

# Who Is Satan?

*Together in Truth*

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**Preached on:** Tuesday, April 21, 2020

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We come back to the study of God's word and to this little series that we're calling "Together in Truth." We're considering ultimate questions about the Christian faith, ultimate questions about life itself. Why do we believe the Bible, who is God, and what is the Trinity are the last three that we considered with an interposing message on Sunday that considered the Triune nature of our salvation. Tonight we come to the topic that I announced earlier, "Who Is Satan?" And I just want to say a word about this as we approach it. When you consider just what we've studied so far in this series, particularly about the nature of God, the inspiration of Scripture, and the unfathomable depths of the doctrine of the Trinity, we need to understand a very basic point to frame our thinking as we continue to go forward in this study, is that there is a spiritual realm, there is a realm of truth and existence and reality that we cannot see, that we cannot touch, that is not accessible by our five human senses, instead these are things that are revealed to us in the word of God. The fact that we cannot see them does not make them any less true, anymore than we would deny the law of gravity or the laws of logic simply because we cannot see them. That's important for us to keep in mind as we come to this particular study, "Who Is Satan?"

When we contemplate the reality of God and then the reality of Satan, as we'll get into tonight, I just want to say this by way of preface. When we talk about Satan and the realm of demons and the like, is to understand that this invisible spiritual realm of which we speak has a dimension to it, an aspect to it that is a lethal threat to our well-being. Our existence as Christians is actively opposed by an evil supernatural realm. Your existence as a non-Christian is far far worse because Scripture teaches us, as we'll see, that this invisible spiritual realm has blinded you to the Gospel, that it holds you hostage to the devil and the father of lies, and that unless you are delivered from that realm, you will spend eternity in a realm of eternal judgment and eternal destruction with this awful being known as Satan, the devil and the father of lies. So we need to know who our enemy is and we know how to meet and to answer the enemy, and that's part of what we want to consider here this evening. While this is about an invisible realm, that does not meant that it is unimportant. It's actually far more important than anything that's going on in the national disruption that causes us to meet online like this here this evening.

So we come to the question: who is Satan? Well, that name Satan appears over 50 times in Scripture, roughly 15 times in the Old Testament, some 35-36 times in the New

Testament. The name Satan itself means adversary, one who is opposed to us. A synonym name that is used for him in Scripture is the word "devil," and that word has the sense that he is an accuser of the brethren, an accuser of man, and those things give us an immediate entrance into the kind of realm that we're discussing here this evening. As we consider who Satan is, we're stepping into a biblical realm of revelation that says there is an adversarial force at work against us, accusing us and seeking to deceive us, to lead us away from the truth as it is found in Scripture and in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so when we come to the Bible, when we come to prayer, when we study Scripture and learn doctrine and theology together, we're doing so in the midst of opposition; that there is a foe that is at stake and a foe that is at work trying to hinder this, trying to hinder people from coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and also working to undermine the faith of true Christians to cause them to stumble in their walk or even lead them away from truth, to the extent that that's possible. So what we're doing here is not simply an academic exercise, this is not at all like studying mathematics in some kind of theoretical intellectual sense, there is a very real sense that every time we gather together as the people of God, as we open Scripture and teach it, that we are doing battle against a spiritual realm that is trying to undermine everything that we do, and as we're going to see as we go along here, it's important for us to understand that this is a realm with supernatural power; that as we gather together, we cannot simply overcome this in human strength because there is supernatural power in this invisible evil realm that is seeking to undermine us, and we'll see that as we go along here tonight.

So it humbles us. It should put a healthy sense of fear, if I can put it that way and I emphasize the word "healthy" there, it should sober us to realize that, let me just re-emphasize that word, it should sober us to realize that this realm in which we engage as we proclaim the Gospel, as we study God's word, it is met with a supernatural opposition from one who is designed to and has as his design to destroy us and to hinder us and to undermine us, and so that immediately puts us in a position of humility, it makes us dependent upon the help of God, the help of the Holy Spirit as we do these things, and so that we do not treat this as a trivial matter, as a light matter, as a comedic matter of just fun and games. No, we're involved in something that is deadly serious, that is earnest in its implications. That's what we're coming to study here tonight and it just gives us a sense that the whole mission of the true church is high, it's lofty, it's noble, and it's also something of great consequence that the ramifications of which will echo throughout eternity.

You know, I try to read a bit in the realm of church history and of the great men of the faith that have gone before us. I'm reading a book on the Scottish Reformation by Ian Murray in these days, and you're just mindful of the fact that the church and what we're doing, it's bigger than us. It's more significant that we ourselves, our individual lives, and it transcends our individual preferences and individual comforts. We are in the line of a long line of great and godly men. We stand on their shoulders. We're small in comparison to them, but the faith that we study and the faith that we have received is something that has been handed down to us over the course of time by generations of faithful men, many of whom greatly suffered for the cause of Christ, and so we've been handed a treasure that we are seeking to preserve, to take what we have received, to teach it and to proclaim

it while the Lord gives us breath, so that the next generation to come after would pick up the baton and carry it on as well.

One of the things that I love about our church, and I'm kind of drifting off of the subject here for now but that's okay, some of you are in this room and some of you that are watching over the live stream that are a lot younger than I am, you know, what I would encourage you to do is to realize that as you're hearing the word of God taught, is that it's an opportunity for you that you would be one of those faithful men, one of those faithful young women who would receive this and treat it earnestly and take it as a treasure that's been entrusted to you, not simply for your own well-being, not simply for your own good, but something that you are to protect as that which has been handed down through generations of Christians before you, and that you would treasure it and pass it on to someone else. Scripture teaches us that this is exactly what we're supposed to do, to take what we have received, teach it to faithful men who will be able then to teach it to others. And so, you know, as we gather together tonight, especially for you young people, you young adults and all of that, just recognize what a great privilege it is for us to be in the realm of truth with such a long noble line of tradition and heritage that preceded us, for us to do our part to pass it on for generations to come if the Lord tarries. So we're aiming to do no less than that in this series that we've titled "Together in Truth."

So Satan is an adversary. He is an accuser and the question becomes, "Well, where did Satan come from? Where did he come from if God created everything very good in the first chapter of Genesis?" Well, we're not going to spend much time speculating on that. I'll simply say this, that based on passages like Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, most Bible teachers believe that Satan was originally a good angel, a high angel, the highest of angels, but he fell from his position through pride and rebellion against God, and as a result of that he was cast out of heaven awaiting his ultimate destruction over the course of millennia, but Satan in the meantime has misappropriated the great angelic power that was originally given to him and he now uses it for evil purposes in rebellion against God, to frustrate to the extent that God allows him to hinder the purposes of God, and to hinder and discourage the people of God and to keep other men from coming to the truth. So God gave him a high position, God gave him supernatural power. Something in Satan and his pride rebelled against God and now seeks to use that which was given to him against the very God that had originally created him a good and high being from the start.

So that's something about his origin. The thing that I want to focus on here tonight is not so much about those things that are not as fully revealed in Scripture as much as what Satan is doing today and the implications that it has for us as believers in Jesus Christ. The primary thing that we would want to keep in mind is that Satan is a great deceiver. Jesus said in John 8:44 that he is the father of lies, and as a result of that, he is a working master of deception. And you can see the work of his deception going all the way back to Genesis 3 when he took the form of the body of a serpent, deceived Eve about the purposes of God. She ate of the forbidden fruit, handed it to Adam and he ate, and the whole human race collapsed into ruin and separation from the privileged position that they had with God at the time of creation. And so his deception was so great that he deceived man who was in his original innocence, and his destructive purposes and intent

were so great that it brought down the fall of the entire human race and introduced death into the realm of existence as Romans 5:12-21 speaks about. Death entered into the world through sin, sin came into the world through the temptation that Satan provided to our original parents, Adam and Eve. So I mention that just by way of passing for us to realize the cataclysmic, the colossal consequences of his initial deception and his original destructive intention as he came upon our first parents, and so the entire world lives in the aftermath of the deception and the destructive intentions of Satan. That's why we deal with disease. That's why we deal with death. All of this came in through the sin of man, and the sin of man came about through a deception that was practiced upon him by the devil as we read about in Genesis 3.

Well, in Revelation 12:9 it says this about Satan, looking forward to his future destruction. It says,

9 ... the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Revelation 12:9, indicating there that Satan carried off a colossal number of fallen angels with him when he was kicked out of heaven, and so we see that this is a matter of great consequence. Revelation 12:9 again, he deceives the whole world and so when we're talking about Satan, we're talking about something with worldwide consequence even if most men are unaware of his existence, men mock his existence and don't take it seriously, you know, the pointy tail and the red birthday suit kind of thing, we need to put all of those caricatures out of our mind and deal earnestly with the biblical reality that is presented to us. So to talk about Satan, then, is to talk about a spiritual being who is evil and who is a real and personal and immediate threat, a threat to our well-being. We are in danger as a result of the existence of Satan and we do not have in our own capacity, our human power, our human ingenuity, our human wit can do nothing to overcome him.

Now let's see a little bit about what Scripture says about him. If you want to turn in your Bible to the book of Job, Job 1:6 through 12, we just see a very insightful, a very intriguing passage of Scripture that talks about how Satan approached God and wanted to tempt men into problems. In Job 1:6,

6 ... there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. 7 The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." 8 The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." [So God brings Job to Satan's attention] 9 Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 But put forth Your hand now

and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face." 12 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

And you know how that story unfolds. Colossal calamity comes upon Job. He does not curse God. He's blameless in how he responds. Satan comes back to the Lord. The Lord gives him permission to strike Job physically but protects his life. The Lord protects Job's life from utter destruction and so Job suffers miserably under the hand of Satan, he loses everything earthly and then he loses his health all because Satan wanted to provoke the Lord, to test the Lord and to test Job in the process. So we see how wicked, how malevolent, how evil his intentions are that he would take a blameless man and strike him in the wickedness of Satan's being. So who is Satan? We see that he is an evil spirit that has some manner of access to God, according to this chapter in Job. He is an intelligent personality. He talks to God about Job. He forms plans against Job and he's also a being with immense power when the Lord gives him the opportunity to exercise that power, and he will do so destructively. He has no inhibitions about destroying everything in his wake, and so this gives us a bit of an introduction and leads us into our four points for this evening.

First of all, we want to expand on the idea, number 1, that Satan is an adversary. Satan is an adversary. He is an opponent. You see his opposition to Job totally unprovoked. You see his opposition to Job. We talked earlier about his opposition to Adam and Eve and to the human race, and so there is just this blind hatred, this blind wickedness that is driving Satan in order to destroy everything in his path and his evil plays out in different ways and that's what I want to just kind of expand on here. For the rest of our time tonight, we're going to jump around to some different passages in Scripture. There's a lot that we need to pull together in one place. There's not a systematic passage that teaches all about Satan in Scripture that we could go to and look at that one passage, rather we go to many different passages and piece together how wicked he is and how serious his opposition to the human race is.

So that's what we're going to look at now in this first point as we consider the fact that Satan is an adversary. Well, we saw already that he tempted the original man into sin and thus cast the human race into sin and death. Going further and thinking about it now in New Testament terms, thinking about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, let's pause there for just a moment. The Gospel of Jesus Christ which we've been trying to emphasize so much over the past several weeks, the good news that despite the sin of man, the fall of man, the ruin of man, the good news that Jesus Christ came to earth as a man, that he lived a perfect life, that he offered his life, he offered himself up at the cross, and in his shed blood provided for the forgiveness of sin for everyone who would believe in him, including people just like you and me, that everyone who would believe in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ would have their sins forgiven and would receive the promise of eternal life. Do you know what? The Gospel means good news and for a fallen race like ours, that's the best of news to realize that someone from outside us has become like us and identified with us in our humanity in order to deliver us from the danger that we

are in. And you would think in one sense if you were just thinking about it on a purely human level, you would think that men would be flocking to hear this news and wanting to embrace it for their own sake, for their own well-being in order to be delivered from lostness, darkness and judgment and enter into light and forgiveness and eternal life. When you look at it with opened eyes, you just say, "Why wouldn't everybody want this? Why doesn't everybody come to Christ for salvation? Why is there such an opposition and resistance to the Gospel which is the very good news that every man, woman and child needs? Why this darkness? Why this indifference? Why this hostility against the Lord Jesus Christ who is the only Savior of mankind? Why?" It's a troubling question to realize that and as you pull open the trap door, so to speak, and look down into the depth of what's at stake here, what you find is this, is that Satan is at work and that Satan blinds men to the Gospel so that they cannot believe, so that they do not see the beauty of Christ, they do not see their danger, and therefore they do not repent of sin and come to faith in Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:3 and 4 says this, it says, "even if," this is the Apostle Paul speaking, he says,

3 ... even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case [now listen to this, this is the key point here] in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ,

Satan who is the god of this world has blinded men, he supernaturally prevents them from understanding the Gospel, from seeing the value and the worth of Christ, he supernaturally hinders them and blocks their understanding so that they cannot grasp it, so that they cannot see it, so that they don't even have the ability to do so and he stands as an evil interloper between the Gospel of Christ and the salvation of men. Satan, as it were, stands and holds out his hand and pushes men away from this truth. To use a different physical analogy, he puts his hand, speaking metaphorically obviously, he puts his hand over their eyes, he covers up their ears so that the truth does not penetrate into their understanding so that they would not repent and believe. So he holds unsaved men in bondage. He is like an evil slave master and he has men in spiritual chains that they cannot escape by their own power, and this supernaturally hinders them from being saved.

The New Testament speaks about this in another place as well in 2 Timothy 2 and I invite you to turn to 2 Timothy 2:24-26 where you see this same truth taught again by the Apostle Paul. 2 Timothy 2:24 says,

24 The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

And so Paul says here, he says that the man of God must be of a certain kind of character as he preaches and as he ministers the word of God, and he says the importance of this is that he would do so in a way that opened the realm of God's work if perhaps God would have mercy on some of those who do not believe, a supernatural power from God to come upon them in the midst of their unbelief.

Now why is a supernatural power from the God of the Bible necessary for them? He goes on and he explains it. He says, "You see, they are under supernatural captivity." He says that they need to come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil because the devil has held them captive to do his will. Unsaved men are under the power and the domination of Satan. They cannot hear the Gospel unless God grants it to them, unless God grants repentance to them. Satan, in other words, is their slave master and he is not releasing anybody voluntarily. He will not let anyone go if it's up to him, rather he holds them captive to do his will and his will is ultimately leading to their eternal destruction. That's how great an adversary he is.

So Paul here as he speaks about the nature of the man of God immediately brings up the fact that there needs to be a supernatural intervention from God himself if anyone is to be saved because Satan is actively hindering men from hearing the Gospel. That's how great an adversary he is. So lethal is the hatred of Satan that he earnestly desires the eternal damnation of every soul that's born into this world. Billions and billions of people, Satan sees them all as his dupes and wants them all to end up in hell with him forever and ever and ever. This is a frightening prospect. That's how wicked, how much of an opponent he is, and he has the supernatural power apart from the intervention of God, if it were not for God, he has the full power to take every man, woman and child down that path. That's a powerful adversary, one that we need to take seriously as we contemplate the truth of the Gospel.

There's another application of it as we think about things. It's so common, especially as you talk maybe to new believers as people have been sharing the faith and they find that people are not interested, that people are hostile, that people twist their words and make foolish and false accusations against them just because they're trying to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with them, and they say, "Well, why can't they see it? Why are they like that? Oh, I can't believe. How foolish they are." Well, you know, when we're talking in that way, we're missing this dimension of the spiritual reality that's at stake and we need to remember this as we're sharing the Gospel, as people reject us, as people are indifferent to the words that we say, we need to remember this aspect of it that we are dealing with people that are under the power of a supernatural blindness that is hindering them from hearing the truth and that changes our whole perspective on it. For one thing, it should make us understand that we are utterly dependent upon the help of the Holy Spirit if our evangelism is going to have any good at all, produce any results at all, because as a man I can't overcome the power of Satan by what I say. I need the help of the Holy Spirit to give weight to my words not only in evangelism but every time I step into this pulpit to teach and preach to you. I need the help of the Holy Spirit because my words are empty and impotent apart from that, so great is the opposition of Satan.

Well, in a like manner when you're evangelizing, when you're sharing Christ with your loved ones and day after day, month after month, year after year they don't want to hear it and they just seem to get cold and harder, you need to come back to this and realize, "Oh, this is terrible. This is so awful. I'm seeing living out before me the effect that Satan has blinded their eyes to the Gospel and that there's a supernatural deception under which they operate." And that has an effect on you inside your heart. Rather than getting angry and wanting to win an argument or getting frustrated with them, when we understand these things it opens up the floodgates of compassion for them, you realize how lost they are under Satan, you realize a sense of gratitude, "Wow, I used to be like that and God had mercy on me or I would be in that position as well." And also if we're thinking rightly and the Spirit of God is really starting to purify and sanctify us, it gives us a sense of how necessary it is for us to be prayerful in our ministry of God's word and in evangelism. It's just so essential that we are dependent upon God and asking for the Spirit of God, as it were, to come down upon us, to come down upon our words, to come within and give life and power to the things that we say, to break through that spiritual bondage and that spiritual blindness that Satan has imposed upon our loved ones and upon others that we come into contact with with the Gospel of Christ. It just humbles us to realize how serious the stakes are, how great the power is that opposes us, and it humbles us, causes us to look to Christ in prayer and view our loved ones with a sense of compassion, not frustration or anger that they don't get it.

And let me just add a word for those of you, the parents of young children in our congregation and for you to see this in your own life and within your own family. As you're training your children and helping them, there needs to be this consistent praying for their salvation over time that God would overcome the work of the devil in their lives that even your children would be delivered from that. You don't have the power as a parent to make them change. You don't have the power to open their eyes and so while we minister and do everything we can as parents to train them in the way that we should go, we understand that we cannot control and manipulate them to bring about the result that we want. Even as parents of young children and as they grow up into their teenage years and the challenges that sometimes come with that, to realize we need the help of God day by day and as we understand how much of an adversary Satan is, it should draw us and drive us to prayer that we would be asking God to help us in ways that go beyond all that we could ask or think because your young ones are under this spell of darkness if God does not interact for them, and in your love for your children and in your understanding of Scripture, it should help you become a prayerful parent looking for God to do the work in them that you're not able to do on your own. So this has very practical consequences in the way that we deal with our loved ones and in the whole matter of evangelism.

Now Satan is an adversary and we see that playing out in the Gospel, there's another dimension, a different kind of aspect of his opposition to us that I want to mention at this point, is that Satan is not a solitary evil force; that Scripture teaches us that his threat against us is multiplied by the fact that he has innumerable demons, lesser evil spiritual beings that are under his control that he acts as a General over an evil army of demonic



soldiers. He rules over wicked spirits which oppose God and man. He is called Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons in Matthew 12. Jesus refers to the devil and his angels in Matthew 25, indicating that these demonic evil angels belong to Satan in the sense that they are under his control and under his command. In the passage that I alluded to earlier in Revelation 12:7 and 9, give me a moment to find it even as I give you a moment to find it also, Revelation 12:7-9 says this,

7 ... there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, 8 and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. [And as we read earlier] 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

And so Scripture gives this picture of a hierarchy of evil beings, Satan being at the head of it and then a hierarchy of evil beings underneath him, helping him to carry out his evil will. Well, beloved, here's what I want you to see. First of all, we should emphasize and understand that Satan is not like God. God is omnipresent but Satan is not. He is not everywhere at one time, but he compensates for that by the fact that he has this legion of evil angels that are under his control that do his bidding. If you think about it this way, a man's power is increased when, just speaking in human terms, when he has a number of people who are under his authority that do his bidding. Thinking about it in an evil way, a mafia boss has multiplied power because he has henchmen under him that obey his orders. The mafia boss couldn't do it all by himself but when a drug cartel or city mafia organizations are practicing their criminal enterprises, they have far greater power than the one person in charge because there are so many people that are carrying out his orders and his wishes. Well, in a parallel way into that invisible realm that we cannot see, it's like this with Satan so that he's an adversary in the sense that he opposes the Gospel, he blinds men to the Gospel and he also has this hierarchy of evil beings that are underneath his authority, and we'll see how that plays out more a little bit later in the message.

So for now our point simply is this: Satan is a formidable, a formidable adversary to mankind and he is an adversary to the church of Jesus Christ. He's an adversary and we cannot overstate what a real and present danger he is to our spiritual well-being. We need to take this seriously just like the word of God does. 1 Peter 5:8 says,

8 ... Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

And that's addressed to Christians. We're humbled by this. We're sobered by it and we take it seriously.

He's an adversary. Secondly for tonight: Satan is a deceiver. Satan is a deceiver and in a crucial passage in the Gospel of John 8, Jesus speaks about this aspect of the nature of the devil. John 8:44 Jesus speaks to the unbelieving Jews who are challenging him and he says in John 8:44, he says, actually let's look at verse 43, "Why do you not understand

what I am saying?" This is the point I was raising just a moment ago, people blind to the Gospel, blind to the word of Christ. He says,

43 Why do you not understand what I am saying? [Then he answers his own question,] It is because you cannot hear My word.

You're not able to. You don't have it within you. And why is it that you're not able to hear and understand what I say to you? Verse 44 lays it out.

44 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.

And so at the very core of the personality of Satan is that he is a father of lies, he is a master of deception, everything about him is misleading and when you combine that with the fact that he's a murderer, you get a sense of the colossal wickedness that has warped his character and forms the heart from which he does everything that he does. He designs to deceive, he designs to destroy, to murder and to mislead.

The way this plays out in further biblical teaching is this, is that one of the great avenues by which the devil deceives men and works to undermine the church and the Gospel is that he uses false teaching to lead men away from God. In 1 Timothy 4 it says this, it says,

1 ... in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,

Satan disguises himself even as a messenger of truth in order to deceive men.

In 2 Corinthians 11, I realize we're going through these texts rather quickly, 2 Corinthians 11:13-14. We'll pause for a moment to summarize here in just a moment. 2 Corinthians 11:13-14 Paul talking about the false teachers of his day, he says this, he says,

13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 For no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

One of the things that makes Satan so deceptive, so tricky, so difficult to discern is that he comes to us in the form of false teachers who claim to be teachers of Christ, who claim to be men of God, who may say a lot of things that sound biblically true but is mixed with enough error to actually be a message of deception. You know, a glass of pure water is turned into poison with just a drop of arsenic or some other kind of poison and that's the way it is so often with biblical truth; things are said that on the surface might seem to be true enough but error is introduced alongside it or the other matters of essential biblical truth are not talked about, are not mentioned. The sin of man, the

judgment of God, the wrath of God, the call to repentance, the call for holiness is always absent from these kinds of men even as they're talking about the love of Jesus. And you know, all that different stuff that they'll talk about, God wants you to be happy and God has a great plan for your life and blah, blah, blah, understand that this is not harmless, understand that these kinds of teachers are not simply human instruments here. They are the front-men for Satan in his design to deceive men and to lead them into eternal destruction.

That's why it's so important, beloved, in one sense I am saying a word of gratitude with what I'm about to say to those of you who are so supportive of our church, and it's also a word of warning to people who diminish the importance of a Bible teaching ministry and look for other things out of the church life. It is so important for us to understand that Scripture needs to be at the center of everything that we do as a church, and the full counsel of God needs to be taught, not simply our favorite parts. We need to teach the full counsel of God because that is the means by which God protects us from the error that Satan would otherwise interject into a body of believers or into your own individual lives. We need the word of God because it is the word of God that helps us discern truth from error and that's why, beloved, that's why we place such a central emphasis on the word of God here at Truth Community Church. It's not because I like to hear myself talk, it's because the word of God is our protection against the doctrines of demons, it's our protection against the work of Satan, and I can't tell you, all I can do is open up my pastoral heart and let it bleed here a little bit for you, I can't tell you how it distresses me to hear the people that say these kinds of things, that they want something else than that in their church experience; that they'll diminish and they'll set aside the priority of the word of God because they want something else out of it, something that seems more immediately helpful, something more relevant to their lives or something that is, you know, has more for their family in different programs and all of that. Beloved, I beg you to understand and to embrace and reaffirm your commitment to this, that if you have those things without the word of God, you have nothing and you actually have less than nothing, you have worse than nothing, you have something that is leading you away from the truth if the word of God is not central in the ministry of a local church. If the word of God is not central, anything else that you can have does not make up for the lack of that, and if you have the word of God in a local church, then that makes up for other things that you might otherwise like to have, understand that the Bible, that a teaching ministry of God's word is the sine qua non, the reason for the existence of the church, without that you don't really have a church without the teaching of the word of God being at the very center of everything that's done.

So, you know, it's the nature of life that people come, people go, people have different things that they want. As I'm speaking to you here this evening, I just encourage you to settle it in your heart that what you seek out of life is the word of God and part of the reason that you seek that is because you understand that you need protection from this supernatural deceiver who is Satan, the devil and the great dragon who will one day be cast into the eternal lake of fire. It's that important, beloved, and it shapes, you know, our understanding of the threat of Satan and demonic powers has a way of shaping the priorities that we pursue as a local church. That's why, it's one of the reasons that we do

what we do and the reason that we do it like we do it. Well, what you just heard was a plea for biblical ministry and a plea for people who hear to embrace it with their own convictions and with their own, you know, with their own desires. I'm pleading for nothing less than that and I'm grateful to have a congregation that shares in that commitment. I just want to reinforce it and call others to join in with that kind of commitment because eternal matters are at stake and invisible realms of the difference between evil and blessing are at the cutting edge of what we're talking about here and it's why we do what we do and make the Bible the central focus of our church to the point that an open Bible is at the center of even of our church logo. I don't know how else to say it.

Well, how does Satan work his deception? 1 John 5:19 says that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one, and when it speaks about the world, it has the idea that Satan is at work in philosophies, in false teachings, in systems of thought and false religion that lead people away from the true knowledge of God. We shouldn't think about Satan in this kind of superficial term that I'm about to describe, you should not be thinking about Satan as the one who is tempting you to eat that extra piece of chocolate that you know you really shouldn't take. We shouldn't think about it in such superficial terms like that. Satan is at work in false religions and in false philosophies that lead people away from the truth. He's the force behind the dominant theory of evolution. He's the force behind false religions like Catholicism and Islam and Mormonism and countless other false religions that teach men a system of works by which they can supposedly achieve their own salvation rather than teaching people that they must come helplessly and humbly by faith in Jesus Christ for the atonement of their sins, and that there's nothing that we can do with our hands and in our own lives in order to save our souls. You see, Satan is at work in whole systems that lead people away that look very attractive until they're measured by the presence of the word of God. So in 2 Corinthians 10:5 Paul speaks about his ministry saying,

5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

That's 2 Corinthians 10:5. And so Satan is an adversary, Satan is a deceiver, and his systems of deception are elaborate, they are sophisticated, they may at times sound very academic, at other times they may appeal to our emotions, at other times our sense of excitement or whatever the case may be, there are a multitude of ways in which Satan works to deceive people through systems of thought and religious systems and we need to be aware of those and to see through them and to see them in light of the word of God because if we don't it's going to lead us astray.

So Satan is an adversary. He is a deceiver. We'll leave it there for this evening. Let's go on quickly to a couple of final points here. We've kind of seen the downside, we've looked at the evil side of this, let's look at the provision of God here that he's made for us as believers in Christ and how God himself compares to Satan. There is no comparison but as much as we talk about his supernatural power, when we see it in comparison with

the God of the Bible and the God of our salvation, we understand that they are not co-equal beings, that Satan is an infinitely lower and lesser being than God and that is where we find our hope and our strength and our courage from.

So point 3: Satan and God. Satan and God. Despite the strength and the cunning of the devil, the Bible gives us hope that all is not lost. Satan is not omnipotent like God is. God has all power to carry out his will. For Satan, he's not. Satan can only work within the boundaries that God permits to him. Satan, as I said earlier, is not omnipresent like God is. And so what else can we say about this? First of all, God restrains Satan. He restrains Satan. He determines the boundaries in which Satan can operate and so Satan could not touch Job until God allowed him to do so, and he could only touch Job to the extent that God permitted. At the start, Satan could not touch Job physically and so he could only touch the possessions and family of Job. Second stage of it, God allowed him to touch Job physically and to afflict Job physically but he could not take away his life. Believe me, Satan would have done it if he could because he is a murderer as Jesus said, Satan finds delight in the destruction of human life. But with Job we see that he could not act beyond the boundaries of permission that God gave to him. That gives us a sense of comfort and confidence that there are boundaries beyond which Satan cannot go and the one who sets those boundaries for those of us that are in Christ, we have the rest and the comfort and the encouragement knowing that it is our heavenly Father that sets those boundaries on Satan so that even if he afflicts us, he can only do so to the extent that God has determined and allowed to happen. That's a great encouragement for our hearts.

Secondly as we consider Satan and God, we look at the ultimate outcome of the course in the ages of history and we find this, it's that God will destroy him. God will condemn him, you could say. The most decisive limit that God has set on Satan is that Satan is destined for eternal judgment. In the book of Revelation 20:7 it says this,

7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. 9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Amen to that. Satan's final destination is the eternal pit of eternal destruction. He cannot escape that final destination, that final judgment, and so God in a sense is using Satan as his pawn to advance God's own purposes during the course of time and when God's purposes are completed and God has done everything that he desires, Satan will be cast into the pit and God's final victory will be complete, it will be decisive, and it will be irreversible. So as we look to the final outcome that has been revealed to us in advance, we see how limited Satan is and that ultimately he is running around now as an already

defeated foe under the power of our God and the power of our Christ, and so God rules over Satan, establishes boundaries for him, and ultimately will judge him forever in hell.

Now that's Satan and God, let's just talk briefly, point 4 as we wrap it up here: Satan and you, let's put it this way. Satan and you. We see the ultimate outcome, well, what about you and me in the course of living our Christian lives right now, and this is where it all becomes very practical. What are we to do and how are to think in light of the fact that there is this deceptive adversary to our souls who's looking to devour and destroy us? What are we to do and how are we to defend ourselves in the midst of this?

Well, first of all, we are not to be ignorant of his schemes. We're not to be ignorant of his schemes. 2 Corinthians 2:11 speaks to that. We understand that Satan rules over an evil realm, he rules over the world system in which we live, that he has a realm of deception and our own flesh contributes to the problem, and so we realize that we are vulnerable and therefore we're not to be ignorant of these things. That has consequences for us, it means that you and I, we do not trifle with sin, we do not trifle with false teachers, we do not abide with them or by them, we do not listen to false teachers because we take seriously the threat of exposing ourselves to satanic influence through false teachers, and also we guard ourselves from interacting with the spiritual world. We want nothing to do with the realm of psychics, or Ouija boards, or other matters like that that are dabbling in the realm of spirits, of trying to communicate with the dead. Scripture condemns all of that and we should understand that there is an evil spiritual force at work in these things and when we understand that, we flee from it, we have nothing to do with it, we separate ourselves completely from it. None of you should be reading astrology charts, those daily things that you see. None of that should have any place in your life. None of that has any place in the life of a Christian. This is one way that we take the spiritual realm seriously is by avoiding and cutting out any influence that it previously had in our lives. We don't treat it as a game, we realize it's deadly serious and so we avoid it with every power in our being because we understand that those things are Satan's foot soldiers in his battle to destroy you.

That's the negative side. Let me just say this as we contemplate that and I have a few Scriptures to bring us to a conclusion, but as we're talking about these things, beloved, and you know, there are realms of so-called Christianity that are just so preoccupied with Satan that people live in just such utter fear of his tyranny, they haven't gotten a biblical balance of it and every time something goes wrong, Satan is attacking them and you get the sense that Satan is stronger than God, which is just an utter upside down approach to what Scripture actually teaches about it. And while Satan is a serious foe and a serious threat to us, you and I need to understand this, is that the reality of Satan and the existence of Satan and his demons, it should not paralyze us with fear like that as you often find in the realms of charismatic teaching.

You should not be paralyzed with any sense of fear of Satan at all, and let me give you an analogy before we go into the Scriptures that help us. You and I understand and we have enough common sense, most of us do anyway, that we know that we should stay away from the bad areas of town. We know that there are areas where drug deals are going

down, where people are murdered, and where there is a lot of present danger on the streets, and we have the good common sense to avoid those areas and to not send our children into them and all of that. The area exists, we understand that, but we just, we stay away from it because we've got the good sense to do that. In the same sense, we understand that we don't stick knives into electrical outlets because there's danger there. We lock our doors at night before we go to bed to keep out people who would want to intrude and cause us harm. We understand that there are practical measures, pretty simple ones actually, that help us avoid much of the danger that exists in daily life, especially living in a metropolitan area, a big city area like we do here in Cincinnati. We understand that and so we simply avoid the things that would cause us harm and that's what I'm speaking about in avoiding these other spiritual things that I alluded to a moment ago.

At the same time, we understand that we cannot defeat Satan on our own. We have to consciously trust in the power of Christ and appropriate the resources that he has given us to succeed in the battle, to go forth in strength and confidence, and when we draw upon those things in Christ, we're safe. We're not in danger of Satan when we are in the realm that Christ has given to us.

I opened our time together reading from Ephesians 6 and let's go back there for just a moment, Ephesians 6:10.

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

Then Paul goes on and explains these different aspects of the armor of God. If you look for our sermons on Ephesians 6 you'll find several messages that explain all of that. The point is for now, a brief general overview of the point is that God has given us provision in his word, in prayer, in the indwelling Holy Spirit that are completely sufficient as we appropriate them to resist the power of the devil, to overcome it, and to not be harmed by his efforts to destroy us. We have the ability and God has given us what we need to succeed in battle but we have to consciously appropriate it in our lives.

In the book of 1 John 3:7-8 it says this, it says,

7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. [Then he goes on and he makes this great statement.] The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

Christ came to undo what Satan was trying to accomplish and for you as a believer in Christ here this evening, what that means for you is this, is that if you are in Christ, it means that you are safe because you are in the one, you are in union with the one, you are joined to Christ who came to destroy the works of the devil, and because Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, it means that he came to protect his people from the works

of the devil. And so our mindset is, "Yes, Satan is a real threat but I am in Christ and Christ came to destroy the works of the devil. He has given me the full armor of God to protect me. I can go forth and be victorious in battle as I am depending on Christ, looking to Christ, resting in Christ. Christ has the power to protect me and He will protect me as I appropriate the things that He's given to me in my spiritual life." So we're not afraid. We take the threat seriously but we take it seriously to the point that we appropriate what Christ has given us and then we go forth in peace and confidence, not in fear and dread of our adversary.

And going on just a couple of points further. In the book of James, if you turn back just a couple of books in the New Testament, James 4:7,

7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Then in 1 Peter 5 it says,

8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. 10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

The threat is real but the principle of protection is simple. Resist him. Satan does not have the power to compel you to sin against your wishes. You sin only when your own will is actively involved in pursuing that and submitting to it and seeking it, and in Christ we are given the provision that is necessary to overcome the temptations of the devil, and in Christ we're given a command to act upon that and to resist it and to be firm in our commitment to sanctification. So the threat is real but the protection is sufficient. So you and I need to stay close to Christ. We need to be in the word of God. We need to be reading it on a consistent basis. You need to be doing and continue to do what you're doing tonight, being under the teaching of the word of God, when possible to be in the fellowship with other believers so that they can encourage and help and strengthen you.

You see, here we go again on another matter of just a pastoral plea and urgency to you. I mentioned several messages ago about Christians that kind of come and go and they're inconsistent in their commitment to the local church, maybe they'll show up, maybe they won't and, you know, who knows what's happening to them from week to week because they're not involved and they don't stay in touch with anyone. Well, friends, what I want you to see is that that lifestyle makes people vulnerable to the attacks of the adversary. It makes them vulnerable because we need to stay close to the fold. We need to be within the boundaries of the fence that the Shepherd has provided for us because that is the realm of protection that he has given to us where the word of God is taught, where the fellowship of the believers is active, where prayer is offered to God for the saints and for the conversion of the lost.



This is so critical and I realize and I plead with you to realize that we can skip it a week or two or three and it doesn't seem like anything happens, and we start to think that, "Well, maybe that it's not that serious after all." Well, that's like a soldier dropping his shield in the midst of a battle because there's a momentary interlude in the conflict and he drops his shield and he takes off his helmet and he lays them aside thinking that the danger has passed. Well, when he does that, that's when he is most vulnerable, speaking in terms of ancient conflict on the battlefield, that's when he's most vulnerable to the attack is when he's laid it aside. You and I need to understand that the threat of Satan is real, that what God has given us in provision for protection of it are things that we need to appropriate on a day by day basis, and our commitment to the ministry of the local church and gathering together when believers are assembled together, it's a reflection of our understanding of how serious the threat is. Those of you, and I say this gently and I say it pastorally to you, those of you who casually come and go, you are manifesting by your life that you don't understand the threat or understanding it you don't take it seriously or somehow you don't care about it. Well, I'm not trying to jack up attendance numbers, I don't even track those numbers by and large, the point for you is that you need to be protected from this. Satan designs the destruction of your soul and you need to gather together with the other sheep so that we can all be under the care of our great Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, who protects us and uses these ordinary means of grace to protect us and sustain us so that Satan doesn't harm us in the end. And so I just plead with you to consider that and to anticipate now when we're able to join together, that your commitment to the word of God in your private life and your commitment to the local church would be renewed and invigorated by the consideration of the things that we have talked about here tonight.

Well, let me just close with this one final thought, appealing again to those of you that are not in Christ, is to realize one way to think about the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that Christ comes and offers to you a deliverance from this realm of Satan; that he came to destroy the works of the devil and he came to deliver you from the bondage of Satan. And so when Christ comes to you and calls you through his word to come to him, you who are weary and heavy-laden and he will give you rest, part of that promised rest is a deliverance from this domain of darkness. Colossians 1 says speaking about true Christians, it says he delivered us from the domain of darkness and delivered us over to the kingdom of his beloved Son. And so, my friend, I present Christ to you once more. I call you to faith in Christ not simply for the forgiveness of your sins, although you certainly need that, but that you might be delivered from the bondage of this horrible destructive adversary of your soul, and that you would come under the glorious reign of Christ who loved sinners just like you and gave himself up for them. Won't you come to Christ and be free from the bondage of the devil and under the Lordship of the one who loves you and cares for you and will deliver you safe to heaven? Please come.

Let's pray together.

*Father, we just humble ourselves before You once more under the sound of Your word. We pray that You would give weight to Your word and seal it to us by the work of Your*

*Holy Spirit to accomplish all that You would desire in our lives. Rescue us from Satan, those that are not in Christ. Keep us from Satan, those of us that are in Him, and deliver us safely into our heavenly home. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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