

4/7/24 Christ Fellowship

## Know The Enemy – Ephesians 6

How many of you know the name Pat Tillman? You should. He was an American hero. Mr. Tillman was a professional football player with the Arizona Cardinals when 9/11 happened. He played out the rest of the season with the team and then turned down a \$3 million, 3-year contract with Arizona to join the Army. He went into the Army Ranger program and was sent to Iraq and Afghanistan where he served honorably until 2004 when he was shot and killed defending the country he loved.

Anytime one of our great warriors is killed, it's a tragedy. Yes, they know what they are signing up for and they know what can happen to them but the man was a patriot and loved his wife and his family and his death was an absolute tragedy. He will always be known as a hero but there is more to the story that makes it even more tragic.

A month after his death, it became known that Mr. Tillman was not killed by the enemy. In the mountains of Afghanistan, while pursuing the enemy with another group of Army soldiers, the two groups got separated and in the fog of war, Mr. Tillman was accidentally shot and killed by friendly fire.

This is just a horrible situation. This is painful for the Army as a whole. It is painful for the other soldiers around Tillman; painful for his family, painful for his friends, painful for the country. But can you imagine the pain of the soldier who thought he was shooting at the enemy and then found out he had shot and killed one of his own? And can you imagine how the enemy must have rejoiced at the thought of an American killing another American? It is a tragedy on top of a tragedy on top of a tragedy.

Accidents happen and nobody is angry at the soldier who made an honest mistake. But there are consequences to our mistakes and we have to live with them but it's harder when somebody else has to die because of them. So, what might have kept this from happening? Well, if the soldier had the knowledge to know who the enemy was and wasn't, that would have solved the problem. But he also needed wisdom, training, communication and support to be able to have that knowledge and be able to use it.

It's the same for us here today. Whether you realize it or not, we are in a battle. We are in a battle with even more serious consequences than any soldier has ever fought in any battle before. You are being attacked. Your family is being attacked. Your church, your country, your world and your soul is facing an attack like never before and the consequences of this attack are more serious than ever before. We have to fight this battle and we have to win

and we can't make any mistakes or everybody will suffer. So, we are going to spend the next few weeks working on that knowledge, wisdom, training and communication like any good military would. And the first lesson we need to learn is who the enemy really is.

Turn in your military manual to the book of Ephesians and turn to chapter 6. Some of you that were here five years ago know we went through spiritual bootcamp back then and we took a deep dive into Ephesians 6 and we looked at the whole armor of God that we are to put on every day. Well, we have graduated from bootcamp now and we won't spend any more time on the armor. Hopefully you remember that well enough. But we do need to be reminded of who our enemy is and what his plans are. We need to know how he works and who he attacks.

So, let's look at **Ephesians 6** but just **verses 10-13**. **Ephesians 6:10-13** says, *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

In the great, ancient book “The Art of War” by Sun Tzu, the author writes, *“All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when we are able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must appear inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near.”*

That is Satan's favorite way to work. We know he hates us and as **1 Peter 5** says he prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. But his favorite attack is to deceive us into thinking somebody else is doing the attacking. He's like that bully in the classroom that pulls the little girl's hair in front of him and then ducks out of the way when she turns around and points at somebody else. He thinks that is big fun.

But he really enjoys it when he can attack you and you don't even know you are being attacked. That's a hoot to the devil. And while some people don't see the spiritual warfare that we are in at all, some people give Satan too much credit. They think they are being attacked with every hangnail and flat tire in their life. I knew a guy years ago that was convinced he was possessed by a demon because of how often he would be driving around and he would see light bulbs burned out.

So, let me ask you a question. Can a demonic spirit inhabit or possess a true believer? I read what a professor, C. Fred Dickason, wrote in his book entitled, Angels Elect and Evil. He asserts that “*A genuine Christian may become possessed at least to some degree, even to the point where they speak strange voices or in foreign languages.*” In another book (Demon Possession and the Christian) he uses the term “demonization” and says that a believer can be owned by God, yet inhabited by demons. And he has proof. Want to know what that proof is? He says, well you can’t look to the Bible to support that assertion but he has seen it in his clinical observations. And goes on to say he has done a lot of research. So, is the research of Dr. C. Fred Dickason good enough for you?

I’m sorry but while I’m sure that Dr. Dickason is probably a swell guy and well-meaning, I’m always going to use scripture as my truth and there is no clear example in scripture where a demon ever possessed a true believer. Never in the New Testament are believers warned about the possibility of being possessed by demons. Neither do we see rebuking, binding or casting demons out of a true believer. The epistles never instruct believers to cast out demons, whether from a believer or unbeliever. Jesus and the Apostles were the only ones who cast out demons, and in every instance the demon-possessed people were unbelievers. (John McArthur Jr., *How To Meet The Enemy*, page 23)

**2 Corinthians 6** says, “*What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? (the devil) Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.*” In **Colossians 1**, Paul says we are delivered from the domain of darkness. In **1 John 2**, John says we have overcome the evil one. So, we know that demons cannot possess what God already possesses.

But Satan and his demons do attack us. We know that for sure. Think about poor **Job**. Job was a righteous man. In fact, God Himself told Satan that Job was blameless and upright and yet we know that Satan attacked him and took nearly everything he had in this life. What about **Paul** in the New Testament? In **2 Corinthians 12**, Paul says that he was given a thorn in his flesh by a messenger of Satan to torment him. Or how about **Peter**? Yea, ol’ Pete was kind of headstrong but Jesus warned Peter in **Luke 22**, “*Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*” Jesus didn’t say Peter wouldn’t be attacked. He said he prayed for him that after he was attacked that Peter would come back and strengthen his brothers.

Do you notice what each one of those examples had in common? Each one of those was God allowing Satan a certain amount of power. It's like God has the devil on a leash and He gives him just as much leash as God wants him to have. God used Satan's affliction for the spiritual benefit of Job, Paul and Peter. And none of them tried to command, rebuke or bind Satan. For them the real issue was not the activity of Satan, but the accomplishment of God's sovereign purposes. And we should have that same attitude when we are attacked as well. (McArthur)

So, now let's look at who else Satan has attacked in the past and who he will attack in the future. We know that Satan's main enemy is **Jesus** and it always has been. **Hebrews 2** says that the death of Jesus **broke the power** of him holds the power of death, that is, the devil. So, Satan is especially mad at Jesus and tried to keep Him from ever being born. When that didn't work, he tried to conquer Him in the wilderness. And don't you know Satan thought he had finally won when he saw Jesus die on the cross! But no such luck!

So, obviously Satan has attacked Jesus but he has also attacked **angels**. You remember in **Daniel 10** when Daniel prayed and prayed and finally an angel appears to him and says that God heard his prayer the first time he prayed but the angel had been in battle with what had to have been some sort of demon for twenty-one days. We also see angel / Satan conflict in Jude where it talks about the angel Michael fighting with the devil over the body of Moses. So, Satan and his demons obviously attack the heavenly angels.

Another enemy of Satan is the nation of **Israel**. All through scripture and even all the way through World War II and even today Israel and the Jewish people have been at war and will always be at war partly because they are God's chosen people. And that's more than enough reason for Satan to attack them.

So, who else does Satan attack? How about **you**? Oh, he hates you! I think he probably hates some of you more than others but he certainly hates all believers. **Revelation 12:10** says that Satan stands before God accusing us day and night. I'm just thankful for God's grace and mercy because I know Satan is a liar and the father of lies but I'm afraid some of the things he says about me are probably true.

But we are most definitely in a spiritual battle and it seems to be ramping up in these last days and that is to be expected but expecting it doesn't make it easier. It's hard to know what to do and what to say in this battle because saying or doing the wrong thing is as bad as not doing anything. I mentioned last week that President Biden declared last Sunday, Easter Sunday, to be National Transgender Day of Visibility. And, yes, I understand it has

been on the national calendar for March 31<sup>st</sup> for several years but he still could have changed the date to any other day instead of Christianity's most holy holiday.

And my first reaction is to get real mad and holler and go on Facebook and show how spiritual I am compared to the president. But stuff like this is often used as a provocation. They do this kind of thing on purpose to get a reaction out of people and then when somebody shows any kind of anger, they all point their fingers at the "religious haters" on the right. *"You hate trans people! You're a bigot and a homophobe! Now we need to pass some more laws to protect this .3% of the population who think they are the opposite sex."*

So, don't take the bait. Know what hills we have to die on. This kind of thing isn't it. Yes, it's a slap in the face to Christians but that's all it is and we can handle a sissy boy slapping us, can't we? But there are real battles to be fought. And Satan and his demons will attack you personally in several ways.

The first way Satan likes to attack is through **doubt**. Do you remember what he said to Eve in the Garden of Eden? *"Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the Garden?"* (Gen. 3:1) See? He's casting doubt on what God said. Then in the next few verses, he casts doubt on what God really meant and what His motives really are. This is what He said but this is what He meant and He can't be trusted. That's what Satan wanted them to think and that's what He wants you to think.

He wants you to doubt God's word, the Bible. He wants you to doubt God's goodness. He wants you to doubt that God will forgive you. He wants you to doubt His power and His love. He wants you to doubt what God has done for you. *"Did He really deliver you from drugs? Did He really deliver you from alcohol?"* And when you doubt, you feel burdened by anxiety and guilt and you forget what He has brought you out of and that pulls you even further away from God and that is the devil's goal. If he can't have your soul, he will settle for keeping you as far away from God as possible.

The second way Satan attacks is through **persecution**. Most of us have never suffered real persecution for our faith but it doesn't take much. When you share your faith with somebody and they reject you; when you try to help somebody and they take it wrong and attack you for it; when somebody lies about you or gossips about you; those are all forms of persecution. And that can be devastating even for a mature believer.

Another way Satan attacks is through **false teaching**. I don't think false teachers are usually complete charlatans. I think most of the time they mean well but just rely more on how they feel and what they think rather than what scripture says. It may be a preacher or

teacher or it may be just a friend you are talking to that has been misinformed. Satan loves that and he uses that.

I remember talking to a lady one time who said during a church Bible study years ago that she believed a certain way. And it's not because I'm so smart or anything, in fact, it's not that at all. I just knew what scripture said and it is plain on whatever subject we were talking about. So, I invited her to talk later and she and her husband came to the church office and I had printed out about a dozen verses that show what scripture says about this topic and I handed it to her as soon as she came in.

She never once looked at the paper. She just lectured me about what she had seen and what she thought and what she wanted God to think about the subject. She didn't want to change her mind so she didn't want to read what God had plainly said. And Satan giggled his little head off once again.

One last way that we can expect Satan to attack us is through **self-sufficiency**. I think this is one reason that God sometimes takes people and things away from us. Because we can become so comfortable with what we have that we don't rely on God. Do you remember in **1 Chronicles 21** when David numbered the people of Israel and it made God mad? The verse actually says, "*Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.*" It doesn't say David was possessed. It just says that Satan moved him or tempted him to do something that would make him feel more secure, not relying solely on God.

It's easy to place our confidence in the wrong things. And sometimes those things might not be bad things in and of themselves. But Satan wants you to think that you are smart enough or you are wealthy enough or you are spiritual enough. **1 Corinthians 10** says, "*let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*"

And that leads us to what we have to do to resist Satan in all these different areas. We have to stand. Let's read **Ephesians 6** again. "*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*"

How do we overcome Satan? We stand. Not in our power. Not in our wisdom. Not because we are so smart or so anything. We stand behind God. We don't attack Satan. We don't

cast him out or bind him or even talk to him. We talk to God and we stand behind God in His power and his might and through His grace. Yes, we put on the full armor of God. We rely on everything He gives us and only what He gives us. Not on how we feel or what we want. We stand in Him and through Him and by Him and behind Him. We let Him fight the battle with Satan because we know that in God's power, the war is won. Paul said in **1 Timothy 1** that we are to *“fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience.”* And how do we fight the good fight? We stand.

To end, I want us to all learn some Latin. Anybody here fluent in Latin? Well, I'm not either but I learned a little bit lately. The Marine Corps has a great motto. Their motto is **“Semper Fidelis.”** Do you know what that means? It's Latin for “always faithful.” That's good stuff. But for our church as we go through this series on spiritual warfare, I want our motto, our goal, our continuing thought to be that we are always standing. Always standing firm with the full armor of God. Always standing behind God, not ahead of Him or beside Him but not running away or sitting down either. We are always standing and in Latin that is “Semper Stantes.”

Lord, I pray right now that you would continue to protect and provide for Christ Fellowship like you have for all these years. We have seen you protect us as we have gone from Runaway Bay to Lake Bridgeport to here in Chico. And we trust you to provide for us wherever you take us next. But we stand behind you. We stand on your word. We stand on your promises. We stand on what you have done in the past and what you will do in the future as we stand behind you. Jesus taught us to pray, “Protect us from the evil one” and so that is what we pray now. We know we are not smart enough or tough enough or anything enough so we put all our faith and hope and trust in you, Lord. Thank you for what you have done and what you are going to do. Thank you for protecting your bride. We love you, Lord! Amen

If you don't have a relationship with God through His Son Jesus, don't wait another minute. All you have to do is believe that Jesus, who is God, died on the cross to pay the price for your sins that the Father said was due. Then confess those sins and repent of those sins and turn away from that lifestyle. Do it right now as the music plays.