

December 15, 2019

"...so that you may know him better..."

"You were taught with regard to your former way of life, to put off the old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against...the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms. 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. Stand firm then..."
Ephesians 4:22-6:18

The Apostle closes out his letter to the Ephesian believers with a clear call to ***"...put on the full armor of God..."*** and ***"...stand against the devil's schemes..."*** If we keep in mind the content of this letter and Paul's focus on the importance of relationships with God and with one another, then I am convinced the Apostle is wanting us to see that same focus in this call.

So, what are the schemes of the devil and how do they affect our relationships? I think, if we go back to the beginning we can more clearly understand what form the devil's schemes usually take. In Genesis 3 we find the story of man's downfall.

Moses writes, ***"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden?"' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" You will not surely die, the serpent said to the woman."*** (Genesis 3:1-4)

In this account, the first thing Satan does is put the woman on the defensive. "Did God really tell you not to eat anything?" Having set the stage by getting the woman on the defensive he goes on to suggest that there are no consequences for sin. ***"You will not surely die."*** This is absolutely one of the most popular schemes that Satan continues to use over and over again. He is constantly whispering that we can do wrong and there will be no consequences. Satan is the 'Father of Lies' and this is one of his favorite lies. There will be no consequences for sin.

Now look back to the account. Satan goes on to say, ***"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*** (Genesis 3:4-5) Understand, Satan is not lying when he says this. The fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil does open our eyes and it does make us like God. But, it also makes us absolutely accountable for the choices that we make based on this understanding.

So, Satan uses a truth to tell us a lie; another of his favorite schemes. Now look at the rest of the story. ***"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it."*** (Genesis 3:6)

Notice, how her acceptance of Satan's lie changes everything. Before her attitude was "Don't even touch that tree or bad things will happen." Now, having accepted the lie, the fruit of that tree is really good for you; even necessary. Again, this is a favorite scheme Satan uses

over and over. He is constantly telling us that good can and will come from evil. So, in terms of our relationships he encourages us to believe that our selfish destruction of those relationships will have no negative consequences in fact, it will be for the best.

So, Satan attacks our relationships by lying to us about what happens when we fail to maintain those relationships. When church bodies splinter, or marriages fail, or families breakdown, or the workplace is filled with division, then we have listened to Satan's lies. And his favorite lie is always that getting our way, no matter what it costs, is really all that matters.

And the consequences are always the same. Any time we let our own selfishness destroy our relationships then Satan wins. It really is that simple. So, the Apostle would command us, "*...put on the full armor of God...*" and "*...stand against the devil's schemes...*"

