bunyan, a Puritan who faced persecution and imprisonment for his faith, and highlights the importance of remaining steadfast in the face of spiritual warfare.

Transcript

Lord, we do want to worship you. We want to be true worshipers. Lord, people whose lives are dedicated entirely to you.

So Lord, just work into us that work of your spirit for that purpose that we might glorify you. We thank you in advance for what you're going to do tonight here among us. Amen.

Well, great to see you tonight. Great to be back. I want to begin this evening by thanking each and every one of you that prayed for us on our outreach over in England this past week and a half ago or so.

Actually, it was last. Yeah, and we just had a tremendous time, a better time than I even had hoped that we would have. And things went really smoothly.

And we had just a tremendous outreach. We had we did what was called, I think I told you before I left, we did a festival, a music festival where we had an opportunity, of course, along with the music to present the gospel to many, many people. And we labeled it Creation Fest just because there's this whole uproar in Britain right now over the subject of creation.

So we thought we'd get right into the middle of that uproar, capitalize on the interest in it. And we ended up having six different groups come from all over the world to share musically. We had three groups from South Africa.

We had two bands come over from the United States and we had Alan's band from London come and join us. And so we did a thing that was probably about a six hour event. And the bands, of course, did their music and they shared their background and a little bit of testimony.

And then we had some testimonies that were shared. And then between all of the bands and things that were going on that night, I was doing little preaching segments for, you know, eight to ten minutes or something like that. And we were just really excited about the outcome of the event.

Over a thousand people attended and the vast majority of them were not Christians. And so, you know, that's what you really want to see is just to be able to get out there and get the gospel of people that have never heard it before. And so that was tremendous.

And I talked to my friend Phil and Devin yesterday and he was saying now that a week has passed, he sort of, you know, seen some of the fruit and he's finding that people that we had no idea that were there were actually their key people in the city. And God really touched them through what they saw. And they the sort of the elders of the city, they have all concluded that this was one of the best things to happen in that area in a long, long time.

So we are really thankful for what the Lord did. And and I really do. I want to thank you guys, because, you know, it was one of those times where there were there were some bumps in the road and you could sense the enemy's presence and the conflict.

But yet at the same time, you could sense that God was just keeping the enemy at bay. And I really attribute that to all the prayer that went forth for the event. So thank you so much for that.

And just so you don't lose your fervor and praying will give you something else to pray about. Coming up in the next week or so here, we have our high school ministry is taking a team of about 20 people over to France. And we've had a church in the city of Nice in France for quite a few years now.

And it's a very difficult place. It's a very tough place. And this is one of the first real outreaches that they've done in a long time.

And so Tuesday, they're flying over. And Wednesday, they'll begin to do their outreach to the city of Nice. And so would you just keep them in prayer? The high school fellowship, keep them in prayer that God will use them.

They'll be doing music on the streets. They'll be doing drama and they'll be having an end of the week concert. And they've had to get permits and so forth to do anything out in public.

And as of yet, the mayor hasn't really given full permission. So pray that the permission would be granted and then pray that God would draw many people to that end of the week concert so they could really preach the gospel. They're not really allowed to preach out in the public, but I'm sure they'll have wisdom from the Lord as to how to go about that.

But keep our high school ministry in prayer. Now, as you already know, we have a concert after the service this evening at 7:30. And so for you radio listeners, just want to remind you of that, invite you out.

We have a great lineup tonight. We have Courtney Chambers, who's just fantastic. She's a lady who attends our church here.

Just, you know, just one of those typical mothers who happens to play pretty good rock and roll guitar. And so she's great. I really enjoy her music.

So she's here tonight. And Phil Wickham is up with us tonight from San Diego area with his band. And then all the way from London, England, we have our friends, M.O.D., Ministry of Defense, and they do the hip hop rap thing.

And it is a real treat. So we're looking forward to that this evening. And we canceled the In-N-Out Burger truck because it seemed like people are more interested in hot dogs made by our singles ministry than in hamburgers made by In-N-Out.

So we've got hot dogs by the singles ministry tonight. So looking forward to being out there. So hope you can join us.

Let's turn tonight to Ephesians chapter six for our Bible study. And we're going to continue tonight our disjointed effort to make it through a series on spiritual warfare. I really do apologize for all the Saturdays I've been missing.

But, you know, there are just so many things to do these days. And but I trust that God's going to help us to get through this series. We'll do a session tonight and then next Saturday.

And then unfortunately, I'll be gone again for a couple of Saturdays, but we'll come back after that and we'll have two more on the subject of spiritual warfare. And then we'll move on to something new, having finished Ephesians. But we pick up tonight and let me just refresh your memory, because it has been a while since we've been together.

But we began quite a few weeks ago, a series of studies on the subject of spiritual warfare, and we got through two sessions. We did the Christian warfare was the first session, and we just talked about the reality of the battle that we're in. And we looked a bit at the enemy who opposes us.

And we looked at how God has made a way for us to have victory there. And then in the second study, we the study was entitled the God of this age. And we looked a little more specifically at some of the activity of the devil in the world at large.

And then we came back. And you remember, we finished up Ephesians because we were sort of holding up the Ephesians series. So we finished that up with looking at this whole segment on the subject of spiritual warfare.

And so now we come tonight to picking up again on the series. And our subject tonight is the subject of the wiles of the devil. Now, this is a message that I've given quite a few times over the years in a variety of different contexts.

And this is a message that I find to be a very critical message for the church. It's something that every time I give it people, I really believe, you know, maybe for the first time some people are illuminated to

something that's been going on in their life that they haven't really understood what it was. And they began to see how Satan works.

And that, of course, is the first step to victory, to know that your enemy has a certain tactic. And then you're able to recognize when he's at work and you're able to counter the activity of the enemy. So I anticipate that this message tonight will serve to encourage many of you.

And so let's read together once again, Ephesians 6, 10, and we'll go through a few verses here. Paul says, Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand. Now, let's jump down to verse 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

So there are two things that we read here that I want to emphasize tonight, the wiles of the devil and the fiery darts of the wicked one. Although covering a broad range of activity, these are no doubt inclusive of Satan's attack upon our mind and our emotions. Satan attacks us in the realm of our mind and subsequently that affects us emotionally.

Now, just how it is that Satan has the ability to interfere with our thinking process, I don't know, but I do know that he does. I know from the Bible as well as from personal experience. And so let's look for a moment at some biblical examples of Satan's ability to influence people's thinking way back in the ministry of David toward the end of David's ministry as the king.

We read in Second Chronicles, chapter 21, verse one, that Satan rose up against Israel and he tempted David to number the children of Israel. And here we see that Satan puts a suggestion in the mind of David to do something that was against the will of God. Now, I would imagine that when this idea just suddenly popped into David's mind, he wasn't aware of the fact that it was Satan who had suggested that to him.

But that's exactly what the scripture tells us, that it was Satan who was moving against Israel. And so he suggested David to count. The children of Israel, there's an example right there in the New Testament, we see in the life of Peter.

An incident occurred where Satan actually was speaking to him and even speaking through him. You remember when Jesus was there with his disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration and he said to them, who do men say that I am? And they began to say, well, some say you're Jeremiah. Some say you're one of the other prophets.

Some say you're John the Baptist. He said, but who do you say that I am? And Peter responded and he said, you are the Christ. You're the Messiah, the son of the living God.

And Jesus then in turn said to Peter, blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you. But my father in heaven revealed it to you. So Peter was just under the influence of the spirit and he spoke by divine revelation that Jesus was the Christ.

Now, having made that statement, Jesus then proceeded to tell them what was going to happen. He began to tell them that he was indeed the Christ and that he was going to go to Jerusalem. He was going to be betrayed by the chief priest and the elders.

He was going to be delivered over to the Gentiles. He was going to be mocked and scourged and crucified and killed. And Peter immediately spoke up and he said, not so, Lord, far be that from you.

And Jesus then turned to Peter, the person who just a few moments earlier had had divine revelation. And he said, get behind me, Satan, for you do not savor the things of God, but the things of men. And so here's Peter, the great apostle, the follower of Jesus and David, the great king, the man after God's own heart.

Both of them we see. Came under the influence of the devil in their thinking process, the devil planted a suggestion in their mind and David acted it out and Peter spoke it out. Now, I wanted to share with you, David and Peter, because they are two people who were actually believers.

And so if that can happen to David and Peter, it can certainly happen to us today as well. But we have other examples. We have the example of Judas Iscariot, of course, and in John chapter 13, we read that the devil having put into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus.

You see, the devil planted that plan within the mind of Judas and Judas went ahead and acted out what the devil had planted in his mind. You remember the story in Acts chapter five of Ananias and Sapphira, how they came and they fabricated this story about how they sold a piece of property for so much money and they pretended that they were giving all the money to the ministry. And Peter, being filled with discernment and wisdom from God, he said, why has Satan filled your heart to lie against the Holy Spirit? So it was Satan, again, Peter could see behind the scene, it was Satan who made this suggestion and put this plan into their minds that they would go ahead and try to dupe the apostles in this regard.

But then we have from the apostle Paul, a more general statement that shows us Satan's ability to affect people's thinking. He said in 2nd Corinthians, chapter four, the God of this age, who is Satan. Has blinded the minds of those who do not believe the God of this age has blinded the minds of men.

So Satan comes and he affects the minds of unbelievers, keeping them in unbelief of people in hypocrisy and leading them into more hypocrisy. But he also affects the minds of believers and he seeks to get us thinking the wrong thing, saying the wrong thing or doing the wrong thing. Now, these are biblical examples, but as I said, there are many examples from personal experience as well.

Now, this morning, Cheryl and I were sitting there having breakfast and as we were just sort of sitting quietly, I was just thinking in my mind over the wonderful events that had transpired in the past week when I was in the UK. And as I was thinking about it, I began to chuckle and she said, what do you what are you laughing about? And I said, you know, I was just thinking about the experience I had as I was making the decision to go and to be part of this outreach, because I had I had been a part of the planning process all the way along. But at a certain point I had dropped out and said, you know, I'm not going to be involved in this thing because I will have just gotten back from England and it's ridiculous that I should turn around and go again.

And so, you know, I thought that I wasn't going to be part of it. But when I was in England, I just you know, I sort of felt like the Lord was saying, I want you to be part of this. So I said, well, Lord, if you really want me to be part of it, because I'm not all that thrilled about getting on a plane 10 days after I get home and

going back to England.

But if you really want me to be part of it, then have Phil bring it up to me. One of those little fleeces before the Lord, you know. So the first thing Phil said when he saw me is, you know, Brian, I really think you should come.

And I thought, OK, Lord, well, that's you. So I made the commitment. I said, yeah, Phil, I'll come.

And then this is what we ought to do. And this is what we ought to do. And this is what we ought to do.

After I made the commitment, it wasn't an hour later. Suddenly I began to be hit with these thoughts like, you know, that's ridiculous. You're coming back, you know, you're wasting your time and you're wasting people's money.

And, you know, what are you going to do anyway? And, you know, it's almost I mean, this whole thing of the fiery darts, they really are like darts because they they hit you and they sort of like, oh, you know. And and then, you know, because I had asked a couple of other people to be involved, you know, suddenly this thought in my mind, oh, that was stupid to ask them. They're not going to be able to do anything.

And that's ridiculous. And how are you going to get the money to pay for them to be there? And I'm just, you know, and I'm thinking to myself, I got to get out of this. You know, I got to just tell Phil that, oh, you know, it's a bad idea.

Sorry, I'm not going to come after all. You're on your own. But, you know, as that was going on, I suddenly realized, wait a second.

I have had this experience way too many times to, you know, to buckle under it. But like I said today, I was chuckling. I was thinking, well, no wonder the devil was suggesting that it was a stupid idea to go and be involved in that, because we just put a major dent in the bumper of his car and he's upset about it.

And but, you know, I told you that story because I want to illustrate to you how Satan attacks in the realm of our mind. And as we go on tonight, I think you're going to see more clearly that he does indeed do that. And I think you're going to come to the realization that a lot of things that happen in your lives, a lot of things that go on in your thinking process are actually the work of the devil against you.

Now, we want to talk tonight about. The satanic attacks upon the mind that result in experiences like condemnation, doubt, fear, evil thoughts, depression and discouragement, and we'll take them in that order. Condemnation, this is something that.

I find. Many, many people. Fall victim to very frequently condemnation is that feeling of being cut off from the love or the forgiveness of God, this.

Occurs most often after some failure on our part. Perhaps you've failed in some way in your Christian experience, perhaps you've fallen into sin or perhaps you felt that God was calling you to do something and you didn't follow through with it and you, you know, you feel like you've let the Lord down. When those experiences happen to us, the enemy comes in immediately and he tries to capitalize on that experience.

He tries to get us to think that God is finished with us. He tries to get us to think that we've just, you know, gone over the limit one too many times. And now God is he's done.

He's not going to forgive us anymore. And sometimes we even have those feelings after we've confessed, after we've repented, we've said, Lord, forgive me. But yet we don't feel any better.

As a matter of fact, we still feel miserable. That feeling is what is known as condemnation. And that is one of the things that Satan uses very frequently on us as God's people.

He's always looking for any area to accuse us in any area where we failed, any area where we've even maybe failed to live up, not to God's expectation, but we can place expectations on ourselves, fall short of them. And then the devil comes in and says, oh, see, you're worthless. You might as well cash it in.

God's not interested in you. Look how many times you failed him. And he comes with those things and and quite often we you know, we fall under that condemnation is designed to drive us away from God.

It's basically designed to get us to despair of God's love and forgiveness and to give up the faith, because after all, if God's finished with us, then what's the use of going on? When we were involved in this outreach last week, there was a team that came and joined the effort from Calvary Chapel, Fort Lauderdale. And, you know, as I came in a few days after they were there and I got there late one afternoon and we went immediately to an outreach and, you know, I hadn't slept in about 30 hours. So I was kind of wasted.

And Phil comes to me, says, Brian, you've got to do devotions first thing in the morning. I said, Phil, I'd like to be asleep first thing in the morning. So let's get somebody else to do the devotions and then I'll do them the next day.

And so, you know, I walked away and I thought, oh, that was pretty spiritual of me to just pass the buck on to somebody else. And Phil comes back and says, no, I think you need to do it. And I said, yeah, the Lord already spoke to me and I think I should speak on the subject of spiritual warfare.

And he said, you need to, because there's a lot of you know, there's a lot of conflict going on around what we're doing right now. So anyway, I shared the next morning with the group. It's a group of about 50.

I shared with them on the subject of spiritual warfare. And afterwards, a young lady came up to me. She was part of the team, but she was from Knoxville, Tennessee, and a small group had joined the team.

And she said to me, she said, you know, I thank you so much for that message today, because I really needed it. She said, I came here. I was all excited about the outreach.

And then I got here and I just felt this heaviness come upon me. And I really felt like I was struggling and trying to connect with people. And then I began to feel like, well, maybe God's not with me after all.

And then I began to feel that, well, I probably let him down. So he's disappointed in me and he doesn't really want to use me. So I began to feel like I should just shut up.

And and, you know, and I'm listening to her thinking, oh, yeah, that's it. That's what the devil does. He comes in and he's bringing this whole case of, you know, you've done this and you failed here and God's finished and he's not going to use you on this outreach.

You might as well just shut up. You might as well just stay in your room all day because you can't be used by the Lord. You see, that's how Satan operates.

He comes in with that heavy condemnation and he tries to get us to buy into it. And many people do. I do sometimes.

Not for as long as I used to, but I still do. You know, there are times when God's calling me to do something and then the enemy will come in with all this. Well, why do you think you could do that after all? Remember all the times you failed God and then pretty soon you're sitting there just like, you know, yeah, I can't do this.

I'm such a failure. God surely doesn't want to use me. That's all Satan.

That's the way he works. And so condemnation is a very common tactic of the devil. Remember this.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And remember this. If you confess your sin, he's faithful and just to forgive you.

You stand by faith on that. Even if you don't feel forgiven, you are forgiven if you've confessed. And by faith, you just accept that and you move ahead.

Another of the devil's darts is to plant doubt in our minds. Satan will try to get you to doubt everything from God's existence.

To your own salvation, to God's call upon your life to serve him. To what God has spoken to you about regarding what he wants to do for you, the enemy wants us to doubt God and his word. And I don't know that any of us are ever exempt from this sort of an attack or immune to it.

I know that I myself, after almost 25 years of walking with the Lord and teaching his word for so many years and so forth. I can still have times where the enemy will just bombard me with doubt. And that's something that he has been doing for a long, long time.

He especially is concerned to cast doubt upon the word of God. That's his primary attack. He wants to attack the word of God.

And look how successful he's been. I mean, it's unbelievable how many people he has been able to do and to get them to give up their faith and their hope in the scriptures. And that's the primary target.

He goes after our belief in God's word, our trust in the Lord through his word. He attacks directly his word. When I was young in the ministry, I went through a prolonged period of illness.

And of course, Satan is he's ruthless. And so, you know, he will take advantage of your weakness. And if you fall into some sort of a difficult state, he'll come and try to capitalize on that.

And he'll kick you when you're down, basically. And I had this experience at this time where the enemy came like a roaring lion and he just began to attack the word of God. And there were times in my mind where the word of God was so under attack, it was just relentless.

It never you know, it never let up. It just you know, from the time I woke up in the morning till I went to bed at night, it was there. And if I woke up, if I would wake up in the middle of the night, it was there as well.

And it was just a constant assault against the truth of God's word concerning the validity of the scriptures, concerning the person of Jesus Christ, concerning the whole means of salvation, all of these things. Satan

works that way. He's been very successful in history, attacking the word of God and getting people to give up their faith in God's word.

You remember in the Garden of Eden, what was his angle there? He came to Eve and what did he do? The very first thing he did when he spoke to the woman was he sought to cast doubt upon the word of God. He said to her, has God really said you shall not eat of all the trees in the garden? You see what he was doing? He was trying to plant doubt in her mind. So that's what he did with Eve, and he found that it was very successful and he's been doing it ever since.

He even had the audacity to try it with Jesus. You remember when Jesus was in the wilderness, Satan comes and he says, if you are the son of God, he's trying to get Jesus to doubt his own connection with the father. If you're really the son of God, then take these stones and turn them into bread.

If he has the audacity to attack Jesus and to challenge the validity of the word of God to Jesus, you can bet your life he's going to do it with you. And that's what he does. He comes and he attacks the word of God.

And as I said, you think of how successful he has been. You know, there are men who started off as sincere Bible believing, God loving Christians seeking to minister God's word to people and now have basically come to a point where they have denied the faith. Some of these, you know, sometimes you'll read in a news periodical or something or an article in the newspaper or you'll hear on the news about this theologian or that theologian that came up with this absolutely ludicrous statement.

You know, the interesting thing is a lot of those fellows, if you look back in their early history, they had a faith in the word of God. But tragically, it wasn't rooted deep enough. So when they went off to their seminary or whatever and they started hearing their, you know, atheistic professors bash the word of God over and over again, they began to buy into that.

And now they're just completely out there. Satan is relentless in his attack against the word of God, and he's going to try to get us to doubt God's word. But know this, that the temptation to doubt is not the sin of doubt.

You can be assailed with temptation to doubt, but as long as you're not succumbing to that, as long as you're not surrendering to it, then you're not sinning. But of course, Satan comes in and he plants a doubt in your mind and then he turns around, says, oh, look, you doubted God. Oh, God doesn't like you anymore because you doubted him and he does not bless those who are in unbelief.

And there you are. Oh, no, I doubted God. I'm cursed.

I'm full of unbelief. No, don't own that thought. That's not your thought.

If those kinds of things come into your mind, you say, oh, I hate that. I don't agree with that. I don't want to know whose thought it is.

It was planted there by Satan himself. Fear, Satan will oftentimes seek to frighten us away from the will of God, threatening evil consequences for those who obey the Lord. This is another tactic.

And again, you know, the amazing thing is these kinds of things, they work so well. Satan really hasn't changed his he hasn't changed his approach over the years. He still does the same things.

As we think about I remember my own experience before I really committed my life to the Lord back, you know, when I was just in my early 20s, I remember moving in that direction. Then all of a sudden some circumstances happened to lead me to believe that if I really made that commitment of my life to Christ, man, trouble was ahead. And so, you know what I did? I stepped back.

I just said, wait a second, I don't I'm not up for this. And the enemy succeeded in keeping me back from a real commitment to the Lord out of fear that if I really made that commitment, then it was going to bring these evil consequences. And he's done it over and over and over again to so many people.

God might be speaking to you, God might have a plan, he might be calling you to do something. And Satan rushes in right away and he says, oh, no, if you do that, then this is going to happen. One of the most pronounced experiences I ever had in this regard, I remember it like it was an hour ago.

It was years ago and it was one of those times, you know, where I was just in a place where I wanted to really make a full and complete dedication of my life to the Lord again. And and I'll never forget, I was there and I was by myself on my knees and I was praying and I was just saying, Lord, take my life. I want to be your servant entirely, completely.

And, you know, I was just dedicating myself fully to him. And in a flash, like a like a bolt, you know, right into my prayer time, there was this thought that if you do this, it will mean the death of your children. And I just remember all of a sudden it just shook me so violently that I stopped my prayer and everything.

Wait a second. And, you know, I think back on that now and I just remember, you know, that just that fear that suddenly I was seized by that was the enemy wanting to keep me back in this context. I've so often told this story and I got to tell it real quickly again because it's so appropriate.

But it's the story of John Wesley, John Wesley, who led the great 18th century revival in England and was basically responsible for changing the course of British history. When he was originally sought out by George Whitefield to take the open air preaching ministry that George Whitefield had begun and to carry on the revival that God had started, his immediate response was that he would not do it because when the invitation came, he was suddenly stricken with the fear that if he did this, it would mean certain death. Just as fast as the invitation came, suddenly there was that thought, if you do this, it will mean certain death for you.

And so Wesley refrained, he said, no, I I don't believe that I'm the person for the job. And then he sought to ascertain whether or not it was God who was really, you know, showing him that it would be certain death. So on three different occasions, he opened his Bible randomly, which is something that I don't advise you to do.

He opened his Bible randomly and wherever his eyes landed, he took that to be the word of the Lord. And on three different occasions, it seemed to confirm his greatest fear. Well, finally.

After Whitefield had prayed for him and kept encouraging him, he also went to his brother Charles, who was a great man of God. And, you know, in the big picture. But he went to Charles and shared his fear with him.

And Charles said, you're right. I bear witness. You shouldn't do it.

It will mean certain death for you. So finally, after all of this, he just got to a point where there was so much pressure on him. He just said, well, I'm going to do it.

And if I die, I die. He was 45 years old at the time he took the invitation to preach. He ministered for another 45 years.

And it was during that time that the course of British history was altered. It was during that time that Methodism came into existence and impacted this country tremendously. And so, you know, but the devil, you see, the devil knows a life that's sold out to Christ is a powerful life.

And so he's going to do anything he can to keep you from giving yourself entirely to the Lord. And if it's making you afraid of whatever. And, you know, all of us have those deep, dark fears that we never tell anybody else about.

And that's usually the very thing that the enemy says, oh, if you do that, you know where God's going to send you. He's going to give you a ministry in San Quentin. Oh, no, I never wanted to be in prison ministry.

Or he's going to send you to the deepest, darkest part of the jungle where they're still actually headhunting and, you know, cannibalism is going on and things like that. And that's what he does. But listen, that is the devil's way of keeping you out of God's perfect will.

Don't succumb to it. Don't believe it for a moment. God's plans for you are good plans, plans to give you a hope in a future, so don't buy into that fear tactic of Satan.

Another manifestation of the wiles of the devil is evil thoughts. Now, this is a delicate issue here because we can certainly produce our own evil thoughts without the help of the devil. And sometimes we do.

But then, you know, there are other times when the thought process really isn't our own thought process. And the best way to sort of determine whether it's your thought process or one that's being imposed on you by Satan is to just sort of ask yourself, you know, do you take delight in those thoughts? Charles Spurgeon, the great Victorian preacher, was plagued by these kinds of things. And so much so that finally, after a long struggle, he went to his grandfather, who was also a minister, and he confessed to him all of these evil thoughts that were running through his mind.

And his grandfather said, let me ask you a question. Do you delight in these thoughts? And he said, no, I hate them. And his grandfather said, then don't own them.

They're not yours. They belong to the devil. Have you ever been praying and suddenly had your mind assaulted by blasphemous thoughts? Have you ever been worshiping and had pornographic images flash across your mind? Have you ever gone through a period of time when your mind was obsessed by deplorable thoughts, thoughts that sickened and oppressed you, thoughts that you long to be delivered from? If so, know this, you're not alone.

Many of God's faithful servants have experienced similar things, and, you know, it just seems like in certain times this kind of activity is heightened. And I think also this kind of activity is. Somewhat directed toward people who have maybe a disposition toward it or some sort of a vulnerability, I don't know the the mechanics of it.

Not everybody goes through these kinds of things, but many of God's servants do. And many of God's faithful servants in times of great difficulty spiritually, times of great darkness, went through these kinds of things. One of the most striking examples of this type of warfare is seen in some of the experiences of John Bunyan.

Now, we all know who John Bunyan is. He's the man who wrote the book *The Pilgrim's Progress*. *Pilgrim's Progress* is the second bestselling book in history next to the Bible.

This man experienced this assault upon the mind in a way that few people at least have written about. Many others, I'm sure, have had similar experiences, but he wrote down his experiences. And I'd like to read to you from a section of his book, *Grace Abounding*, where he describes his own experience.

And you need to bear with me. It's a bit lengthy, but I think it'll be very helpful. And what's helpful about it is to see that, all right, this is the kind of stuff that God's people go through.

When I was going through a very difficult time like this in my own life, I'll tell you who who got me through it. Charles Spurgeon got me through it. He'd been dead for 100 years, but he got me through it by reading his biography and by him describing the experiences he had as I was reading.

And I was thinking, oh, God, thank you that I'm not the only person because the devil comes along and he wants you to think that you're the only freak around that's thinking these kinds of things. And, you know, basically to get you to throw up your hands and give up the faith. So listen to John Bunyan.

He said at a certain point, a very great storm came down upon me, which handled me 20 times worse than all I had met with before. It came stealing upon me now by one piece, then by another. First, all my comfort was taken from me.

Then darkness seized upon me, after which whole floods of blasphemies, both against God, Christ and the scriptures, were upon were poured upon my spirit to my great confusion and astonishment. These blasphemous thoughts were such as stirred up questions in me against the very being of God and of his only beloved son and whether the holy scriptures were not rather a fable and cunning story than the holy and pure word of God. The tempter would also much assault me with this.

How can you tell but that the Muslims had as good scriptures to prove their Mohammed, the savior, as we have to prove our Jesus? And could I think that so many tens of thousands and so many countries and kingdoms should be without the knowledge of the right way to heaven if there were indeed a heaven and that we only who live in a corner of the earth should alone be blessed therewith? Everyone does think his own religion to be right. Jews, Muslims, pagans. And how, if all our faith in Christ and scriptures should be, but that kind of thinking to.

Sometimes I endeavor to argue against these suggestions and to set some of the sentences of blessed Paul against them. But alas, I quickly felt when I thus did such arguings as these would return upon me, though we made so great a deal of Paul and his words. Yet how could I tell? But that in very deed, he being a subtle and cunning man might give himself up to deceive with strong delusions and also take the pains and travel to undo and destroy his fellows.

These suggestions, with many others, which at this time did make such a seizure upon my spirit and did so overweigh my heart, both with their number and continuance and fiery force that I felt as if there were nothing else but these from morning to night with me. And as though, indeed, there could be room for

nothing else and also concluded that God had in very wrath to my soul, given me up to be carried away with them as with a mighty whirlwind, only by the distaste that they gave into my spirit. I felt there was something in me that refused to embrace them.

But this consideration I then only had when God gave me leave to swallow my spittle. Otherwise, the noise and strength and force of these temptations would drown and overflow. And as it were, very all such thoughts or remembrance of any such thing.

While I was in this temptation, I often found my mind suddenly put upon to curse and swear to speak some grievous thing against God or Christ, his son and of the scriptures. Now, I thought, surely I am possessed of the devil. At other times, I thought I should be bereft of my wits for instead of lauding and magnifying God, the Lord, with others, if I have but heard him spoken of presently, some most horrible, blasphemous thought or other would bolt out of my heart against him so that whether I did think that God was or again did think that there was no such thing, no love or peace or gracious disposition could I feel within me.

These things did sink me into very deep despair, for I concluded that such things would not possibly be found amongst them that loved God. I often when these temptations had been with force upon me, I did compare myself to the case of such a child whom some gypsy half by force taken up in her arms and is carrying from friend and country kick. Sometimes I did and also shriek and cry, but yet I was bound in the wings of the temptation and the wind would carry me away.

I thought also of Saul and of the evil spirit that did possess him and did greatly fear that my condition was the same with that of his. And these days, when I have heard others talk of what was the sin against the Holy Spirit, then with the tempter, so provoke me to desire to send that sin that I would that it was as if I could not must not neither should be quiet until I had committed it. Now, no sin would serve, but that if it were to be committed by speaking such a word, then I have been as if my mouth would have spoken that word, whether I would or not.

And in so strong a measure was this temptation upon me that often I have been ready to clap my hands under my chin to hold my mouth from opening. And to that end, also, I have had thoughts at other times to leap with my head downward into some muck hole or other to keep my mouth from speaking. That is a real description of the kind of brutal, ruthless warfare that we can experience sometimes as God's servants.

Now, remember, John Bunyan lived in a very critical time in history. He lived in a time of the great persecution against the Puritans in England. He himself was in prison for 13 years.

And you could see how the devil was just having a heyday in that land at that time. And anyone who was seeking the Lord and seeking to serve the Lord, he just all barrels were directed at that at those people. And Bunyan happened to be one of them.

But even if we are assailed in such a manner. We have to remember. And Bunyan, of course, came through these things, we have to remember that the battle belongs to the Lord and he'll bring us through it, he'll give us the victory ultimately.

But sometimes we go through these periods and they're difficult, difficult times. But there are times that really do teach us to cling to God like never before. And there are times that really turn us into warriors and teach us how to be victorious in the fight of faith.

We come now finally to the subject of depression and discouragement. And this is another one of Satan's tactics. Now, not everybody is prone to depression.

Some people are more inclined toward depression than others. I think all of us can at some time or another become discouraged. The two things do seem to go hand in hand.

Satan will quite often blow things out of proportion. He will make a mountain out of a molehill. He'll come along and he'll take some problem or some situation that you're worried about or whatever, and then he will begin to just, you know, get you to concentrate on that thing.

And then he'll start to blow it up. And pretty soon it is just so big you can't see anything else. And and you become overwhelmed and this depression sets in because you see no way of overcoming this thing.

And then pretty soon you're discouraged and then, you know, you're ready to just give up. And as I said, some people are more vulnerable than others in this area. And I know people who Satan knows that vulnerability and he comes after them in that area.

And many times it's it's on the tail of the tail end of a victory that we have. And, you know, I just I had this experience this past week and telling you all the glorious things that God did and he did do great things. And I left England on Monday, just so excited about all that God had done and all that God's going to do.

And by the time I arrived home, which was about 10 hours later. I had an email from a good friend in England. And this is a person that God is using powerfully, mightily, but Satan was so overwhelming him.

With things, he was to the point of just ready to give the whole thing up. And, you know, as I read through his letter and the things that he was sharing with me, I could just see how little difficulties and problems Satan had taken them and magnified them a thousand times over. And brought him to this overwhelmed state that can happen to us at times.

But yet again, we've got to remember we're in a battle. And of course, whenever we do. Take ground from the enemy, whenever we do put a dent in what he's doing, he's going to retaliate, he's going to come and he's going to try to get us depressed and discouraged, get us focusing on the wrong thing, get our eyes off the good things that God is doing.

And he has been very successful with that. Many of God's people throughout the ages have known what it's like to be depressed. The psalmist knew depression.

Listen to the words of the psalmist, Psalm 77. In the day of my trouble, I sought the Lord. My hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing.

My soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God and was troubled. I complained and my spirit was overwhelmed.

You hold my eyelids open. I am so troubled that I cannot speak. Boy, that is one accurate description of depression right there.

So troubled, I cannot speak so troubled, I cannot sleep. When I think about God and and hoping for the deliverance, yet my thoughts are troubling me. The psalmist knew depression.

Paul, the apostle, said in 2 Corinthians 1:8, said we are burdened beyond measure, above strength so that we despaired even of life. I think that's a pretty clear description of depression as well.

We also have examples from church history of those who have suffered from depression. I've already mentioned Spurgeon and some of the battles that he had. Let me quote from him.

He said, I have all men and perhaps the subject of the deepest depression, depression so fearful. I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to. People who were used mightily by God sometimes.

Suffer severe attacks in these areas, William Cooper, the great hymn writer. The one who wrote, There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins and sinners. Dipped beneath that flood, lose all their guilt and stains.

He was the the subject of of great depressions on one occasion or on several occasions, actually, but one most notable occasion, he was so depressed that he planned to kill himself. He went out and attempted to kill himself. But yet God prevented him from doing so.

And his church, his pastor, they prayed for months for him, and finally he was delivered to some extent, but he battled this throughout the rest of his life. You know, there are certain things that are just part of being soldiers of Jesus Christ. Depression itself can have a variety of sources.

Sometimes there are medical issues that need to be addressed. But always. In every case of depression, I believe there is a satanic element.

And so even if there is a medical factor that needs to be treated as well, we cannot go without much prayer when we come into these places. And that's what's going to make the major difference. You can take the medications and those things and sometimes they can be beneficial.

But the greatest weapon against depression is prayer. Now, these are some of the wiles of the devil. How do we respond to it? Well, let's close by just quoting from First Peter five, eight and nine.

Peter said, be sober, be vigilant because your adversary, the devil, walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Here's what we do. Resist him steadfast in the faith to stand on God's word.

Even if you have to go back and stand on it a thousand times a day, you know, there are those evil days. Sometimes you get one dart in the day, you hold up the shield of faith and then you just press on. Sometimes you get a hundred, sometimes you get a thousand.

Sometimes you have to just keep returning to the word of God all throughout the day, just around the clock. You got the arrows come and you go right back and you stand upon the word of God. Resist him steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

You know, that's one of the ways that Satan often brings us down. He seeks to make us think that we're alone. He tries to isolate us and then.

He imposes upon our minds that, oh, nobody else has ever had this experience, nobody else has ever thought these things. Oh, you're you're one in a million and you're the one that God's cast off or whatever. It's not true.

The same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world, but know that God. Will lead us in victory as we trust him to do so, let's pray, Lord, we thank you that greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world. And Lord, although we have a formidable foe.

In the devil, we know, Lord, he's no match for you. And Lord, I pray that as we would just get a bit of an understanding of how he operates or that that in and of itself would serve to help us on to the road of victory. So, Father, we just commit ourselves to you, Lord, we thank you that you're the good shepherd and Lord, ultimately, you watch out for us.

We thank you, Lord, ultimately, that the battle is yours and you will give us the victory. We trust in you help us, Lord, to press on by faith and not to be. Held back in any way.

By Satan and any of his attempts to discourage, depress, confuse or thwart the work that you're doing in and through our lives, we commit ourselves to you as your servants. Help us, Lord, to wage a good warfare and to endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. In his name, we pray.

Amen. Let's stand together. We're just going to go through a quick chorus and then get out to the field because we're already five minutes late for the concert and I've got to start it.

So so God bless you.

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