

Galatians 1:6-12 (tx: Ephesians 6:10-13)

SATAN'S SUBTLE STRATEGIES (I)

- I. His counterfeit assailants
 - A. Heresies
- II. His mental attacks
- III. His experiential assaults
- IV. His practical aggressions

INTRODUCTION

A few weeks ago we saw from **Eph.6** there is a war that we Christians are constantly engaged in.

- a horrible, hellish battle for our very lives.
 - a severe struggle against a tremendous, terrible enemy.
 - against Satan & his evil spirits.
 - against all kinds of sin & evil & error that are out to destroy us eternally.
- & we were also shown just who this enemy is.
 - how spiritually, superhumanly strong & cleverly subtle he is so that we need God's might & weapons to stand & win.

Now today we begin a more detailed study of **SATAN'S SUBTLE STRATEGIES.**

- & we consider how he attacks **1st** through counterfeit assailants, **2nd** through the mind, **3rd** through experience, & **4th** through practices.
- we begin then looking at Satan's subtle attacks through counterfeit groups, particular this morning through heresies.
- & tonight through false religious groups.

I. HIS COUNTERFEIT ASSAILANTS - A. Heresies

Now, remember: **Eph.6** says we aren't fighting against any ordinary human enemy we can see & grab on physically & wrestle to ground.

- no, but our real enemy is a wily opponent that is spiritual & supernatural & sinful.
- & so the emphasis is that we are not just fighting against mere principles or influences & powers of evil & error around & in us human beings, as some claim.

No, never, for a mere principle or power can't be subtle.

- only a real person can be.
- th'fore we see again **Bible** teaches the devil is a real, live person.
 - & he has a host of personal evil spiritual beings at his command that we must fight.

But one of Satan's subtle strategies, & probably best one, is to persuade people he doesn't exist at all.

- so he produces the heresy or false teaching, even in the Church today, that we are only up against the principles of evil in ourselves & others.
 - & in the environment around us.
- th'fore the devil has duped many to think it doesn't really matter if we believe in a personal devil & demons or not.
 - but if we just improve our surroundings & schooling we will be better.

However, to question the truth of a personal devil is really to question the truth & authority of Scripture's teachings.

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- & that's surely what Satan wants.
 - but Bible certainly & clearly teaches in Eph.6, & elsewhere, & even Jesus Christ believed it,--
 - that we aren't just battling wickedness & wrong, but sinful spirits.
 - real, live, personalities of filth & falsehood.
- we are fighting against world rulers of the darkness of sin, & not just against the darkness of sin.

And so the whole emphasis & object of Eph.6 is that we must not be deceived & deluded.

- but we must always realize we are up against real sinful, spiritual persons headed by a personal devil.
- superhumanly powerful beings who are conducting a terrible, subtle, vicious war against God & us.

To deny that & to say Paul is writing Ephesians only as a person of his age so that today we must get rid of those old-fashion, unscientific notions,--

- to say that is to deny, as I said, the teachings & truths & authority of Bible, & of Jesus Christ Himself.
- because Jesus wasn't just a person of His age & He believed in a personal devil & demons.
 - for He spoke to them several times & commanded them to come out of people.
 - & you can only do that to a person, not a principle or power.
- & Paul received Jesus' teachings as a direct revelation from God, or from Jesus, as he says in Gal.1.

So, to dismiss the devil as a cultural belief & old-fashion is to deny Christ & His authority & teachings.

- & to say we are more superior than He is with our greater knowledge & scientific understanding,--
- it is to put ourselves over His Word & to decide what's in it is cultural & no longer relevant today.
 - & to say what timeless truths we are going to accept.

To do that is to put ourselves in the dangerous position of listening to Satan.

- & we are going to end up with no real, final rule & authority for faith & life, as we see today.
- th'fore we will have no real, stable, safe place to stand firm in the battle against the devil & evil & error.

We must then be constantly aware & alert regarding what **Scriptures** say about Satan & his subtle strategies.

- & that's especially true in his attempts to confuse the Church & us Christians
- & his desire to cause havoc through heresies concerning Bible & its truths.

Now, you see, **heresy** is a denial or doubt about any defined, established Christian doctrinal truth of **Scriptures**.

- a heretic then is one who holds on to most of the biblical truths of the Christian faith & life.
 - but he or she goes wrong on some particular part of the faith.
- &, like Jesus teaches in His Parable of Wheat & Tares, our enemy, Satan, comes & sows in the Church questionings, doubts, denials, different emphases about certain aspects of Christian doctrines.
- & he does that to disturb the Church's life, shake our faith & confidence in Christ, & spoil Lord's work in the world.

Th'fore the devil comes into the Church with his subtle strategies of **heresies**.

- he comes with doubts & denials of biblical truths.
- he did that in past history which caused the Great Church Councils & Protestant Reformation to happen when the Church drew up our creeds & confessions.
 - they did that to lay down what is scripturally true.
 - & to inform & instruct us regarding what we must believe & practice over against heresies.

And today too, Satan causes heretical doubts & denials about certain aspects of the Christian faith & life.

- he does that in the attempt to confuse us Christians & to defeat & destroy the Church.

Now, in doing that the devil causes many feel it doesn't really make a difference what doctrines you believe.

- that they aren't important because real Christianity isn't a creed.
 - it is a conduct; it is a life.
- th'fore people say we must be more practical & just have words of comfort & cheer & strengthening in the Church to make us feel good.
- people say doctrine isn't important, it is just living.
 - so they aren't interested in all that doctrine, for they state they aren't theologians.
 - they have no time for these things.

- for them it is “No creed but Christ.”
- so all they want is something to help them live by each day.
 - not all those dry, dull doctrines.

And the results of such thinking is the prevalent idea in the Church today is that we must be more therapeutic & not so theological.

- we must stop putting so much emphasis on what we believe, for what we believe really doesn't matter.
- th'fore, today we are putting most of our emphasis on Christian unity & Church growth at expense of truth & purity
 - someone writes: “Relevance is the cry of our day. Methods & mechanics, committees & commissions seem to [be] more prominently in the actions of Christians & Christian organizations than sound doctrine. Paul warned that the time would come when people ‘will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears’. The forces that will oppose God's people & His work in the last days will promote their doctrinal system & it will include the ‘doctrines of demons.’”

Well, with today's lack of emphasis & excitement for doctrines, we are told we must then sink our differences.

- get rid of the doctrines that divide us or we must lower the standards of church membership.
 - even by putting aside some very basic biblical truths: God in human flesh, the virgin birth, substitutionary death for sin, creationism, Christ's physical resurrection & ascension & return, hell, divine wrath, etc.
- & we all must come together in the spirit of love.

Now, the result is today many no longer recognize **Bible** as the sole & supreme authority for faith & life.

- & that means we are left to be our own authority on how to interpret Scriptures & to do as we please for ourselves, even in the Church.
- th'fore there is moral confusion & chaos because we can do almost anything as long as it is love.

But, you see, that's love without law or standards to follow.

- & since we are no longer guided by God's Word & will as our only authority, then such love isn't true biblical love.
- & we get ourselves into the terrible moral mess we see today.

Well, that's exactly what **Scriptures** teach would happen.

- that wrong beliefs corrupt our character & behavior, as ICor.15 says.
- th'fore Bible tells us plainly & positively wrong teachings are desperately dangerous so that we must make no mistake about it.

- it isn't a matter of indifference if we believe & emphasize the doctrinal truths of Bible or not.

So we can't ever divorce doctrines from deeds, or beliefs from behavior, or creeds from conduct.

- for ICor.15:33 says, if we have “bad company”, if we listen to wrong teachers, have wrong thinkings & believings, go wrong in doctrine,--
 - neglect basic biblical truths, then that will “corrupt our behavior”.

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- it will, because sound doctrine “is only the accurate foundation for true Christian living. Your living is reflection of what you believe. Tragically, [the idea is that] doctrine is not important--just living-- [that is illogical]. [For] every attempt at godly living apart from sound doctrine will be defective. When Paul prayed for the needs of the churches he prayed for an increase in knowledge since he realized this would produce holy living. Sound doctrine issues in fruitful living, & holy living must be based on doctrine.”
- th'fore if we get rid of doctrine, then we will go wrong in our living too, as we see happening nowadays.

Then too, why do you think Christians often don't have real power today?

- why are they often so weak & defenseless & defeated by troubling experiences & events in their lives & in society?
- again, it's because they are often deceived by the devil into the heresy of thinking the studying & knowing biblical truths & having doctrinal purity aren't really important.
 - so they don't like to hear & learn the Church's doctrines because it's so burdensome & boring anyhow with seemingly no practical implications.
- th'fore they make the Christian faith & life nothing more than mere subjective, emotional experiences.
 - & they are just concerned about feeling good & happy all day.

Then, no wonder, we are defeated if that's all the Christian faith & life are.

- you see, people are wonderful, shining Christians when all is well.
- but then, suddenly sickness & sorrow, other crises & catastrophes, & even death comes into their lives, & they are just shattered.
 - they don't know where to turn; they begin to doubt God.

For after all, they were living the Christian life--praising & praying to Lord, committed their life to Him.

- but now, look what has happened to them, so they ask: "Why?"
- & they begin to doubt God's dealings with them.

Now, 1 of the reasons for their doubts & denials is they have wrong understanding of the Christian faith & life.

- they thought it is just to simply believe in Jesus Christ & there will never be another trouble or tear.
- & they forget or they were never told & taught all Bible's truths.
 - that a true Christian is always going to suffer trials for Jesus' sake to be eternally glorified.
 - & that through it all there is God's all-sufficient grace needed to bear it & be victorious over it.

Th'fore such people fall into Satan's subtle trap of heresy by failing to realize all the truths of Scripture are absolutely necessary & important for proper, joyful Christian living.

- so they are deceived & deluded.
- & they are defeated with lives of miserable conflicts & confusions about Lord & His Word & ways.

Now the same is true for today's great emphasis on physical healing in connection with Christ's atonement.

- the idea is that it's never God's will that any of His own will be ill.
 - it's always His will that believers be healthy & not die from diseases.
- well, to believe that is to make a wrong, heretical addition to the biblical truth of salvation & the Christian faith & life.
 - & it will often cause despair & depression, misery & unhappiness.

For, you see, if we believe Lord never allows illness, then if you or your loved one is dying of an incurable sickness you will begin to doubt God.

- & that can bring despair & the feeling you aren't a real Christian.
- especially if you are told you aren't being healed because your faith isn't strong enough.
 - or you are failing somewhere in your Christian life.

Now, again, that's Satan's subtle strategy of trying to defeat us by getting us to fail to realize the importance & necessity of knowing & believing & living all the truths of Bible.

- that it's also within Lord's will that Christians suffer as part of our battle against the devil for the testing of our faith.
 - we see that in Job's case.
- also we fail to see God allows suffering to shape us & get us fit for eternal glory with Him.
 - that's what we see in Paul's case when Lord didn't remove the thorn in flesh though he prayed & prayed & had great faith.
 - but God did promise him His all-sufficient grace to bear it.

Then too, Satan's subtle strategy of heresy is to make us think, because Scriptures were written at a certain time & in certain cultures, th'fore what it says isn't relevant anymore for us today.

- how often don't we hear: "That was for then, but it is not for now"?
- & so Bible has to be reinterpreted for our modern age.

Th'fore we can so easily slip into the heretical doubts & denials about God's creation of the world, & the historical character of the creation account.

- or about Jesus' being & work, marriage & divorce, sexual orientations, gender roles & places in the Church, & all rest.
- & with all that the devil is creating conflict & confusion & chaos in the Church & among Christians so we don't know what to believe & live anymore.
 - & we are left wide-open to Satan's attack & to be defeat by him.

Th'fore we see how subtle Satan's strategies are in the area of biblical beliefs & truths & doctrines.

- how heresies & errors are result of the devil's wiles as he tries to cause us to underemphasize beliefs & doctrines, & overemphasize experience & Christian unity.
- & we are led into error which eventually causes evil living too.

And so we must always be on guard against all heresies.

- against all doubts & any denials of Bible, or parts of it, & we must continually contend for the truth.
 - fight for the faith once delivered to us, Jude says.
- for Scripture never just emphasizes experience & practices, or just unity & love.
 - not even for church growth, though life & love & unity are all an important & necessary part of the Christian faith & life.

Yet never at expense of the truth or doctrinal purity, for this too is God's great & equal concern in **Bible**.

- so much so that we read there in Gal.1 if anyone, even an angel from heaven--anyone, regardless their credentials or reputation,--
- if anybody proclaims a gospel or teachings other than, or in addition to, or less than God's gospel & all its truths revealed in Bible, then let that person(s) be eternally condemned.

CONCLUSION

Th'fore, as Christians & the Church, it is our business to declare God's truths--everyone of them--nothing more, nothing less.

- we must study & expound, explain & teach, believe & obey only & all the doctrinal truths of Scripture no matter what.
- we must, even if we stand alone, like Martin Luther did.
 - remember: when he found & knew the truth, he said before everyone: "Here I stand; I can't do otherwise, God helping me."
 - & Luther didn't recant, but he stood his ground on Scriptures through Lord's help & might regardless the consequences.

And God will help us if we too stand only for all truths of **Bible**.

- for He always honors the truth & those who contend for it against Satan & sin, against all the heresies he throws at us, against non-Christians & an evil world like ours.
- & God's truth will go marching on & continue to be victorious.
 - if not in this life, then in the life to come.

So then, don't be misled to think it doesn't matter what we believe.

- or that doctrine isn't important & necessary as long as we live the Christian life.
 - such thinking is Satan's subtle strategy to defeat us.
- th'fore we must know & understand, believe & live all the truth taught in Scriptures.
 - that's only way we are ever going to be strong & win against the devil.

AMEN