

Trick or Treat or Truth

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Hi, I'm Pastor Steve Hereford. The message you are about to hear was preached back in 1998 at a church where the audio was not done according to the standards that they are today, but regardless of the poor quality the message is no doubt important and we pray that God will use this message in your life as you evaluate the subject of Halloween.

After you have finished listening to this message I would like to recommend another that message that I preached entitled, "Should Christians Participate in Halloween?" I believe both messages will help you to do God's will in this important matter.

Now we noted the warfare that is found in Ephesians six where Paul tells the believers at Ephesus to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."¹ And then he tells them in verse 11 the way that you can be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might is to, "Put on the whole armour of God."² And by putting on the whole armor of God that you are able to stand against the wiles, or the schemes of the devil.

And then he notes before us in verse 12 that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood."³ The warfare that we engage in is not on a human level. It is on a spiritual level. It is against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. And therefore Paul says in verse 13 because of all of this, we are to take up the whole armour of God that we may be able to withstand or to resist in the evil day and having done all to stand.

Now we talked last week about how important it is to have the armor on and to leave it on. And with noting the items of the armor last week we saw it wasn't something mysterious. We saw it wasn't something mystical, not even something physical. But it is taking the Word of God and putting it on in your life and being committed to it, seriously committed to the Word of God and the things of God. It is having yourself covered with the practical righteousness of holiness and it is taking these elements in your life and being seriously committed to them. And then he sums it all up in verse 18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication."⁴

¹ Ephesians 6:10

² Ephesians 6:11

³ Ephesians 6:12

⁴ Ephesians 6:18

We must understand that the enemy that we are fighting is a tricky enemy. One moment you think you understand a little bit about him and the next moment he has fooled you. He is a master of deceit. He is a master of trickery and don't think for one moment that you have the power in and of yourself to overcome him. That is why Paul says in verse 10 that we are to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,"⁵ not the power of your might, but the power of his might. We are to stand strong in the might and the strength of God.

E.M. Bounds says that, "The existence and the work of the devil is a serious matter. It is to be considered and dealt with from the most serious standpoint and only serious people can deal with it. For this reason the New Testament gives the repeated note of warning: Be sober."

To understand our opponent we must understand a few of the basics. First of all, Satan does exist. He is real. And it doesn't take long when you are trying to witness to someone about the grace of God to find out, yes, the devil is real. As he seeks to snatch away the Word in the heart of that person as they are hearing the truth.

I know in my family we have shared with people and we see them reject the truth. And the Bible says upon that person's rejection that Satan comes in and snatches the Word from their heart so that they cannot believe. That is why we need to keep going over ground that still needs to be tilled, right? And don't give up just because they have rejected us.

E.M. Bounds further says, "The Bible does not enter into an argument to prove the person and the being of God. It assumes his being and reveals his person and character. Without preface or introduction the Bible brings God before us in all his majesty and omnipotence. God is at the world's beginning and he created the beginning of all things. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,'⁶ Genesis 1:1. How sublime and inspiring is our first glimpse of God? God is revealed not by argument, but by work. We learn what he is from what he does. The revelation of the devil is the same. He is presented without introduction or ceremony as the evil one, a graduate in the school of deception and evil. The curtain is drawn and the chief actor is in full dress. A world is at stake. Man is to be seduced. Eden is to be corrupted. No light is shed upon his past history. No knowledge is given of the school where he learned his evil trade. He was before earthly life. Eden does not date his birth. It is not the first chapter of his history or the first test of his hellish art. We have not access to the archives of the past. Eden bounds our horizon and the devil is still there. Since that time his history has run parallel with the human race."

John MacArthur says, "From a philosophical perspective we can conclude that there must be an adversary because absolute harmony does not exist in the world."

⁵ Ephesians 6:10

⁶ Genesis 1:1

Now it doesn't take long to pick up your Bible and do a little searching to find out that there are references to him in the Scripture. Fifty-seven times in the Old and the New Testament he is referred to as the devil. Forty-nine times he is referred to as Satan for a total of 106 times he is mentioned in the Bible.

How many times does God have to mention any thing for it to be true? Only one time. And yet we are given the privilege to have it mentioned to us 106 times just by those two different terms. You could use some of the other terms that are mentioned for Satan and you could find a numerous host of references given to him. But we know that the devil exists by the very fact that Jesus acknowledged the devil.

In Matthew chapter four if the devil was not there in the temptation, then Jesus was wrestling against some unknown force here. Is that correct? Look at Matthew chapter four with me. It says in verse one, Matthew 4:1:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."⁷

In the Greek language it literally means, "Since you are the Son of God." It doesn't say "if" as if to question it. The devil knew exactly who Jesus was.

Verse four:

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'" Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"⁸

You see, Jesus acknowledged the existence of Satan very clearly in this passage. Even in John chapter 12 and verse 31 he says, "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."⁹

⁷ Matthew 4:1-3

⁸ Matthew 4:4-10

⁹ John 12:31

In John 14:30 he said, “I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.”¹⁰

In John 16:11 he says, “And concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.”¹¹

And in John chapter eight and verse 44 he told the group of Jews, those religious leaders that sought to trip him up in his teaching, he says, “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.”¹²

You see, Jesus acknowledged the existence of Satan and he acknowledged his trickery and his schemes and his devices as a murderer and the father of murders and the father of lies.

Other Bible writers acknowledged the existence of Satan. Paul, for example, in Ephesians chapter two—you could back up a couple of pages if you are still in Ephesians—says in verse one:

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.¹³

And, of course, the passage we read just a few minutes ago, Ephesians chapter six verse 11 he told us to put on the full armor of God that we would be able to stand against the schemes or the wiles of the devil.¹⁴

And take the apostle John, for example. He, too, acknowledged the existence of Satan in 1 John 3:8 when he says, “The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”¹⁵

Then you take James, for example, and his writings in the book of James and chapter four and verse seven. He says, “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”¹⁶

Peter mentions the devil in his writings in 1 Peter 5:8. He says, “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”¹⁷

¹⁰ John 14:30

¹¹ John 16:11

¹² John 8:44

¹³ Ephesians 2:1-2

¹⁴ See Ephesians 6:11

¹⁵ 1 John 3:8

¹⁶ James 4:7

Then Jude in verse nine, tells us that, “Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, [he] did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’”¹⁸

Throughout the pages of Scripture the existence of Satan is noted. Even in the book of Revelation it tells us in chapter 12 that he is called the great dragon that drew a third of the stars of God, the sons of God down to the earth in his hellish deception.¹⁹

That is where we get the understanding that when he sinned in the very beginning in heaven—Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 denotes that before us—and when he sinned in the very beginning and sought to exalt himself above the throne of God, that God expelled him from heaven and in his being expelled from heaven he drew a third of the angels with him which are now known as fallen angels or demons.

I would just have to say that Satan has been around for a while and he has studied us for a while. He knows many times our weaknesses because we have fallen many times in those weaknesses, fallen to the same types of sins in our life that he knows how to trick us up.

Now when we talk about the deception of Satan I think that there is many ways that he seeks to deceive us. In fact, he does that in many ways in our own life. He may do that through family members or he may do that through occasions or situations or events that occur in our life.

If you are still in Ephesians just look over to chapter five for just a moment and look at verse 11. It says, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them,”²⁰ or reprove them. Here Paul gives the believer the responsibility not to become partners with evil, but to become that type of believer that exposes darkness in his life and around his life.

Now what am I talking about? Of course I know that you don’t really know my views about certain events of holidays because I haven’t had the opportunity to share it with you. If you looked at the title this morning in the bulletin it said, “Trick or Treat or Truth.” And, of course that would have a reference to Halloween.

But let me give you some things that I really believe that Satan seeks to deceive us in. And, of course, I am going to leave you with some things that you are going to have to deal with just like my family and I have had to deal with.

What is so great or has been great for us is that we have formed many convictions before we had any kids so we knew what we were going to do when we had kids.

¹⁷ 1 Peter 5:8

¹⁸ Jude 9

¹⁹ See Revelation 12:4

²⁰ Ephesians 5:11

I recently was reading a book that pointed out how evil will play out in our lives in very deceptive ways. It starts small and then it gradually takes more footing into our life as we yield up more areas. We think it's nothing when we yield a small area of our life, but even Song of Solomon tells us it is "the little foxes that spoil the vine."²¹ It is the little things that we give ourselves to that open up for greater temptations that we yield to.

And, of course, I know that you would agree with me with many things I want to say this morning because you are born again and you have a new nature in you that is driven toward the truth and toward the light.

But let me just expose some things about this particular day and I really don't know a whole lot of things as to where you are on this other than just a few things that I have observed. And, of course, I know this weekend with having the fall festival is obviously an alternative to that day and I praise the Lord for that. I was saddened a few years ago when I saw a church offer a haunted house.

Folks, we don't need to do the same things the world is doing to reach people. And if we are providing an alternative from the most part for our church family, we need to do things that are right, absolutely. But they felt in their way that they could offer a haunted house. They did it two years in a row, very grieving. I don't think at any time when we come to church we should get a picture of a haunted house. This is a place to be set apart for the truth, not to be a partner with darkness.

Halloween, of course, as you know, is celebrated year after year, but maybe you didn't know this that this is one of the highest and the holiest days of the satanic church. It is the highest days of the witch's coven. According to a fact sheet that was put out by Focus on the Family a few years ago, they defined Halloween as the end of the witch's year. It marks the beginning of death and destruction associated with winter. At this time the power of the underworld is unleashed and the spirits are supposedly free to roam about the earth. Occultists consider Halloween the best time for contacting spirits.

You see, Halloween is more than just dressing up in costumes and marching door to door and collecting goodies. It is really a celebration of death and destruction. There is nothing celebrated in the sense of the things that we celebrate that are good associated with this day.

It was reported back in 1990 in the *Florida Times Union* that there are as many as 60 witch's covens around Jacksonville and that these witch's covens use Halloween as the occasion for prayer and fasting against the Christian faith.

You see, a lot of times we use that day and we see nothing innocent...you know, we think it is very innocent. And we let our guard down. And Satan has his foothold and his opportunity just to parade right on in.

²¹ Song of Solomon 2:15

I am going to give you some suggestions in just a minute of some ways that we can deal with this and, of course, one of the ways that we are already pursuing this weekend is offering an alternative. But I want to give you some other ways as well.

When you look at some of the events that occur, some of the things that are associated with that day many times we don't hear of the horrifying things that occur. In fact, I was recently watching on the news of some things appearing in the neighborhoods.

This is a high and holy day for the satanic church.

Take for example some of the costumes. I remember a couple of years ago, during the O.J. Simpson trial that one of the first costumes that came out was O.J. Simpson in his football Jersey with blood dripped on it.

You see, there is no celebration here.

Take even some of the TV shows and movies showing during this time: *Halloween IV: House of the Dead, Killer Party, Dead Alive, Death Wish V, The Devil and Daniel Webster, The Devil's Bride*, some of the videos that appeared in *Billboard* magazine as the top videos during this period were: *Four Weddings and a Funeral, Shindler's List, Naked Gun, The Ref, The Nightmare before Christmas, Threesome, Bad Girls and Serial Mom*.

And you read on and on and you just see that this day has become more and more populated, more and more celebrated. When I ride down the road toward my house, what do I see? I see lights around houses and stuff in the yards. And my kids, the first thing they think, "Oh, Christmas lights."

They are not Christmas lights.

Of course you and I know that Halloween finds its roots in pagan, cultic rites of the ancient Celtic people. You can go back and trace it to Scotland, Wales, and Germany. This was the day when they offered up sacrifices to a god and to placate the spirits during this time. This was a serious situation.

Later on the Church, of course, took on some of this. They tried to offer something else as an alternative. And it just got blurred.

You probably don't know that on this day in history Martin Luther walked up to the door and nailed his 95 Theses and the birth of the Reformation began.

And, of course, we have to ask the question. When you know a little bit of that background and you know what the day was really celebrated for, what kind of response is a Christian to have to this?

Well, first of all, if you lean entirely on the new nature that is in you, you are going to see that this whole situation or any kind of association with darkness is like two magnets that you try to stick together and they repel one another. I know in my own life when darkness seeks to come in and I seek to be tempted and lean toward darkness it repels against the new nature within me. And this should repel in your own life as well.

Let me just give you some truths that the Bible gives us. First of all notice Ephesians 5:11 where he says, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.”²² Christians are no longer of the darkness. We are of the light. Light was illustrated right here. We have come to the cross and we have laid down the darkness in our life. We have laid down our sin at the foot of the cross and Jesus has come in and has taken away our sin. He has clothed us in righteousness. He has clothed us with light.

The Bible even says in 1 John chapter one and verse five “That God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”²³

And for a believer to even associate with any kind of darkness gives one of two possible responses. One, he is not of the light or two he is of the light but presently sinning by being disobediently against the Lord. We have those time where we lapse into sin.

Colossians 1:13 says that he has “delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love.”²⁴

Ephesians 5:8, says, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.”²⁵

1 Thessalonians 5:5 says, “You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.”²⁶

Christians are not of darkness any longer. They have been changed. They have been given a new nature, a new life. Secondly, Christians are not to fellowship with darkness.

Take, for example—and I know many times we use this passage of Scripture when we talk about dating between a believer and an unbeliever—but have you ever thought about it with any other association of sin in our lives? 2 Corinthians chapter six verse 14 says, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?”²⁷ And you read on and you find some pretty revealing statements here where he says:

²² Ephesians 5:11

²³ 1 John 1:5

²⁴ See Colossians 1:13

²⁵ Ephesians 5:8

²⁶ 1 Thessalonians 5:5

²⁷ 2 Corinthians 6:14

And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.²⁸

You see, we are not to have any fellowship with darkness. I remind you, again, of Ephesians 5:11, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them."²⁹

The word "fellowship" here, means to have fellowship with, it could be translated to become a partaker together with others or to become a partner. Don't become a partaker with the unfruitful works of darkness.

John MacArthur said, "The child of light should not become involved in evil even by association."

I remember when I used to go to this one church. It was really the second church I went to after becoming a believer. I was only about a year old in the Lord and I sat there listening and weeping because everything he said was just a mirror of my heart, just exposing my sin. And I knew I had been saved and I had been cleansed and washed. I tell you what. The Word of God had a lot of cleaning up to do. And I remember many times he used 1 Thessalonians chapter five which says, "Abstain from every form of evil."³⁰

We were invited to a birthday party Friday night and there were people there drinking. And we were very concerned when it came to us getting a Coke that people would think we were drinking alcohol too. We didn't want it to be in the same type of glass that everybody else was using because we didn't want people to think that we were drinking alcohol.

And, of course, the only thing that I could do was pull the straw out to make it...hey, we're just drinking a Coke. But still I had to go up to the bar to get the Coke. That was the hard part.

The guy looked at me as he stepped back, Coke? Ok. Nobody in here orders a Coke.

²⁸ 2 Corinthians 6:15-19

²⁹ Ephesians 5:11

³⁰ 1 Thessalonians 5:22

But I remember that pastor saying that when you are in those situations even something minute as that is an opportunity of evil by association. If it presents in the minds of the other people that see you that you are possibly drinking, that is evil by association.

Apply this to Halloween.

I know there is really nothing evil in and of itself in dressing up as a biblical character. Some churches do that. They are dressing up in cowboy or western or something like that. But let me just offer you something that we have dealt with on this evil by association. If we go into the same stores where everybody else goes to buy from the same area of costumes, maybe theirs is evil and ours is not. As far as the people that are standing there in the aisle with us we are participating in what they are doing. That is evil by association. And that is, of course, just something that we have had to come to terms with. We think in those regards so therefore we have never allowed our kids to involve themselves in that way. But we have gotten involved in alternatives.

He says here that we are not to be partakers with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather we are to expose them. The word “expose” means to reprove, a correction. How can we correct things like this?

Of course, as I was reading that book this week, it was pretty clear that Halloween is here to stay. It is the third most popular holiday and it is not even an official holiday on our calendar. It is the third most celebrated holiday. Amazing, isn't it?

So how should we respond?

Well, let me just give you some suggestions. Obviously one of them is offer an alternative because we know that there are going to be kids innocently out there doing that, right? And we know for parents' sake, hey we are not celebrating evil. We are not seeking to do what was historically part of that day. And, of course, I have to commend people for that, right?

But, at the same time they are trying to say let's deal with this innocently, hey there is nothing really wrong with it, that is the part where we have got to be real careful, just evil by association. Not even evil by association, but the opportunity for the devil to deceive us, right?

What are the ways that we have dealt with some of this? Number one, use it as an opportunity for outreach. We know that kids are going to come to our house and, of course, we want them to come to our house if you will. If there are going to be kids out there participating in it we want them to know that a safe place that they can come to is our house, right? And I know everybody in here would agree with the same part of that, right?

We used to take opportunity with our kids and turn it into a family time. We would do crafts together and make things that we could pass out during that time. I remember one

year we took some things and made some crosses and we had already purchased some Halloween tracks that a kid could read and we put all these things together and when kids came to the door that's what we gave them.

Some opportunities that had been presented to us was even an opportunity to share with some of the kids. Of course you are limited at that point.

Some other ways as alternatives is even patrol the neighborhoods where this is occurring to prevent evil occurrences. I mean if this is a high and holy day for the satanic church—and I know that we have been mystified because of the television that has taken away the reality of evil—we have got to be careful with what is going on in our neighborhoods. I don't know about you, but I would seek to look out for my neighbor, wouldn't you? My neighbor looks out for me. He watches my place. We watch each other's place. It doesn't have anything to do with whether we like each other, right? We care about what each other has. We respect what each other has and we seek to provide protection there.

I know in our neighborhood—and it is really strange because where we live, we live on a pretty busy road so to go off on other people's yards you have really got to be going after something because of the way that is all spread out.

We had a situation not too long ago where people were having things taken from their property during the night. Before the old post office was cleaned up and sold to a private owner, it used to have satanic symbols sprayed on the back of it.

The reason why we want to patrol the community is to prevent evil occurrences, to help protect the kids that are out there. That is another opportunity.

This is what I believe is the best alternative. It is simply this. Pray. Pray for the kids that are out there. Pray for the adults. Pray about the neighborhoods. Pray about the community.

And then a fourth one would be some of the alternatives: fall festivals, family time—celebrating one of the things the Church sought to center itself on—All Saints' Day. Of course, that got confused, too, because the Catholic Church got a hold of that and they made it saint worship.

You see, there are all kinds of opportunities before us. And, of course, these are issues, many of the issues that you have to deal with personally yourself, especially the issue of any kind of participation or any kind of dressing up or things like that.

Now let me just say this. You come out there next week and your kids are dressed up. You are not going to hear a sermon from me. I gave it this morning, right? And I am not going to condemn you or hate you or beat you up or pull you off to the side and rebuke you. I am not going to do any of that either. I am going to love you as I have been seeking to do that right now.

You see, that is something that you have to do. My responsibility is to give you the truth. Your responsibility is to apply it. Amen?

So what are we saying in all this? Christians are children of the light. All activity should promote what is right and what is truthful and it should bring glory and honor to Christ and we should look for ways where we can counteract the darkness. And we need to examine it ourselves and ask the Holy Spirit how we should respond in this situation and ask ourselves simply this: Is what I am doing giving glory to God? The Bible says it plainly. We are children of light. We are not children of darkness. Don't participate in darkness. Halloween is a celebration of darkness. It is a celebration of murder, death and all those things that are associated with it.

I think about those whose family members were murdered. I know that they are not celebrating this day. You see? It is something to think about.

And I tell you the greatest question, really, to deal with this morning: Is there darkness still in your life? Have you given your life to Jesus Christ? Have you come and laid your sin down in the cross and allowed Jesus Christ to cover you and to forgive you, take the darkness away, to give you a new life, to make you a child of God? Has that occurred in your life this morning?

See, if it hasn't then, you don't even know what I am talking about this morning, right? Jesus Christ wants to be preeminent in every area of our life. He wants the full control of every area of our life, not just a few areas, but every area. And, you see, the thing about Spirit control, where the Spirit of God controls and leads us is an absolute in our life. It just simply means this. You either are filled with the Spirit now or you are not. You can be filled with the Spirit right now and two minutes later not.

How do we know that? Any of us in here have kids? Yes. I like what Swindoll says, "Kids are God's spies." They tell on us, don't they? But I could just be riding home, one of the kids act up. You just really had a wonderful day of worshipping the Lord. You are still filled with the Spirit. A few minutes later you lose it. You are not filled with the Spirit at that point. That is how absolute it is. That is how come we have to give ourselves up daily, moment by moment to the things of Christ.

Now, listen. I love you and I just want to tell you the truth and I have prayed a lot about what I wanted to share this morning and I just want to give you what the truth says. We are children of light. Let's walk as children of light.

I pray that you will consider some of these things.