

OUR ADVERSARY EPHESIANS 6:10-13

Some products carry warning labels that are helpful.

But there're also some *wacky warning labels*. In fact, I have with me [The Top 10 Wackiest Warning Labels...](#)

#10 appears on the packaging for a blow dryer. The warning label reads, “[Do not use while sleeping.](#)” *Ok...*

#9 is found on a commercial washing machine. It reads, “[Do not put any person in this washer.](#)” As if we were going down to the laundry mat for a swim.

#8 is a line in the instructions for an iron-on decal. It warns, “[Do not iron while wearing shirt.](#)” *Thanks!*

#7 is a warning that appears on an infant stroller. Underneath the utility bag, “[Do not put child in bag.](#)”

#6 is on a coffee cup. Here's a needed warning, “[Caution - Hot. Avoid pouring on your crotch area.](#)”

#5 is a fishing lure, “[Harmful if swallowed.](#)” *Wow, it's good to know I shouldn't swallow a few pointed hooks.*

#4 appears on a hot tub, “[Avoid drowning. Remove safety cover from spa when in use.](#)” Who's going to get into a hot tub, and then put the cover back on top?

#3 is a warning that's written on a package of plastic fishing worms, “[Not for Human Consumption.](#)”

#2 is on a Superman suit. Just to be clear... “Wearing of this garment does not enable you to fly.”

The #1 wackiest warning label. My favorite is found in the instruction manual for a jet ski... “Warning: Never use a lit match or open flame to check fuel level.”

I mean, some warnings should be self-evident. The danger is so apparent a warning really doesn't need to be stated... *Yet not so with today's subject!*

I must alert you to a grave danger that might otherwise escape your attention! For the next several weeks we're going to talk about **The Unseen War**.

There's an invisible battle raging - a spiritual conflict... The stakes are high. The dangers are real. And if you're not alert you could become a casualty.

For the next three Sundays we'll be in Ephesians 6, and our subject is “**spiritual warfare**.” Next week we'll discuss **our armor**... The week after, **our arsenal**...

But today, we're going to examine **our adversary**.

Let's read our text, beginning in verse 10... **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 hosts 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.**

Paul speaks of a war - but an unconventional war.

In this battle the theater of conflict is the mind and the heart... The territory to be conquered are the souls of men and women... **Our adversary** is *spiritual*...

We need to be warned! For this war we're in is real and intense, even if it's unseen by the physical eye.

Our enemy doesn't appear in the sights of a sniper's rifle... The most powerful binoculars can't locate him through their lens... Our foe can't even be seen through night-vision goggles... No radar has yet to be invented that will detect our opponent's movements...

We fight an unseen war - against an unseen enemy.

As Paul says in verse 12 **“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 hosts of wickedness in heavenly places...”** Often we think our enemy is the human in front of us - the person we can see - *not so!*

Our enemy isn't the bully - or the hater - or the drug pusher - or the pornographer - or the abortionist - or the atheist. Our ultimate enemy is spiritual wickedness.

The Bible teaches us that there are spiritual entities all around us. They're called **“demons”** or **“evil spirits.”**

These creatures were once God's angels, but they chose to rebel against His will and worship elsewhere.

And now, they hate all that's God - especially, the apple of God's eye - *the human beings he created.*

They vent their animosity toward God by dragging down the people He loves. In John 10, Jesus told His disciples Satan's goal is to steal, and kill, and destroy.

Notice here, Paul mentions four ranks of demons...

First are the “**principalities.**” These are territorial demons. They concern themselves with borders.

Their goal is to push the limits of evil - and stretch society’s tolerance. They want to break down the moral and sexual walls that God has erected to protect us.

Next are the “**powers.**” These are the demons that entice and tempt. They’re fueled by the challenge.

Can they subvert your will and lure you in? Can they persuade you to bite the forbidden fruit? They keep inventing new hooks and bait to try and catch us.

In addition, there are demons called “**rulers.**” These demons are into domination. They’re control freaks.

They like to tie a person to a cord of addiction and drag them through the muck and mire. They delight in a person’s embarrassment and slow destruction.

And finally, Paul refers to “**spiritual hosts**” - these are perhaps the most diabolical of the demons.

These are *the host cells*. Even in times of spiritual awakening and Christian revival they keep evil alive, and brewing, and simmering on the back burner.

Host demons are plotting their next move... some new evil - another day - a more opportune time.

All these demon-types work for one leader - they ply **“the wiles of the devil.”** They’re all employed by Satan.

The Devil, or Satan, or Lucifer... was once God’s archangel until he became jealous and rebelled against God’s authority. Rather than worship God, he *worshipped himself*. And God stripped him of his exalted position. Lucifer fell. Sadly, Revelation 12 tells us he convinced a third of the angels to join his revolt.

The unseen war we fight is against an unseen enemy - and ultimately that foe is the Devil himself.

And realize, when people talk about Satan, or the Devil, they tend to make one of two mistakes... Either they **underestimate him** or they **overestimate him**...

On the one hand, the Devil would love to have you **underestimate** him. He'd love for you to brush him off as a comic strip character - *a little imp in red leotards, horns, hooves, pitchfork - a cute, but mischievous grin*.

One of Satan’s greatest achievements is convincing so many people he doesn't exist. In spite of all the evil in the world some people insist there is no devil.

Here's a poem that asks an interesting question... **“If the devil is voted not to be, is the verdict therefore true? Someone must be doing the work the devil is reputed to do. Some folks say the devil never lived, some folks say that the devil is gone, but what we simple folks would like to know, who is carrying the business on?”** As the old pastor put it, **“If you don't believe in the devil, try working for the Lord for awhile.”**

And I agree. Get busy serving Jesus and it won’t be long before you’ll have no doubt there's a devil.

Don't underestimate the Devil. He and his cronies are ruthless. Their evil is beyond all imagination. The devil and his demons have no conscience or principles.

Again in John 10:10 Jesus calls the devil a thief who's out to steal, kill, destroy. He wants to burglarize your blessings. His goal is to *trip you up - rip you off*.

If you're a Christian, the sooner you realize this, the better - **Life is not a playground it is a battleground.**

The Greek word translated "*wrestle*" in verse 12 - speaks of hand-to-hand combat. We're locked in a mortal clash - a fight to the finish. We're toe to toe with spiritual assailants. *Don't underestimate our adversary.*

But neither should you **overestimate** the Devil.

Satan is not God's equal. He's infinitely inferior. The devil is a created being. Until pride entered his heart he was the angel Lucifer - a minister in God's creation.

In a head-to-head contest, Satan is no match for Jesus. Our Champion can squish Satan like a bug. In fact, one day He will. The Bible says when Jesus returns He'll defeat him with the mere flash of His glory.

Recall, when Moses entered Pharaoh's court, Aaron threw down his staff and it became a slithery serpent.

But Egypt's magicians and sorcerers - *with Satanic power* - duplicated the same miracle. They too were able to throw down *rods* that turned into *rattlers*.

But that's when the Egyptians saw an amazing sight... The rod of God swallowed up Egypt's rods. And the conclusion was obvious... God was making the point, **Satan is powerful, but God is far more powerful.**

Never forget, Satan's leash is always measured by the will of God. The Bible portrays Satan as a pawn in God's hand - a stooge that's used for God's purposes.

In 200 AD, one of the early church fathers, a man named Tertullian, referred to Satan as "[God's ape.](#)" Satan is on a leash, and God is the monkey grinder.

We learn from the book of Job that Satan can't harm a hair on Job's head without first getting God's permission. Don't *overestimate* the Devil. He's limited.

This is why it's impossible for a Christian to become demon possessed. 1 John 5:18 makes this clear, "[We know that whoever is born of God... the wicked one does not touch him.](#)" The verse can literally be translated, "[the wicked one cannot attach himself.](#)"

Jesus is not into "*time shares*" with devils. A Christian can be attacked and tempted and hassled by the Devil. He can be *oppressed* - but never *possessed*.

I think we often give the devil too much credit.

I know people who blame the devil for problems of their own making. The devil may've played a role, but all too often our difficulties are self-afflicted.

Don't blame the devil for your own disobedience.

Years ago, a mis-led pastor published a list of demons that were suppose to torment Christians...

["The demon of fear and loneliness - the demon of junk food and gluttony - the demon of excessive chit-chatting - the demon of sun bathing - the demon of warts - the demon of disco fever \(this was a 1970s list\).](#)

The demon of the fear of fatness - the demon of trying to be cool - the demon of spending sprees - the demon of food gulping - and the demon of baldness." Obviously, he's been working overtime on some of us.

Of course, this list is absurd and unbiblical, yet folks believed it - *and why?* Because it's easier to blame the Devil than take responsibility for our own behavior...

Satan is not **omnipotent**, although he would like for you and I to think so... Neither is he **omniscient**, though it seems he is, since he's had thousands of years to study human behavior and has become quite the expert... And neither is the devil **omnipresent** - though an army of demons give us that impression.

God is *all-powerful*, and *all-knowing*, and *everywhere at all times* - not the devil. Don't *underestimate* his abilities, but neither should we *overestimate* them.

Here's the truth, on our own, you and I are no match for the devil... *but Satan is no match for Jesus!*

The angel Michael had the balanced approach. In Jude 9, he didn't back down from Satan, but neither did he consider Satan a pushover. "Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

If the Devil had taken possession of Moses' corpse he could've turned it into an idol the Hebrews might've worshipped. It was Michael who kept Satan at bay.

And he did so not by screaming insults and expletives - *like a lot of preachers I've heard do.*

Why is it some folks love to shout at the devil, yet the person who probably could, chose not to - Michael used a smart, simple strategy. He said, "The Lord rebuke you." He kept Jesus between him and the devil.

Spiritual warfare is not a time to get the big-head, and think too highly of yourself. Try to take on the devil one on one, and he'll turn you into deviled-ham.

Martin Luther wrote, "For still our ancient foe, doth seek to work us woe; His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal."

There is only one person greater than the Devil.

The King of Glory who reigns in heaven - Jesus the Christ - won the permanent victory. That means the key to winning this unseen war is a connection to Him.

This is why our text tells us in verse 10, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." The muscle needed to confront Satan is not our own - this strength is found only in Jesus. 1 John 4:4 tells us, "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."

The Bible declares that on the cross, Jesus defeated Satan and his henchmen - stripped him of his power.

Colossians 2:15 describes this ultimate victory. That Jesus "disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it."

Hebrews 2:14 says of Jesus, "that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil..." The cross was the deciding blow in the age-old conflict. Through His death and resurrection Jesus de-clawed the lion... Jesus milked the snake...

For many years after World War 2 you read of Japanese soldiers found on South Pacific Islands who were still fighting. They didn't know the war was over.

And this is the case with Satan today.

The devil is living on death row. His fate is sealed. And Jesus is coming back to pull the switch - but the devil and his demons are resigned to go out swinging.

They'll keep raising hell until their thrown there.

This is why we need to remember that Satan is a defeated foe. Yes, he's still up to mischief, but the only authority he has over a Christian is what we allow him.

As followers of Jesus we need to understand we don't ever fight FOR victory, we fight FROM victory.

Our victory has already been won. We stand in what Jesus accomplished on the cross! Our objective in this unseen war is not to gain ground, but to hold the ground Jesus has already won! As we read, verse 13, **"and having done all, to stand."** We *stand* in His victory.

When we acknowledge our weakness - grab tightly to God's blessings - dig in our heels of faith - and stand in Jesus name - then the demons are forced to flee!

And this is God's promise to you! He states it in James 4:7, **"Resist the devil and he will flee from you."**

I read where a Montana rancher interspersed llamas into his flock of sheep. Last year he lost 50 lambs to hungry coyotes. And his best protection was a llama.

Understand, the coyote is an opportunist. He's not looking for a fight. He attacks only where he senses there'll be no resistance. A llama on the other hand has no

fear. He smells a coyote and walks straight toward him. It scares the coyote and the varmint runs away.

As believers the Bible calls us “*sheep*” - but we also need a little “*llama*” in us. If we stand against the devil in the might of the Lord - Satan will tuck tail and run.

Satan realizes he’s no match for the believer in Jesus who’s strong in the Lord and in His might. This is why the Devil prefers the *subtle* over the *frontal* attack.

Persecution, illness, calamity usually drive us to the Lord... We drop to our knees... We open the Word.

This is not what Satan wants. He tries to cut us off from our supply line - neglect our source. When Satan lures us into acting in our own strength he’s got us.

This is why we’re warned to stand against “**the wiles of the devil.**” Satan has a million tricks and traps and schemes. And he’s spent millenniums honing his skills.

We need to be able to recognize our adversary - to detect the Devil’s strategies. Victor Hugo once said, “**A good general must penetrate the brain of his enemy.**”

In 2 Corinthians 2:11 Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth, “**Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.**” Throughout the Bible the Holy Spirit exposes the wiles of Satan.

And with the time I have left I want to look at a few of his strategies, and how we can stand against them...

First is **deception**. Remember Satan is a master of disguise. He comes as a “**wolf in sheep's clothing**” - an “**angel of light.**” He knows how to gift wrap a package.

Shakespeare wrote, "The devil has power to assume a pleasing shape." Rather than come to you wearing horns and a pitchfork, more often the devil appears in a string bikini - or a short-skirt - or a new Armani suit...

In John 8:44 Jesus called the Devil "a liar and the father of it." Satan has no allegiance to the truth. He'll deny it, or twist it, or add to it with no hesitation.

Satan has no conscience. He savors half-truths. He mixes *a lot of truth* with *a little lie*. Satan even knows the Scriptures and he'll twist them to lead us astray.

It was AW Tozer who said, "The devil is a better theologian than any of us and is a devil still." This is why it's foolish for us to argue with the devil. Match wits with Lucifer and you'll lose. Here's good advice, "When the devil knocks let Jesus open the door!"

The second wife of the Devil is **distraction**.

Satan will use an innocent object - a *hobby*, or a *habit*, or even an *honorable cause* - and he'll get you so wrapped up in it, you'll no longer think about God.

Who can forget King David - on his balcony under a starry sky - when suddenly in the moonlight he caught sight of a beautiful silhouette? That one *look* left him *hooked*. The king was brought down by a distraction.

Many a man (*and woman*) has gotten *distracted* and been *destroyed*. Here's a **clip** that illustrates what can happen. Notice, both men and women are vulnerable.

A saw another video from a HS basketball game.

On an inbounds play one of the offensive players ran into the corner of the court, dropped to all fours, and started barking like a dog... It was really bizarre.

Of course, the defense turned to stare at the player's strange behavior... and when they did, the ball was passed to the opposite side of the court - to a teammate who was wide open and got an easy lay-up.

It was a clever distraction. Here's the **(clip)**. Beware, Satan likes to create the peripheral issue - the strategic diversion. Don't get distracted from what's important!

The third scheme of Satan is **doubt**.

If you were asked, "When Satan appeared to Jesus in the wilderness, what was his first temptation?" Most of us would say, "*When he said turn these stones to bread*" - but not so. First, Satan sowed a seed of doubt.

He approached Jesus saying, "If You are the Son of God..." Satan tried to make Jesus doubt His identity. Put Him on the defensive - force Him to prove Himself.

And this is what Satan wants to do to you. Rather than have faith in God's grace, Satan wants us trying to prove our own goodness. *He knows we'll fail.*

When we doubt God's love and the sufficiency of Christ we end up doing a lot of non-important religious stuff trying to prove we're Christians. Doubt pressures us to perform. We trust in *our grunt* not *God's grace*.

Satan will try to cast doubt on our own salvation, as well as the Word of God... *and rob us of His promises.*

When Satan offered Eve the forbidden fruit, she said, "God has said, 'you shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Satan replied, "*You will not surely die.*"

Satan cast doubt on God's Word, and tried to deny that Eve's sin would carry any deadly consequences.

Once actor WC Fields was thumbing through a Bible.

He wasn't a Christian, so it seemed strange to see him so interested. Someone asked Fields, "What are you doing with that Bible?" The man replied, "*I'm looking for loopholes, I'm looking for loopholes...*"

Satan will tell you he's found a few loopholes. He wants you to doubt God's Word. Don't buy into his lies.

Satan **deceives**, **distracts**, breeds **doubt**, and his fourth scheme is **discouragement**. Let me admit, there are times when waves of discouragement will overwhelm me. *They appear for no apparent reason.*

Over the years I've learned to recognize these floods of discouragement as spiritual warfare. I rebuke the Devil, and often the blues leave as quick as they came.

Did you hear about the yard sale at the devil's house? He was selling his tools - *all but one, that is.*

It was a harmless looking tool - but it was his favorite. Someone asked, *why isn't that tool for sale?*

The Devil replied, "**It works when nothing else does. No one knows it's mine. It's called discouragement.**"

One of the ways Satan discourages us is through introspection. He can drown us in a sea of guilt by getting our focus off *God's grace* and onto *our failures*.

Martin Lloyd-Jones once wrote, "**The moment Satan turns us in on ourselves, we're plunged into a vortex. We go round and round, we become defeated, utterly useless**

Christians.” There’s a time for self-examination, but do it quickly, with your eyes on Jesus!

Focus on your problems and they’ll fester. Our healing comes when we turn our focus on Jesus.

The fifth satanic trap is **fear**.

Recall, Peter refers to Satan as “**a roaring lion.**” But the roaring lion is not the one to fear. Look carefully, he’s the older lion who’s lost most of his teeth. But he can growl, and intimidate, and look ever-so-menacing.

When little Bambi walks down the path, the roaring lion jumps out of the brush and strikes fear in her heart.

Bambi gets scared and retreats - and she runs right into the jaws of the young lions. And this is exactly how Satan operates. He controls us through our fears.

Years ago I went to eat BBQ at a restaurant near our house. Kathy dropped me off and I was going to walk home. In fact, I decided to cut through the woods.

As I walked down the path a ferocious dog attacked me. This dog was 10’ tall with dinosaur-sized teeth. *(That’s how I remember him at least... It’s my story!)*

The dog was growling, and snarling, and foaming at the mouth... I had nowhere to run - no tree to climb.

So I prayed. Then I snarled back. I was growling as loud as I could. Imagine, the scene... *this dog growling at Pastor Sandy - Pastor Sandy growling at this dog.*

And believe it or not, my strategy worked. This ferocious dog walked away... and I ran home... And here’s the moral of the story - *don’t succumb to fear.*

When the devil snarls at you - snarl back. In Christ you're a sheep *and a llama!*
Resist and watch him flee!

The sixth wife of the devil is **dissension**.

Satan loves to create ill feelings between *husbands and wives - dads and children - brothers and sisters in Christ*. If Satan can get bitterness brewing in a person's heart he can distract them from what matters.

In fact, nothing preoccupies a person more than a root of bitterness. It's the morsel we most like to savor.

In 1 Peter 3:7 husbands are told to get along with their wives - and for a good reason - *so their prayers will not be hindered*. Evidently, the devil can create static on the line between you and God by breeding dissension between you and someone you love.

Kathy and I have had a few arguments - I'm talking *knock-down, drag-out* feuds - that had no real basis.

In fact, by the time the fight was over we'd forgotten what it was about. And I have no doubt that kind of dissension is nothing more than a trick of the devil.

Another satanic trap is **condemnation**. This is a satanic specialty. The word "devil" means "slanderer, accuser." Satan loves to torture us with past failures.

He often torments us with the guilt of sins that have long been forgiven. "*How can anyone who did that call themselves a Christian?*" It's an all too familiar refrain.

Satan loves to tell you that you've exhausted your final chance with God. He won't accept you until you clean up your act... *but then you discover it's impossible to clean up your act until you've received God's acceptance.* Satan orchestrates the *catch 22*.

Here's a line I like to remember. "When Satan reminds you of your past, remind him of his future."

Satan has no right to comment on who God will and won't forgive. 1 John 1:9 assures us, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The Bible says God is rich in mercy. No matter how often we yield to a sin, God will never reject the truly repentant heart.

Conviction draws us to God - *condemnation* drives us from Him. And it's God's Holy Spirit who brings conviction. It's Satan who heaps on us condemnation.

As Paul said in Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

The last of the wiles of Satan I'll mention today is **compromise**. Satan loves to see God's people water down their convictions - and dilute biblical standards.

Satan offers a less-filling faith - a *Christianity-Lite*. A faith that's convenient, non-offensive, politically-correct. The only problem is this faith lacks the power to save.

It reminds me of the hunter and the grizzly bear. The hunter tracked the bear down and had him in his sites.

Yet just before the hunter pulled the trigger the bear shouted, "Wait, let's negotiate!" The hunter was so surprised to hear the bear speak, he agreed to talks.

The bear wanted *a full stomach*. The hunter was after *a fur coat*... And when the negotiations were over they both got what they wanted... The bear went away licking his chops, while the hunter wore his fur coat.

Obviously though, **the bear got the better end of the deal**. And this is what happens to us whenever we compromise with sin. We end up getting the short stick.

Let me close this AM with a story... A man was on his way to a Halloween Party dressed up like the devil.

It started to rain, so he ducked into a church. When the members saw Satan they were frightened and ran for the doors. One lady got her coat caught on the pew.

As the man in the devil costume walked closer... she started to tremble. Finally, the frightened lady blurted out, **"Satan, I've been a member of this church for 20 years, but I've really been on your side the whole time."**

When we compromise, we end up on the devil's side. Let's stand strong in the Lord and in His might!

Learning to recognize the Adversary in this **unseen war** is one of the keys to victory... *but it's not the only key*. We've also been equipped with strong armor.

Spiritual combat requires *spiritual armor* - and God has provided us *effective* and *protective* battle gear.

I hope you'll be back next week - and get fitted.

We fight an unseen war, but victory is possible if we *know our adversary* and if we *strap on our armor*.