



How Would You Rate Your Level Of Spiritual Discernment?

MARCH 24, 2014

The Scriptures tell us to “Be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might.” In the same passage (Ephesians 6:10-11) we are informed as to what God equates with being “strong in the Lord.” It is this: “You will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.” It follows then, that understanding the various “schemes of the devil” is a consequence of being “strong in the Lord.” Put another way, if you are not spiritually discerning and understanding of Satan’s ways then you are not very “strong in the Lord.”

What are the ploys of the devil that dupe so many people – and how can you see through them?

Read on, my friend.

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Weekly Bible Study During Session

Wednesday Mornings 8:00 AM Sharp. Capitol Building Family Room H324
Hot Breakfast Served.



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I. INTRODUCTION

This week I would like to take a close look at Ephesians 6:10-11. Be sure and block Wednesday mornings for the Members Bible Study where we will elaborate on and discuss this lesson. Here's this week's passage....

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

I would like you first to notice the *command* of the passage: **Finally, be strong in the Lord**. Next, see the *cause* for one being **strong in the Lord** (or discerning in the Lord): it is accomplished not in our own abilities, determination or willpower, but rather, **in the strength of His might**. That is to say we walk not in our human abilities, but by faith in His sufficiency. Lastly notice the *consequence* of our invoking His **might** in our lives, of being **strong**, or discerning **in the Lord: you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil**. This outline: The Command, The Cause and The Consequence of being **strong in the Lord** will be elaborated on in our study that follows. The proposition of this weeks study is this: It is normative for obedient believers to be spiritually strong and discerning! This passage provides us a definitive explanation as to if or not God equates you with being spiritually mature. So the question is: are you?

II. THE COMMAND TO BE DISCERNING

Finally be strong in the Lord

The command of this passage is more than a simply one person telling another what to do. The Greek construction reveals the idea that the believer should *be able to do* what is commanded! It is the idea of **being** who you already are in Christ! Let me explain. Paul is communicating this idea by

his choice and use of Greek verb tenses: The Greek word before his verb of choice is **Finally** *loipos* meaning “henceforth and in the future.” He uses that in combination with the genitive neuter singular definite article, **be**. In other words, as a result of knowing and believing in one’s high calling in Christ (Chapters 1-3 of Ephesians) and then manifesting the resultant mature outward character and behavior incumbent with and keeping with one’s high calling (Chapters 4-6:9), what should naturally result “henceforth and in the future” (6:10) will **be** the enablement and ability to **stand firm against the schemes of the devil** (6:11). **The schemes of the devil** we will see, are spiritual in nature, but are manifest physically through his pawns – non-believers (sometimes referred to as “tares” in Scripture) – in the world in which we live. Notice in this regard the verse in Ephesians that follows (6:12), it elaborates on this core thought:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Understanding this is fundamental to spiritual maturity, my friend! (This passage is a mainstay in the study of the doctrine of demons, aka, Demonology) but suffice it here to say, per this passage, that....

THE ACTUAL BATTLES BELIEVERS FACE IN OFFICE OVER CERTAIN BIBLICALLY BASED POLICY ISSUES ARE NOT NECESSARILY WITH ADVERSE HUMAN BEINGS, BUT WITH SATAN'S SURROGATES

Believers who are mature in Christ will have this perspective on both personal and professional battles wherein God’s specific revealed will is in jeopardy; they will see things this way. They will also possess the discernment and the ability to **stand firm** against the devil’s **schemes**.



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The Greek word for **stand firm** *histemi* is used in ancient literature in a military context to mean, “holding your ground while under attack.” The Apostle John uses it in Revelation 2:25 in reference to the Church at Thyatira – itself under Satan’s attack – when he quotes Jesus saying, “**hold fast** *histemi* until I come.” It follows that one is not **strong**, discerning or mature in Christ if he lacks the ability – for whatever reason – to **stand firm against the schemes of the devil**. Believers who are deceived or seduced by the devil’s various **schemes** are babes in Christ per 1John 2:12-14 (if in fact they are even saved). Per this passage, a babe in Christ *knows only* that his or her sins are forgiven, whereas a “young man” in the faith has definitely “overcome the wicked one” (v. 14). In other words, a mature Christian has spiritual discernment and can see through the profusion of antics served up by Satan. He can and does **stand firm**. In the larger context of what follows in Ephesians 6, he or she is armed for spiritual battle.

Importantly, notice from Ephesians 6:12 whom it is that one need **stand firm** against. Our **struggle** is **not against flesh and blood** but the one who presently controls his physical pawns: Satan. Ephesians 2:1-2 is abundantly informative, foundational and elaborative regarding this. Speaking in regard to those who have never repented of their sin, Paul states....

And you were dead in your trespasses and sin in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

What Paul teaches us in this earlier passage is that all unbelievers are under the control of Satan, **held captive by him to do his will**. They are his minions, often without realizing it. 2Timothy 2:26 underscores this point when the Apostle Paul offers hope for the unregenerate, that they....

....may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

III. THE CAUSE OF BEING DISCERNING *in the strength of His might*

Without regeneration in Christ, unbelievers are used by Satan – especially to lash out at believers in the most vindictive ways. As a matter of fact **devil** *diabolos* is used 35 times in the NT to describe Satan. The Greek word means “slanderer,” or “accusing falsely.” The English word *diabolical* and its meaning are a near transliteration. Further, the Greek word for Satan *satanas* means “adversary.” To understand what the Bible teaches in this regard is to understand that the ultimate **struggles** in the Capitol are not political, but spiritual. And there are really only two combatants behind all the scenes that play out on the Hill: Christ vs. Satan. Regardless of political affiliation, everyone works to some degree for one or the other: Christ or Satan. And the way you can ascertain whose on what side is by this....

**KNOW AND EXPECT THIS:
SATAN'S SURROGATES ALWAYS BATTLE
AGAINST THOSE WHO REPRESENT GOD'S
PRECEPTS**

So what side are you on? What side should you be on? This is why unbelievers need to come to Christ, and why it is so important for believers in the Capitol to be maturing in Christ, which only comes through knowing and applying His Word. It is the only way to become **strong in the Lord** and fully appropriate **the strength of His might**. It is the only way we can **stand firm**, i.e. hold our ground while under attack as we defend God’s immutable truths. It is the only way we can see Satan’s **schemes** for what they really are. Unfortunately, many remain unsaved or spiritual babes and fall to the devil’s **methods** of deception.



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The Greek word for **schemes** *methodia*, from which we derive the English word “method,” has a negative connotation to it, (which is not found in its transliterated English equivalent). It means “craftiness, cunning and deception.” Ephesians 4:14 echoes this idea and adds much clarity and amplification in this regard....

...we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness and deceitful scheming.

It saddens my heart when people who name the name of Christ in the Capitol have little, if any, desire to be trained in the Word through regular participation and intentional interaction in Bible study so as to gain an increasing understanding and ability to **stand firm**. Instead, many are seduced, flattered, deceived and misled so as to remain ineffective in battles – battles that are ultimately spiritual in nature. Satan has them where he wants them, because they don’t realize his **schemes**, the **schemes of the devil**. If saved, they remain babes, walking in their own “strength” versus **the strength of His might**. The idea behind **the strength of His might** then is not so much, “let go and let God, as it is “get in and get trained!”

IV. THE CONSEQUENCE OF BEING DISCERNING

so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

What are the **schemes of the devil**? One should know what they are – be conscious of them – in order to be armed and properly equipped to fight such **schemes**. It is appropriate that their identification should dominate the remainder of this study. It is all too easy to be deceived and seduced if you know nothing of your enemy’s multiple fronts in the spiritual war that you are engaged in. Whether you like it or not as a believer,

per Ephesians, chapter 1, you have a high calling and a high duty to fulfill for God’s glory.

Before exploring these **schemes** notice in addition, that the Greek definition of **scheming** (again, “craftiness, cunning and deception”) connotes the idea that *one does not necessarily realize that Satan is behind the scenes creating the effect*. Deception means “inculcating of one so that he takes the false as true, the unreal as existent, the spurious as genuine” (M&W). Satan is the ultimate stealth bomber in the spiritual sense. Oh beloved, if only more could see this! My heart is often broken over the successful **scheming** of the devil in the hearts of so many whom I love – and what is so painful is that those he holds captive in the Capitol don’t even realize it! 1Timothy 4:1 serves to underscore this point....

But the Holy Spirit explicitly says that in the later times [now] some [apostates] will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and the doctrines of demons.

Apostates are those who seemingly at one time were followers of Christ, but like the tares in the parable of the soils they are disingenuous, not the real thing. When the pressure comes for naming the name of Christ they are found for who they really are, unbelievers. These are those who let down the name of Christ.

It is not the intent of this study to provide an exhaustive listing of all of Satan’s **schemes**, but what follows are four of them – four categories of satanic craftiness, cunning and deception that you must be alert to, and **stand firm** against! Put another way....

THE GREATEST PROBLEM IN AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY IS A LACK OF SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT



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Why do you think this is so? Because so many American believers today are biblically illiterate; people know not the genuine article by which they can compare the false! Here then are some of the common **schemes of the devil** to be found in the world today:

A. SECULAR HUMANISM

Lest you think Secular Humanism – and its adherents, including radical leftists and modern Progressives – is not satanic, one of their “leading lights” is Saul Alinsky. He dedicated his book (their bible) *Rules for Radicals*, to Satan himself! There are three aspects of Secular Humanism in particular that have an increasing hold and devastating effect on American culture. They are as follows:

1. Same Sex Marriage and Homosexuality

In past Bible studies, I have explicated much Scripture regarding this **scheme**. This is Satan’s perversion of God’s beautiful blessing of sex between a man and a woman in the confines of holy matrimony. It destroys the building blocks of society – the family. God designed marriage to be between a man and a woman; a family headed by a father and a mother is the best incubator for creating civility in the next generation.

2. Women’s Liberation

Satan knows that if he can get women out of their intended complementary role to their husbands that he will own the next generation. And that is exactly what is happening in America today. Children desperately need their mom’s attention so that they are not hooked by Satan’s **schemes** of drugs, sex, slothfulness, in their formative years, which then often destroy their later productive years. The Women’s Liberation movement largely disconnects God’s plan for child incubation and catechism. Again, if he can destroy the family, he can destroy the nation.

3. The New Morality

This is code for “no morality.” It is a **scheme** to override and anesthetize the conscience of man. There is no absolute right or wrong when people buy into this ideology. A close cousin to Postmodernism, New Morality people are led to believe that they are their own judge of what is right and wrong. Truth is relative, so they think.

IN THE AUDACITY OF HOPE, THE PRESENT OCCUPANT OF THE WHITE HOUSE SPENDS AN ENTIRE CHAPTER ARGUING PRECISELY THIS – THAT THERE IS NO ABSOLUTE TRUTH

The acceptance of such thinking has a disastrous affect on the productivity of human beings.

B. FALSE RELIGIONS

Satan also deceives people by entrapping them in false religions – religions that appeal to their pride, i.e. systems that in essence declare that each of us is good enough to save him or herself. Similar to his temptation of Adam and Eve, all false religions have at their core personal merit – versus God’s meritorious work on the cross on their behalf – as their central agent of salvation attainment. When you think about it, all such religions deem Christ’s death utterly useless.

1. Islam

This religion is based in part on plagiarisms from the Old Testament – plagiarisms that amount for much of the content of the Koran. To quickly illustrate this, note that in the Koran’s paraphrase and plagiarism of Genesis 1:26, “Let Us make man in Our image” (a direct early OT reference to the Trinity) that Muslim scholars have no response to this and many other plagiary-related issues. In this instance, Muslims deny the Trinitarian nature of God, so they should have omitted borrowing this passage! This religion has historically spread



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through the sword and seeks nothing less than world conquest for Allah. Allah was the moon-god worshipped in the Middle Eastern part of the world long before Mohammed came on the scene to found his religion (hundreds of years after the life of Christ). Salvation per Islamic theology is not attained via a loving, self-sacrificing act of God (as per Christianity); it is attained by jihad, a sacrifice of self in combatting the infidels. Whereas in biblical Christianity, God gives His life for man, in Islam, man must give his life for his god.

2. Works Based “Christianity”

In Ephesians 5:11 Scripture commands believers to **expose the schemes of the devil** – the passage specifically states, **do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them.** This is especially incumbent on someone in my profession to do....

THERE ARE FORMS OF “CHRISTIANITY” THAT HAVE A DEVOLVED, WAYWARD DOCTRINE OF SALVATION IN COMPARISON TO WHAT THE SCRIPTURES TEACH

These other “Christian” religions teach as if salvation were gained in some other way than by faith in Christ alone. There are those who believe they are to work their own way to heaven. Such thinking is diametrically opposed to what the Scriptures teach. (I realize that one can have a cultural connection to a religion and believe what the Bible says about salvation over and above the teaching of their religion – but why they remain associated with a religion that believes differently than they do is difficult to understand). To be clear, the scriptural teaching on salvation is summarized in Ephesians 2:8 & 9....

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Works based “Christianity” deludes people into thinking they can save themselves via their own effort, when in reality they cannot. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” states Romans 3:23; it is a deception of Satan to think otherwise.

3. Liberal “Christianity”

Modernism is another name for theological liberalism. Many of America’s Christian denominations (and their educational institutions) have been affected by this and as a result are only shells wearing the name “Christian” today. Their doctrines are vastly different from what the Bible teaches.

APPROXIMATELY 100 YEARS AGO RELIGIOUS LIBERALS BEGAN STIRRING TOGETHER HUMAN RATIONALISM WITH BIBLICAL REVELATION. THIS IN TURN SUFFOCATED HISTORIC, REFORMED BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

Specifically, Higher Criticism was imported which subjected Scripture to a cynical, skeptical brand of scholarship, falsely concluding that the source documents that make up our Bible were in error. Higher Criticism was an outright denial of the authenticity and historicity of the Bible – as though the inspiration and transmission of God’s words to man were erroneous. Scripture became subjugated to man, versus the other way around. What followed was a wholesale disaster: humanistic rationalism substituted for divine revelation. And today the results are clear to see: congregations that call themselves churches who have no sense for the authority of God’s Holy Word. The movement remains today (but is dying because their doctrine creates no incentive to evangelize folks outside their church). In relatively recent years, theological liberalism was repackaged in the form of the multi-year “Jesus Seminar” where liberal scholars met semi-annually to vote on the sayings of Jesus so as to decide what was inspired and what was not. Liberal theology is a **scheme of the devil** that



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plays in and through the arrogant, self-righteous intellectual faculties of man. It serves to elevate his ego and proves hostile and poisonous to biblical revelation and Christianity.

C. POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

Not only does Satan deceive through secular movements and false religions, but he also uses political ideologies as well. Throughout history there have been many forms of human government, influenced by Satan, that have attempted to destroy God's purposes. For instance, the Roman Empire would not tolerate Christianity until the time of Constantine. Today Communism, in its atheistic political ideology is another such illustration; it persecutes the Church wherever it goes, as do Islamic ideologues as they expand their religiously exclusive political ideology. These are political **schemes** empowered by Satan that require godly political leadership to defeat – political leaders who can **stand firm against** such **schemes of the devil!** Ronald Reagan is a great illustration: he possessed such discernment when he stood against Communism during his presidency.

D. PERSONAL TEMPTATIONS

The last of four broad **schemes of the devil** in the world today are those of personal temptations that are orchestrated by him. How many are caught in immorality, pride, worldliness, self-reliance and self-indulgence today? Luke 8:12 adds to our study on demonology....

The devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they may not believe and be saved.

So tricky and deceiving is he that many who continually practice the aforementioned would tell you that they are saved. Why? Because he has sold them on the fact that they “believe in Jesus.” But the devil “believes in Jesus” as well and is certainly not saved (cf. James 2:19). He deludes people into thinking that intellectual assent is all that it takes –

as if you need not repent of your habitual sins and come to Christ humbly, attitudinally submitting to His Lordship. John 10:10 states further....

The thief [Satan] comes only to steal and kill and destroy

Remember, Satan does all his work very stealthily. He will do his best to try and trip up your effectiveness for Christ by and through enticing you with various personal temptations. See his deceptions for what they are and objectify them: Do not allow him to sideline you! Walk in **the strength of His might!**

V. SUMMARY

These four areas, Secular Movements, False Religions, Political Ideologies, and Personal Temptations are what, in a broad sense, begin to illustrate the deceptive **schemes of the devil** in today's world. God will enable you to be conscientious and victorious over all of them to the degree you are **strong in the Lord and the strength of His might.** God has graciously blessed us with the book of Ephesians in order that we might know of our high calling in Him (Chapters 1-3), how our behavior ought to be in relation to our high calling (Chapters 4-6:9), and lastly how we can be most effective for Him (6:10-24) as a result. In light of this last point of the book, we must know our adversary, the devil, and **be able to stand firm** against his various **schemes**, i.e. his various forms of craftiness, cunning and deception. Failure to do so keeps one in spiritual diapers, far from becoming the soldier of the cross that God intended when He foreordained and adopted you for His purposes!

**DON'T UNDERESTIMATE, UNDERVALUE
OR UNDER PERFORM IN YOUR HIGH
CALLING, MY FRIEND!**

May many people be blessed because of your spiritual discernment in Christ! Amen!