

Who Is Satan?

What Does the Bible Teach?

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I'm delighted that you've all made the effort to be with us here this morning as we continue a foundational series of messages in the formation of Truth Community Church. We're studying what it is that we believe; we're taking a broad sweep through systematic theology, really, is what we're doing and answering various questions that go to the heart of why we exist as a church and what is the doctrine that we believe as Christians, what it is that we teach, what it is that our church stands for. For those of you that haven't been able to be with us, we've considered some very stimulating questions, foundational questions: why do we believe the Bible?; who is God?; what is the Trinity? We have been blessed by God's word because it has lifted our minds to glorious realms of thought and understanding of why we believe what we believe and to understand that we believe these things on the highest authority possible, we believe them on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we have contemplated the unspeakable grandeur and majesty of God, we've realized that we're contemplating and we are saved by one who is unlike us, who is great and immense and to whom there is no earthly analogy. God is totally other than us and yet he became a man in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ to secure our redemption of which we've been singing here this morning, to secure our salvation. As we think about salvation as we rightly should, we most often think about salvation as being a salvation and a deliverance from our sin, a deliverance from the penalty and from the wrath of God that our sins deserve.

We're going to see this morning that as we continue to study what the Bible teaches, that our deliverance is more than a deliverance from sin and penalty and wrath. Our deliverance is a supernatural deliverance from a supernatural enemy of our souls and this is so vital, so crucial for us to understand. We've seen the purer holiness of God on display over these past few weeks; we're going to see evil on display this morning as we consider the question: who is Satan? Who is Satan. We're going to address who it is that is the adversary of our souls and as we start, I'll address this later on in the message as well, but it is just so very vital to understand that the Bible describes men apart from Christ as being under the slavery and dominion of Satan, of a wicked, sadistic destroyer of souls who is opposed to the holiness of God, who is opposed to the salvation of men, who stands opposed to everything that we believe and stand for and proclaim as a church and everything that our souls love and adore are those things that Satan opposes and hates and tries to divert men away from.

It is shocking, really, when you survey what the Bible says about Satan, how much the power of Satan is at work and how much greater power from the Lord Jesus Christ it took to deliver us from his dominion. This is going to be a somewhat heavy message, I suppose in some ways but, beloved, we preach it first of all, we preach against the backdrop of singing about the redemption that we have in Christ which gives us a ray of hope as we traverse this dark terrain but also for those of you who are not Christians, I can't think of anything that should frighten you more to flee to Christ than a contemplation of who it is that is right now the father of your souls. Scripture describes you as being under the dominion of Satan, as under his power, as being a member of his kingdom, of sharing his nature. And, beloved, if you share his nature, if you share his fatherhood, as it were, let me beg you, let me warn you, let me plead with you to understand that you share his ultimate fate as well apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a message that above all messages should wake you up, non-Christian friend, should wake you up to the unspeakable terror and bondage in which you find yourself.

I don't know how else to say it. I want to speak plainly. I'm not going to sugar-coat this. I'm not here to try to get you to laugh or to entertain you today, I'm speaking to the eternal well-being of your soul. For those of us who are Christians, we're going to see, as we go through this, how much understanding the person of Satan is; how much it impacts who we are at the most fundamental level of our Christian life. When we understand the adversary of our soul, it drives us to gratitude and dependence and humility on the Christ who laid down his life on our behalf at the cross.

That's a little bit of an introduction. This is really serious stuff this morning. As you understand what Scripture says about the adversary of our souls, you understand that the Bible and a Bible-teaching church, we can't play games. We can't play games with each other. We can't play games with the public. We're not trying to be an alternative to Hollywood that gives people a little bit of entertainment or a little spiritual boost for the week, there are matters of eternal life and death consequences when we gather together, when we speak. So, that's what we're going to see today and these things are true whether we want them to be true or not. We would like, I know, especially those of you that are non-Christians, you would like to close your eyes and close your hearts and steel yourself against these realities and just live the life that you want to live. It doesn't work that way. You don't have that option. The truth is true and what Scripture says is true and what you're going to see here this morning is laying out before you the stark choices: it's Christ or Satan. You either spend eternity with Christ or you spend eternity with Satan, there is no in-between. And why, why, why, why would you turn away from Christ in light of such realities?

So, who is Satan? Most of you this morning that are here, those of you that have read the Bible at any length at all, you would affirm the existence of the devil because the Scripture speaks of it but the truth of the matter is that we can believe in the devil, even in the devil of the Bible, and not really take him seriously. I think you will see by the end of today's message that you have not taken Satan as seriously as you ought. I know that it had that impact on me this week. We need to be willing to humble ourselves and to

consider this question: have we underestimated his threat? Have we thought lightly of what the Bible says about Satan? Would we pray better if the biblical truth about Satan had sunk into us? If we really believed in this adversary as clearly as the Bible teaches and describes him, I can't imagine that we would be as careless and flippant about our spiritual lives and indifferent about them as so many of us painfully are as we go through our day-to-day lives.

Who is Satan? Let's start here. This isn't a particular point, per se, but we're going to start here. We need to start some place answering the question: Satan is an evil spirit who has some manner of access to God and who is the accuser and the adversary of our souls. You are not walking through life as an innocent, stand-alone, independent person. You are walking through life in the midst of a spiritual battle that you need to be awakened to, that you need to alert yourself to, that Scripture makes plain for us. If you'll turn to the book of Job in the Old Testament, this is going to be our starting point and we're going to go to many passages. One of the reasons that we're going to go to many passages today is to help you see how much the Bible addresses the reality of Satan and speaks about his impact on our lives.

But we're going to start with this narrative account in the book of Job as Satan approaches the throne of God and the Lord institutes a question about a righteous man named Job. Job 1:6, "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. 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.'" That should tell you something right there: Satan, despite what sometimes we mistakenly think, Satan is not omnipresent; he is confined spatially; he is not omnipresent like the Lord is. He roams about on the earth and walks around on it because he's not everywhere present all at once.

So, Satan answers the Lord's question, verse 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.' Then Satan answered the LORD, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? 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. But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.' 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." That's one of the clearest narrative portions of Scripture that talk about Satan and you see him somehow approaching the throne of God. You see somehow the Lord calling a righteous man named Job to his attention and you immediately see the malevolent, evil, wicked spirit of Satan in that he immediately tries to turn God against this righteous man named Job and accuses Job of serving God out of self-interest rather than for God's own inherent worth and doing everything that he can to besmirch Job's reputation in the throne room of God and to stir up opposition against him.

Now, in the course of the book of Job, we're not going to look at this whole book here this morning at all by any stretch of the imagination, but God is content to allow Satan to attack Job and to inflict pain and loss upon him so that Job would become an instrument of the display of the inherent worth of God. In the end of the 42 chapters of the book of Job, you see that Job maintains fast his faith in the glory and the goodness of God even though Satan stirs up all kinds of evil and sorrow and loss and wickedness against him. The point here for this morning is this: Satan went into the presence of God with a design to inflict harm against Job. That tells us a lot of things in that little bit of overview: Satan is an intelligent being; he is an intelligent spirit. You see him engaging God in conversation about Job and so he's not merely a force of evil as if somehow if you think about gravity as a force of physics, Satan is not simply a spiritual force, he is an intelligent being with spiritual powers that transcend anything that we could imagine.

Now, for this morning, knowing that many of you have been exposed to all kinds of silly teachings about exorcisms and things like that, our goal here this morning is not to speculate about what happens in the heavenly realm between Satan and God except to acknowledge that there is some kind of engagement like that that takes place. All of that hasn't been revealed to us. What we want to do here this morning is understand Satan's threat to us and how to be protected against it. We want to understand his threat and how to be protected against it and to do that we're going to consider three primary points and then work out some points of application at the close of the message. This has the potential to be the longest message that I've ever preached at Truth Community Church which, knowing how long some of my messages have been, would be saying quite a lot but there's just so much for us to consider and so I ask you to bear with me patiently, knowing that the only reason we're doing this is for the well-being of your own soul. I don't get anything out of this, so to speak. I don't get anything out of this, this is all about the well-being of your soul here this morning and so if it takes 75 or 80 minutes to get through this, what's left, this is 75 or 80 minutes that's devoted to the well-being of your soul. And I plead with you to follow and to pay attention because there is so much at stake.

The first point here this morning is this as we answer the question, "Who is Satan?": first of all, the first answer to that question is that Satan is a supernatural deceiver. He is a supernatural deceiver. During the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, he gave us some defining statements about Satan's character, about what he is like and I want you to turn to the gospel of John 8 for one of the clearest statements, John 8:44. As you're turning there, let me remind you that we said in our first message that we receive the authority of the Bible based on the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. No one understands the spiritual realm in a superior way to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are dependent on him. We are humbly looking to him to tell us the truth about the adversary of our souls and so when Jesus speaks about the nature of the devil, we find that we have the answers to our questions; we find that it is explained for us. The Bible uses the term "devil" and "the devil" and "Satan" in an interchangeable way and so when we see the Bible speaking about "the devil," we see a description that helps us answer the question, "Who is Satan?"

Here's what I want you to see in John 8:44: Jesus is speaking to unbelieving Jews and he tells them, "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." That gives us a sense of the supernatural deception that the devil wields in his power. The gospel of Christ is the only hope that men have from being delivered from this wicked deceiver. Without the gospel, men will go to hell. And Jesus tells us, as he addresses those unbelieving Jews, he says, "Understand that as you oppose me, you are acting consistently with the one who is your spiritual father, the one who is a murderer." But just think back to the opening chapters of Genesis, it was the work of the devil to tempt man into sin and with man willingly embracing the temptation that was placed in front of him, the entire human race was cast into destruction. He murdered the entire human race with his temptations. We're all bearing the consequence of that: billions upon billions of people who have been generated ultimately from the loins of Adam, a real historical person, I might add, are bearing the consequences of the murderous intentions of the devil.

And he is a liar by nature. He deceives men with false teaching in order to lead them away from God. This is one of the most important things that you need to understand here this morning when we talk about the supernatural deception of the devil. We're not talking about a comic book figure with a red pointy tail, we're talking about a supernatural spiritual being who somehow works through those who propagate false philosophies, false doctrines both inside the church and outside of it. It's not that the devil is simply at work in the raging murderer or the town drunk in the gutter, he's working equally through the arrogant university professor who propagates his views on the philosophies of a godless life. He's at work through the shining million dollar smiles of celebrity pastors who don't preach the truth. He works through a variety of different ways all designed and calculated either through your love of sin, your love of self or your love of lies. Anything that would tempt you away and lead you away from Christ finds its ultimate source in the father of lies, the devil himself.

You see, biblical doctrine and what a church teaches you is not a matter of some small difference of opinion, it's not a matter of things inconsequential, we're talking about the difference between being sourced ultimately in the authoritative word of the Lord Jesus Christ or being sourced ultimately in the father of lies. If you think I'm overstating the case, let me encourage you to turn to 1 Timothy 4. The Apostle Paul, writing toward the end of his earthly ministry, says that "the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron," and then he goes on and describes something that looks an awful lot like the teaching of the Catholic church, verse 3, "men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth." Doctrines of demons and it's not going to be necessarily fiery displays of evil, it's going to be cloaked in things that sound palatable to the human ear, things that sound plausible, things that give you the sense that you can work your way into heaven. Or that perhaps God is ultimately going to forgive everyone and no one

will go to hell. Or perhaps that God isn't as holy or that you're not as bad as the Scriptures say you are.

The vast diversity of deceit that the devil propagates through so many different systems ultimately shouldn't confuse us from the fact that there is a common root. If you've ever worked in a garden, you know that sometimes a single weed will spread itself out over a lot of different area but when you pick up the weed, you find that it just has one common root that you have to pull up. In that way, there is a sense in which Satan is the father of every lie that opposes the gospel. Jesus said he's a liar and the father of lies and so when we see false doctrine being taught, we need to understand that there is more going on than simply a man being mistaken, there is a spiritual force that's at work whether the man is aware of it or not. If you think back, Jesus even saw this and explained it during his own earthly life. When Peter said, "God forbid that you would die on a cross, Lord." What did Jesus say in response to him? He said, "Get behind me, Satan. Get behind me, Satan." Men become the mouthpiece for this deceiver, this supernatural deceiver of our souls. And, beloved, what should humble us, what should frighten us apart from Scripture and apart from our Lord Jesus Christ is to realize that Satan has the supernatural capacity, the supernatural capacity to make himself look like and to present himself as one who is bringing light not darkness.

Turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 11 and you'll see more about what we just said about the doctrines of demons, about this threat of supernatural deception. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 11:12, is defending his apostolic ministry and he says in verse 11, he kind of makes the point of what I opened up is, I appealed to you to listen to me with patience this morning, he says, "Why am I doing this? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!" Paul, speaking from an urgent love for the Corinthian church, speaks to them about the nature of his ministry and about the opposition, the spiritual opposition that he faces that comes through the false teaching of men. He says in verse 12, "But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting." Verse 13, "For such men are false apostles," notice these men that they saw, flesh and blood human beings, they "are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ." For purposes of today, watch what Paul says, "No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants," whose servants? "Satan's servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds."

They come and they look like Christian teachers. They come and they look like instruments of righteousness, instruments of truth, but behind the veil of the deception, the supernatural deception, behind the disguise, behind the mask, they are agents of the devil, servants of Satan seeking to bring influence on those who come under the realm of their influence. Here's the thing, beloved, here's part of the humbling that you and I have to go through in order to be able to be protected and insulated from this kind of threat: we have to understand that in our natural abilities, we do not have the power, you do not have the power to discern that, to see it, to recognize it because it is a supernatural transhuman power that is at work bringing that deception to bear upon the human race

and in the confines of individual local churches. We don't have the power to recognize that on our own. We can't see it. We are natural. We are fleshly. There is a supernatural power at work that goes beyond human ability that is at work trying to deceive men and to hide the gospel from them.

So, what should that do to you? What's the impact, the spiritual impact that that should have on your heart? It's not overstating it to say this should be very sobering even frightening to realize that there is this supernatural power at work that you don't have the ability to guard yourself against in your own strength and in your own power. There is this wicked, malevolent spirit who is at work trying to deceive men and he is so powerful and so deceptive in his work that he'll look just like a safe guide to heaven to you and that should put the fear of God in you enough to cast yourself upon the one true authority, the one true Lord Jesus Christ saying, "Lord, you've got to help me. I'm defenseless in the midst of this realm. I'm defenseless against this foe to my soul and the one's whom he uses." It's a disguise. It's a ruse. It's a mask. You don't recognize it on your own. And if that doesn't sober you up, I don't know how to help you. If that doesn't frighten you, I don't know what to do for you. You've got to take this seriously because God has given you an eternal soul that is either going to be with Christ in heaven forever or is going to suffer eternal judgment with Satan forever. There is no other alternative and you have to value your soul, you have to treasure the eternal value of the soul that God has given you enough to realize that you're in danger and you need help because a supernatural deceiver is at work and you don't have the ability on your own to discern truth from error.

Now, that's our first point. Secondly, we said that Satan is a supernatural deceiver, Satan is not someone to play games with because 2. Satan is a sadistic destroyer. He is a sadistic destroyer who has no compassion on the human race, who has no compassion on you. His desire is to murder your soul. His desire is to bring you down into eternal judgment in hell with him forever. He is a perverted tyrant. He is opposed to God's commands. He is bent on destroying every possible element of the human race that he possibly can. He is bent on hiding the truth of the gospel from you. And this evil, in his sadistic destructive ways, plays out in different manners. We alluded to Genesis 3: he tempted Eve into sin; Eve brought Adam into the sin; and thus cast our whole race into destruction promising them that they would be like God; promising them that he was offering them blessing and freedom that God was withholding from them and in the bait was the hook that brought the whole race down. This is sadistic. There should be no underestimating the wicked designs of Satan upon the human race and you, as a part of the human race, being threatened by those intentions.

Satan blinds men to the truth and he holds them hostage. Look at 2 Corinthians 4 and I'm about to describe for those of you who are not Christians, I am about to read a Scripture which describes your existing spiritual state and as I do, the prayer of my heart is that God would strike you with fear so that you would take this seriously and stop playing games. I don't know if you're going to be here tomorrow to have another opportunity to hear the truth of the gospel. I don't know if I'm going to be here tomorrow to be able to say the same things over to you again today so this makes this moment really urgent.

Look at 2 Corinthians 4, we'll start in verse 1 and we'll see how Paul lays out the truth and then contrasts it with the error that's around. Again, Paul is defending the truth and the authority of his apostolic ministry and in chapter 4, verse 1, he says, "Since we have received this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Watch this, verse 3, this is where it becomes pertinent to our message today and to the lost soul here this morning, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case," those who are not Christians, here is a description of your present spiritual state, "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, who is the image of God." How wicked? How sadistic? How destructive is Satan? Here is a picture of it for you: he has actively blinded men from understanding the truth of the gospel so that they could be saved from their sins, so that they could be delivered into eternal life. There is a supernatural blinding that has been placed over the eyes of the unbelieving and Scripture attributes that to the god of this world having actively blinded the minds of those who do not believe in Christ.

It's frightening. It's terrifying. It's terrifying to think as I stand here preaching this morning that I am, as it were, standing between heaven and hell and addressing people that are the receiving end of this kind of destructive influence upon their minds and that they're blind to it and I don't have human power to do anything to help them. It's frightening. The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving. A force that you cannot see, that you have no power over, has acted against your interests and done something to your mind and to your heart that keeps you from understanding the only truth that could save you. This is horrifying to contemplate. This is the condition of the human race according to the authoritative testimony of Scripture. This tells us that you can be a slave and not even know it. You can be blind when you think you see.

Turn over to 2 Timothy 2 and you'll see this again, verse 24. Again, you see the contrast between biblical ministry and the opposition of Satan laid out in plain language. 2 Timothy 2:24. Remember our point right now is that Satan is a sadistic destroyer. Verse 24, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth." When somebody comes to you and preaches the gospel of repentance for the forgiveness of sin, he is your friend, he is not our enemy. He is not your enemy because he confronts your sin and convicts you and makes you feel guilty, he is your friend for bringing the truth to bear upon your conscience. The enemy is the one hidden behind the scenes. Look at verse 26, that "they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."

This is a picture of unsaved people being a slave to the devil and him being a slave-master, holding them captive, keeping them in chains, as it were, so that they would not come to the gospel but instead would be servants of his will. If you're here today and you are not a born-again Christian, you are a slave to Satan. That's no laughing matter. That's

not a joke. That's not something to be lightly dismissed. This is not something to harden your heart against once again and say, "I don't care." You'd better care! You'd better care. There is a demonic evil wicked being using you for his own end. Why wouldn't you want to be free of that? Why wouldn't you flee to Christ to be delivered from his hold, his snare? I don't understand. I do understand but just in terms of your own self-interest, your hardness to the gospel is utterly mystifying. It makes no sense whatsoever. It's the worst possible thing that you could do if you even cared about your own soul, forget about the people around you. This doesn't make sense.

That's why, beloved, look at verse 26 with me again. Your resistance to the gospel shows how insensible you are. Paul says in verse 26 that the Lord's servants need to be kind, they need to be patient and perhaps God will grant their hearers repentance so that they would come to the knowledge of the truth. In verse 26, that "they may come to their senses." You young people, especially, that are in Christian homes, I'm talking to you. I'm talking to you. I'm talking to you. Letting the gospel and the love that your parents show in bringing you the truth just roll off your back day after day, week after week, month after month. You're accountable to this. You're responsible. And you need to come to your senses and realize the awful reality that you were born into. You were born into sin. You were born a captive of the devil and his intent is to destroy your soul and your hardness to your parents' instruction, your hardness to the preaching of the truth, is simply an aspect of the foolishness and senselessness of your unsaved youth and it's time to come out of that. It's time to repent.

Now, the power of Satan is enhanced, it's multiplied, because he has subordinates that are ready to further his will as well. Satan is the captain of an evil army of demons. Look at Matthew 25:41. This is what Jesus will say to unsaved people at the end of the age. The one who pleads with you now in mercy to come to him for forgiveness and salvation will not always keep the door of the gospel open to you. One day the door is going to be closed and there will be satanic consequences for you if you've not come to Christ. He says in verse 41, "Then Jesus will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.'" There are his angels, that Satan has this cohort of angels that are underneath his authority. And Jesus is going to say to unsaved people, "You go and be with your father forever. Go into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels. That's your lot. That's where you belong for all of eternity." It's a sign of the wretchedness of my own heart that I'm not weeping in front of you now, pleading with you to take this more seriously than you do. How can we read the destination of the lost in being cast into hell with this sadistic destroyer and be unmoved emotionally by it?

Turn to Revelation 12:7 as we're considering the fact that Satan has subordinates ready to further his will, remembering that Satan himself is not omnipresent. In Revelation 12:7, "And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old," shades of Genesis 3, right? "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.” This deceiver cast out of heaven, cast down with angels who followed his bidding.

Here's a way to think about that, here's a way to help you understand the multiplied exponential effect of the power of Satan. You and I have all heard stories through movies or through news reports about the mafia, organized crime syndicate. The mafia bosses are powerful in their own right but they're one man, they're only one individual. What gives them their power ultimately is the fact that their power is multiplied exponentially by people who are under them that obey their orders. Well, Satan has legions of evil angels that are under his authority that do his bidding. The devil and his angels. The Bible doesn't give us an organization chart to follow on that, it gives us just enough for us to see that there is some kind of system that is really, really wicked, with multiplied demons under the authority of the one great devil. Then, here's where it's supposed to lead you: not into speculations and Frank Peretti novels but to realize how desperately vulnerable you are so that you would flee to the protection which Christ alone can provide to you.

Satan is sadistic. He has beings under him that share evil wicked power and Scripture teaches us that this environment in which we live, this world environment that is ours, in which we swim like fish, so to speak, that this entire world environment, this world system in which we live, listen to 1 John, you don't need to turn there, 5:19, “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” The way the world thinks. What entertains and fascinates the world. It's the philosophies which drive its life. They are all driven under the power of this sadistic destroyer that the Bible names as Satan and men don't recognize it. We don't recognize it apart from the revelation of God in Scripture.

I'll give you another illustration to help you understand what it is that we're looking at, what we're dealing with. The effect of Satan and his construction of this world environment in which we live is somewhat like carbon monoxide poisoning in your house. You can't smell it. You can't see it. But it will kill you. Thus also is the adversary of our souls.

Now, it brings us to our third point this morning. We're going to kind of pivot a little bit now. We want to remember as we've contemplated this powerful satanic being, this sadistic destroyer, this evil deceiver, we need to understand and take our refuge in and take our hope in, find our hope in the fact that the God that we have proclaimed over the past two weeks, the God of the Bible, rules and reigns over this one. Point 3. Satan is sovereignly deterred. He is sovereignly deterred. Despite the strength and wickedness of Satan and all of his cunning, the Bible gives us hope. First of all, God restrains him. God restrains him. Satan operates only within the bounds which God has set for him. You saw that earlier in the narrative about Job: Satan couldn't touch Job unless God permitted it to happen and so there is a sovereign restraint that is placed on Satan. He doesn't operate with complete unhindered glee in the destruction of men. That should give us a context to process our fears about his work around us.

Secondly, God not only restrains him, God will condemn him. God will condemn him. The most decisive limit as we consider the power of Satan is that God has destined him

for judgment which he will most certainly carry out. Turn to the book of Revelation again, Revelation 20. We won't go into all of the eschatological discussions that this passage would invite because we're dealing with a more limited consideration of the nature and the career of Satan. Revelation 20:7, "When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 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." So there is this great final conflict coming. "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." Look at verse 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." The ultimate outcome for Satan is defeat. That tells us that our God reigns supreme even over Satan, even over this sadistic destroyer who is the enemy of our souls. God has destined him for judgment. God will carry it out. Satan will not prevail in the end. That gives us hope. That gives us confidence. But for now, we're in between, sort of. We're in a period, we're in an age where that has not yet happened and God has seen fit to allow Satan to continue to operate because he has not yet brought about that final judgment upon him.

So, what do we do? And what is the impact of this for you and me? Point 4, we'll just title it: Satan and you. Satan and you. We need to take a little bit of extra time to think carefully here. Go back to 2 Corinthians 2 again. In verse 11, there's just this interesting statement from Paul that kind of sets the stage and gives the context for everything that follows in this final point here. We'll start with verse 10. Paul, in his tender apostolic heart says, "But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ." Somehow a forgiving spirit is key toward resisting the work of the devil which we'll see again later on here this morning. But this is what I want you to see, "so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes." Somehow in a forgiving spirit, there was protection from the schemes of Satan. Somehow in the work of Satan, there are schemes, there are things that he does that are a part of his strategy and Paul says, "We're not ignorant of those and so we're going to conduct our lives in a manner that protects us from that because we're not ignorant of his schemes."

Well, that's what I want to do here with you this morning. Speaking now more to believers with one exception in just a moment, I would say this, beloved, at the risk of being misunderstood as we contemplate everything that Scripture says about the devil, you and I need to have a healthy fear of the devil yet one that does not paralyze us into inaction, not paralyze us with unhealthy fear. We live with healthy fear that doesn't control our lives all the time. You know to stay away from the bad areas of town without knowing exactly what happens there. You know not to stick a knife into an electrical outlet even if you don't understand the way that electricity works. You know to lock your doors if you live in an environment where that's necessary. You know to lock your doors without having any sense or understanding about exactly what the threat is or what it's going to look like. We don't have to know everything about the threat and everything about how the threat works in order to protect ourselves so that we live in security and so

when you lock the door at night before you go to bed, there is a sense that you're not consumed and captivated by fears of what's outside the walls of your home, you just say this is a commonsense thing to do and if the door is locked, I can presume safety here. You don't go and hang out where all of the merchants of sin operate in the town around you. I don't need to know what goes on there. I know enough that I need to stay away and that's going to keep me in the realm of protection and relative security.

It's no guarantee but my point is that in the natural physical realm we do little things that protect us without being dominated by fear. What we're about to describe here just extends that into the spiritual realm with biblical authority. Okay? So that's what we're going to do. Satan and you. First of all, if you're not a Christian, this is the last thing I'm going to say to you in this message today: if you're not a Christian, you must seek Christ. You must. You must understand that what the gospel says about your condition is true and what the gospel says about your condition in clear unambiguous language is this: you are under Satan's power and if you stay in that condition, if you die in that condition, you will share his fate in hell.

Turn to the book of Acts 26. I want you to see that Paul, when he was describing his ministry of the gospel, defined it in terms that addressed the reality of Satan, that spoke in terms with which I have addressed you, my unsaved Christian loved one and friend, today. Paul is describing, we looked at this passage just before we studied Titus together, 9, 10, 12 months ago, Paul is describing his conversion on the road to Damascus. He says in verse 14, "And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you.'" This is Paul's apostolic commission. Remember, Jesus is our authority here. We can trust him with what he says. He says, "I'm going to rescue you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you." What's the condition of unsaved Gentiles? Like some of you in this room. Verse 18, remember what we said about the blindness from 2 Corinthians 4 about being held captive by Satan in 2 Timothy 2. You see the same thing here. At the core of the gospel is this urgent need "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me."

My unsaved friend, you're in darkness. You're under the dominion of Satan based on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. This isn't me talking. This is what Christ said. This is why he set up apostolic ministry is because unlike the sadistic destroyer who controls and animates your soul right now, Christ is a merciful, compassionate Deliverer, one who sets men free and he sent Paul into ministry and said, "You go and proclaim the gospel to them so that they will turn from darkness to light, that they would turn from the dominion of Satan to God." If you've never been born-again, you're under the dominion of Satan. If you're never been born-again, now is the time for you to turn to Christ. I beg you again.

Turn to Christ. This is the answer to the question, “Who is Satan?” This is the answer for you: you must turn to Christ now. Don't trifle with this any longer. The stakes are that great.

Now, I'm done talking to non-Christians and now I'm going to talk to you believers who share a like precious faith with me. Who is Satan? What does the answer to that question do for you? Well, if you're a Christian, you should be grateful. You should be grateful. Look at Colossians 1, just after the book of Philippians, before the Thessalonian epistles. Remember everything that we've said today about the wicked enslaving nature of Satan. He's a murderer and a father of lies and you are under his domain. Scripture tells you what Christ has done for you. Verse 13, “For He,” the God of the Bible, that is our Lord Jesus Christ, “He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” God has had mercy on your soul, fellow Christian. God, as it were, speaking in general metaphorical terms, invaded the domain of Satan and plucked you out of it, rescued you and brought you out, brought you into a place of safety into his kingdom where the devil has no power to pull you back. You have been rescued from this evil threat that Satan poses to the world. God has worked in your life in a way that has allowed you to overcome the world and overcome the devil. The threat, the destiny, that belongs to the masses of unsaved people is not your destiny because God had mercy on you. If nothing else with what's going on in your life today, with nothing else, you should be grateful, thankful, relieved, worshipful that God had mercy on you that you could not have accomplished on your own. In salvation, God transferred you from Satan's domain to his.

Next point, we're saying: Satan and you. First of all, if you're a non-Christian, you must turn to Christ. Secondly, if you're a Christian, you should be grateful. Thirdly, if you're a Christian, you should be a reader and a student of God's word. That's why we teach the Bible. That's why we don't try to entertain people at Truth Community. It's because this is too serious to play games. The Bible is the only plumb-line that you have to discern truth from error. It's the only source of reliable testimony that you have to keep your soul out of the realm of deception and in the realm of God's truth and blessing.

Go back to 2 Corinthians 10 again and for some of you this is going to be convicting, hopefully convicting enough to cause you to change and not be so cavalier and indifferent toward the word of God which you hold in your hand. Do you realize that what you have on your lap there is the key to discerning truth from error? Christ from Satan? This is the precious treasure that we have? And yet people can't find time to pick it up and read it? Something is wrong there. Notice in verse 3 of 2 Corinthians 10, Paul says, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 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.” Where do you find the truth that captivates your thought in obedience? You find it in the word of God. You saturate your mind with Scripture. We look to the means which God has appointed to shield us from our opponent. That's what he's given us in his word.

Now fourthly, this one's going to sting but I hope it stings us all and opens our eyes to this. Fourthly, you should be a humble, dependent man or woman of prayer. There is no other way to say this and I realize that it's probably the weakness that we can relate to the most but Scripture teaches us again and again that the believing disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ should be one who comes to him dependently again and again and says, "Keep me from the influence of this evil spirit that your word calls Satan." Look over at Matthew 6. We are to recognize these realities, these spiritual realities, not as a matter of academic discourse but as that which would humbly, dependently shape the way that we approach life and there is little doubt that this final element of the Lord's prayer is one that is most neglected. But let me just remind you that when the disciples wanted Jesus to teach them about prayer, this is what he said. He said in Matthew 6:9, "Pray, then, in this way." This is how Christ commands us to pray. These are the themes that are to animate our prayer life and the dependent spirit with which we approach him.

First of all, we worship the true God for who he is and we seek his will, verse 9-10, "Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven." Notice, as we continue on in verse 11, we start to pray a little more horizontally, as it were. Notice, "Give us this day our daily bread." Daily bread. This prayer of dependence for the physical needs that sustain our lives is to be a daily one. Christ is laying forth before us the way that the ongoing pattern of our prayer is supposed to be and it's joined with, in verse 12, "And," as you're daily giving me daily bread, daily, "Lord, forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors." And join together daily, "Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil." You probably have a marginal note in your Bible that say, correctly so, that can also be translated as "deliver us from the evil one." And whether you take it as evil generically or the evil one, all the evil comes from the evil one ultimately and so there you have it. Do you understand that as a believer in Christ you are to have an ongoing spirit of dependence that is continually mindful of the fact that you need the Lord to protect you from the work of the evil one in your life? This drives you to a humble spirit of dependence and do you know what? Let's be honest, we don't want to live that way. We kind of like being independent. We don't really think seriously about living in dependence and in humble reliance upon the Lord's spiritual protection. We think we've got it wired. We're not to be that way. When you contemplate everything about the nature of Satan, it should drive you to a humility before the Lord that says, "Lord, keep me out of that. Don't let me drift into his schemes. Don't let me be deceived."

Turn over to Ephesians 6 and you'll see it again. You'll see that this is addressed to believers. You'll see reinforced here our reliance on the word of God. Ephesians 6:10, this is at the conclusion of a very long explanation of what it means to be a Christian. Verse 10, Paul says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you," speaking to Christians, "will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." There it is. It's as plain as day. How do we miss it? In verse 12, Paul goes on and says, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood," it's not what we see, it's not natural elements, our struggle, he says in verse 12 is "against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."

This spiritual realm is powerful. It is unseen and we're not to go about doing foolish little exorcism rituals like I was reading about at a house in Gary, Indiana this week and they're spreading salt around and pressing crucifixes against people's foreheads. That's ridiculous. That has nothing to do with responding to the spiritual realities in which we find ourselves engaged. We're not to think about it in those materialistic terms. We realize that there is an unseen spiritual battle going on that Scripture reveals just enough to make us dependent.

“Therefore,” verse 13, “take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm, having girded your loins with truth,” there's the word of God, “having put on the breastplate of righteousness, having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” Look at verse 18, “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.” Part of responding to the reality of the spiritual struggle in which we find ourselves, it's not in these magnificent displays of direct spiritual warfare at all. We don't resist this by addressing the devil directly and rebuking him.

Look over at Jude 9. You have to see this. This is a protection against the foolishness of charismatics that want to cast out demons and address Satan directly and bind him and all of that. Goodness, no. That's not what Scripture teaches us. Verse 9 of Jude, “But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'” He took refuge in the Lord himself. Our refuge is in going to the Lord and saying, “Lord, keep us. Deliver us from evil. Keep us from this evil one. I recognize that there is this unseen realm that I can't contemplate and so I just ask you humbly to protect me in your prosecution of your purposes in that unseen realm. Keep me in mind and protect me along the way because they're greater than I am and so, Father, I am dependent upon you.”

Fourthly, you should be a humble person of prayer, fifthly, you should be a repentant person of holiness. Go back to Ephesians 4. I'm almost done. Ephesians 4:26. Those of you that are prone to angry spirits, to grudges and unforgiving reactions, take note. Verse 26, “Be angry and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.” Imbedded in your angry spirit is the same destructive kind of malevolent force that Satan perpetrated upon the human race. Your angry spirit is coinciding with and is in shared purpose with the devil. Paul says, the Bible says, “Don't give root to that. Don't give the devil an opportunity to work his divisive influence through your angry spirit against others.” An angry spirit exposes you to the work of the devil in some way that Paul doesn't elaborate on but just recognize it's enough that the same seed of destruction that was in Genesis 3 is at work in your angry heart. You need to repent of that.

Finally, be alert but be confident. This is the closing point. We could've made two points out of it. Be alert but be confident. 1 Peter 5. This is not drive us to craven fear but

simply to help us live our spiritual lives seriously with the confidence that the ultimate outcome will be good for us who know Christ in the end. Verse 8, “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert.” Peter, why should we be on the alert? Because, verse 8, “Your adversary,” to wit, “the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” That's why you need to be on the alert. You must take your spiritual life seriously.

You know, I'm so glad to have all of you here this morning. Most of you come here week after week after week and I praise the Lord for that, not so much because you're here with Truth Community but because I recognize that the proclamation of the word of God establishes its own protection on you and that as you are growing in the word of God, it is protecting you from this roaring lion who is seeking someone to devour. I have to say, even though they're not here, the people that would most need to hear this, I really worry about those who take church attendance in such a cavalier attitude, who can be here 1-2 weeks and then gone for 3-4. You don't know what's happened to them and then they drop back in for a day or two and then they're gone again. On again, off again Christians. Listen, listen to me, beloved, is that being on the alert? Is that being of a sober spirit? Is that taking these things seriously? No, it's not. It's not. They're placing themselves in a position of vulnerability and then do you know what happens? When life falls apart ten years from now, they wonder what in the world went wrong. “How did this happen? How did I end up here?” And they never make the connection. They valued the things of this world that distracted them away from a commitment to the local church so much that the local church was a priority when it fit with their other things that they wanted to do.

Go back to 1 Peter 5:8, “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” So be on the alert in all things but here's our final confidence and as a pastor, I'd rather expand on this but we just need to be realistic here. Verse 9, understand that you have the power to resist the devil. God has given you the resources to resist him. Verse 9, “But resist him,” it takes conscious thought, it takes conscious effort, “resist him firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.” Resist him. You can as a believer successfully resist the devil. In fact, James says in James 4:7, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” We have the power to overcome. In our faithful living, in our resistance to the things of the devil, in our commitment, in our faithfulness to the things of the word of God and the things of prayer, we are resisting him in a way that God promises to bless.

Look at 1 Peter 5:10, “And,” there's a joining conjunction in the original text, “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.” Do you know what the outcome of our battle with the devil is? God himself is going to bring an end to it. God himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, is going to confirm us as believers. He's going to establish us. He's going to strengthen us. He's going to perfect us. And at the end of it all, at the end of the great conflict through which we have gone in this life, we are going to stand perfected in the presence of Christ having been proven and made victorious over a supernatural sadistic destroyer and we are going to be the ones who have overcome and

Christ is going to display the perfection of his power through the fact that he brought a weak, sinful creature like you and me to glory even when this supernatural deceiver, this sadistic destroyer was arrayed against us. And at the end of it all, we are going to be displayed as trophies of victory that belong to our Lord Jesus Christ and just as Job was a display of the inherent worth of God at the end of that book after all of his trials, at the end of our destination is glory that we'll enjoy but that will reflect upon the glory, the greatness, the power, the majesty, the goodness of Christ because he not only overcame our sin to bring us to glory, he overcame Satan and Satan will be a vanquished foe in the eternal flames of torment under the feet of Christ and we'll share in the glory of our Captain, the victory of our Captain forever and ever.

Bow with me in prayer.

Father, somehow in the mass of all of this material from your word, give us the clarity to be on the alert but not in a craven fear as if somehow the devil could contradict your purposes for our lives. It's not true. Help us to be on the alert out of faithfulness to you and watch as you work in our lives and protect us from his wily, deceitful ways. Father, have mercy on the unbelieving in this room. Father, do what the force of human persuasion could never do, persuade them by the power of your Holy Spirit of the realities of these things, of the threat and, Father, may it so work and churn in their hearts in a way that they flee to Christ for mercy and cry out to him for salvation. Father, that they would turn from the dominion of Satan to the dominion of Christ, that they would turn from darkness to light. But Father, Satan holds them captive to do his will. All we can do is ask you to intervene because we can't reach into their hearts and do it ourselves. We would if we could but you have not entrusted that power to human hands. And so Father, as believers in Christ, as leaders together in this church, we ask you for the souls of those that are in this room that don't know Christ, we ask you for the souls of those who will hear this message in other medias. We ask for them. We pray for them. And we pray that you would give those souls to the victory of Christ as well. God, as we sing now one final time of our Redeemer, let it be in the consciousness of deliverance, the consciousness of certain victory as those who have overcome the world, the devil and our flesh and one day will enter into the permanent experience of that for all of eternity. We thank you for your grace and goodness in our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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