

The Three Enemies of The Soul

The Devil

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

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October 19, 2025

Good morning. Over the next three weeks, we're going to be discussing three topics that have historically been called the three enemies of the soul. This is the world, the flesh, and the devil. Today, we're going to begin our study talking about the devil. Not exactly what you may have thought. You were going to learn at church today. And I'd like to begin by answering maybe the first question that you have, even when I say that. Why are we talking about the devil?

You see, God's desire for us as believers is that we would grow up in truth as an act of faith. And the truth is, we are at war. There's a war going on internally for our own lives. There's a war going on for those around us. There's a war for your marriage, a war for your children, your grandchildren, and future generations. And in this war, we have a very real enemy.

There's a very real power of evil that wants to see you and I destroyed, shipwrecked in our faith, compromising our integrity, the destruction of marriages, the destruction of children and grandchildren and loving relationships, and all that is good. And as we unpack this topic today, I want to help us avoid two very unhealthy extremes when we think about the topic of the devil. The first is to just have a skepticism about the devil and demons.

To kind of just say, you know, I'm not really going to acknowledge that there is a spiritual realm. We see this at times in our culture with people that would say, you know, religion and spiritual beings, that's kind of a creation of previous cultures and generations that didn't have the scientific answers that we have. We know better now. We don't have to be that foolish anymore. But this skepticism can also take root in the church as Christians. We reduce the Christian life to a book study and a list of do's and don'ts.

We become more worried about just some collective morality or positive life experience that we don't actually walk with God. And sadly, as this skepticism about our enemy sinks into the church, we are also often ignoring the power and spiritual reality of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We get lulled into this faith of mere naturalism. We stop relying on the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives and in our corporate gatherings.

And in essence, what we're doing is walking into a more fierce fight day by day with less and less armor for battle, not even acknowledging that we have an enemy. This kind of skepticism in the church has led many people to burn out in their faith or even deconstruct their faith because of the missing power of the Holy Spirit in their life. The second though, an equally dangerous category goes the other direction. We could have an unhealthy interest in the devil or demons.

In our culture, we see this in the rant and rave over the next horror movie that depicts some kind of demonic force or demonic possession. We even see people often talking about fortune tellers and tarot cards and astrology. We fill our minds with things that speak of the enemy's destruction of all that God has created for life and goodness. But on a less sinister side, this obsession can also take place in the body of believers.

Christians that are obsessed with angels and demons and supernatural realities, always thinking, "Boy, I'm fighting a demon behind everything I go through in my life." There have been Christian people and denominations that have created elaborate structures of what are certain demons named and how do we interact with certain demons for the name of Jesus. And this can all look good on the outside. Hey, we're fighting evil, but the devil can also use this to distract us from fixing our eyes on Jesus Christ alone.

It distracts us from having true joy and peace in our day-to-day life with Jesus Christ. It distracts us from seeking His kingdom and His righteousness, and even can distract us from practically living out our faith in the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

And so it's my prayer that as we expose truth about the devil this morning, that we will be reminded of the great joy and hope we have in Jesus. That you would leave this service not thinking about the devil more, but more in love with Jesus in fixing your affections and your desires on him alone.

And throughout this study, I'm going to be answering questions about who is the devil. And I want to let you know that I am only going to be looking at what the Scriptures teach us about the devil. There are all kinds of ideas throughout church history and pop culture that come up with these ideas of how the devil became this, that, or the other, and what he does. But we are sticking to Scripture for our topic today. So would you pray with me as we begin this together? Lord, we can do nothing without your power in our lives.

And so, Lord, right now, I pray that you would come and move in power through the teaching of Your Word. Lord, that the name of Jesus would be lifted up, and God that we would look more like Jesus as we learn and grow. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. A first, maybe simple question would be, what is the devil's name? There are many titles used for the devil throughout Scripture, but I want you to hear what I say that they are titles speaking more of his role or authority or his character than they are actually a personal name for the devil.

I'm going to give just a brief overview of some of the more common titles used for the devil in Scriptures. First is, you guessed it, the devil. Comes from the Greek word meaning slanderer or accuser. And in Scripture, it can be translated to reference the devil, or it can be translated in a more general sense to reference someone who is wicked as a devil. You've probably heard the term Satan.

This comes from a Hebrew word meaning accuser or adversary, and this is probably the most common title used in the scriptures that ends up feeling like a name for the devil, but it is a title. Next is Lucifer. This is actually not a name at all in Scripture for the devil. It comes from a Hebrew word meaning shining one or morning star. And it was used one time in Scripture in Isaiah 14:12 in the King James translation.

And so people will often use the word Lucifer to reference the devil before he fell from his heavenly role and rebelled against God. But if you look in your Bible today, many modern English translations, the word "Lucifer" is not even in that verse. You might say, "Well, where'd we get this?" Well, in the original Hebrew, the word was "hello," which meant "shining one." And when it was translated from Hebrew to Latin, the Latin word for "shining one" was "Lucifer." And when they translated into the King James English translation, instead of going meaning for meaning again, they just kept the Latin word and turned it into a title or name.

And so many modern translations will go back to a meaning for meaning. Translation doesn't really matter. It is referencing the devil. Another word used once in Scripture by the Pharisees to reference the devil is the name Beelzebub. This relates to the Old Testament God of the Philistines, Beelzebub, whose name literally just meant Lord of the Flies. And the Pharisees kind of used this as a mockery of the devil. We also read the term belial.

This was used one time in Scripture by the apostle Paul as a name for the devil, and it literally just means worthless one. Paul is once again poking at the devil. We read about him being called the serpent, which is speaking of this initial interaction in the Genesis narrative in the garden as Adam and Eve were tempted by a serpent. And then it's used again later in Scripture and in Revelation to speak about the devil's works.

We also get many animal metaphors like a dragon, a lion, a wolf, other lesser titles like the enemy, the evil one, the tempter. But in reality, Scripture does not give us an angelic personal name for the devil. And if you had to pick one out of this list, my favorite is Satan. That's a weird clip right there. But Satan would be the most commonly used title as a name in the New Testament for the devil. So our next question is, where did the devil come from?

The devil is a fallen angel. And angels are created beings, which means that the devil had a beginning. The devil is not eternal. And he was one of the highest angels. Some have even speculated maybe the most powerful angel, or maybe he was even the worship leader of heaven. But Scripture doesn't explicitly tell us this. But he was one of the most powerful angels. I want to remind us though this morning that God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the creator of everything.

In Colossians 1:16 and 17, we read, "For in Him all things were created. Things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. There's a common lie believed in the church and our culture today that good

and evil are these both eternal opposites that have been warring against one another and that they have this equal power as they battle against one another.

But that is not true from Scripture. God is the Creator. The devil is a created being. God created the devil. The devil is not God's equal. So does that mean God created evil? It's kind of the next question we might go to, but we have to remember that evil is not a created substance. Evil is when something that was created by God for good and holy purposes, and when it's twisted and misused, that is evil.

And so the devil was an angel created by God to operate in all goodness and all holiness under the authority of God Almighty. And he chose to rebel against God. And this took place sometime before the story of Adam and Eve in the garden, but we don't know exactly when. And demons are the other angels that followed the devil and his rebellion against God. We read of this fall in Isaiah chapter 14 and Ezekiel chapter 28.

And in these passages, these are actually prophecies that God was speaking against real human leaders of the time. There was a king of Babylon and a king of Tyre. And God is speaking against these human leaders. But as he does speak through the prophets, he uses spiritual language of the fall of Satan because Satan is actually the one behind the wickedness happening at the time. So let's read this. In Isaiah 14:12 through 14, how you have fallen from heaven, Morning Star, is where we get Lucifer, son of the dawn.

You've been cast down to the earth, you who once laid loath the nations. You said in your heart, I will ascend to the heavens. I will raise my throne above the stars of God. I will sit enthroned on the Mount of Assembly on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds. I will make myself like the most high. And in Ezekiel 28, verses 14 and 17, we read, "You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God.

You walked among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty. And you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth. I made a spectacle of you before kings. We see that the devil rebelled against God Almighty because of pride. Pride was the very first sin. And pride is simply when we elevate our own opinions and abilities above God's authority in our life.

And just as the devil used pride as the beginning of all sin, so pride is the root of all human sin. Pastor and theologian Sam Storms puts it this way, "Every one of these sins grows from the same deadly taproot pride." Simply put, pride is that ugly part of your heart that causes you to be more concerned about yourself and your own reputation than you are about Christ and His. And as I read that, this should bring us to tremble as the American church.

We live in a society that is all about your body and your ideas and your truth and your future and your well-being. And if you took one thing away from this message today, I pray that you leave with a greater hatred for the sin of pride. Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." In James 4:6, we read God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble. But Proverbs 9:10 says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

So as pride, when we place our own opinions and authorities and abilities, above God is at the root of every sin in humanity. So fear of the Lord, when we humbly submit to God's authority and decrees, that is the beginning of all that is good and wise in life. Our next question is, where is the devil now? Well, let me begin by clarifying that the devil cannot be everywhere at once. Only God is everywhere at once. We use this word omnipresent to talk about the fact that God is everywhere all at once.

And this is only true of God the Creator, not any other created being. And the devil is a created being, so he has a singular personhood and location. What do I mean by that? Well, in Scripture, we read about the devil as prowling around, going to and fro. So as an example, does that mean that the devil could literally be in Florida today and Pakistan tomorrow and Greenland the next day? Very simply, yes, the devil has a location.

We also know that the devil is no longer functioning in that perfect heavenly role for which God created him. As we read in Ezekiel and Isaiah, that because of the sin of pride, the devil has fallen from heaven. He's been cast down to the earth. God says, "I threw you to the earth." Jesus affirms this then in the New Testament in Luke 10:18, where he says, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." So we can conclude that Satan's primary location is here on earth.

He's roaming around the earth, seeking to steal and kill and destroy all that God has created for good. Included in this logic is that Satan can logically visit the cosmic galaxy. Speaking of stars and planets around us, though I don't think he really

wastes his time on barren planets out there, but this could also be an explanation at times for people who see UFOs or other things.

These could be demonic forces that are seeking to instill fear or distract people from focusing on God's good design for their life. In the book of Job, we read that Satan still had access to heaven even after his fall. And in the book of Job, we see three purposes for Satan still accessing heaven. One, he has to give an account to God for his actions. In Job, we read, "Where have you been?" The devil has to answer God almighty. Two, the devil tries to accuse people before God.

So in that story, the devil says, "Hey, Job only loves you because you do good things for him." And the third reason, the devil has to ask God for permission for what he then does in Job's life. And all of this, when you first read it, can sound really scary. You're thinking, "Wait, the devil can get back into heaven? What's going on here?" I want to encourage you, this actually gives me great comfort as a believer because it proves that everything that the devil does must still come under the authority of God Almighty.

Nothing happens outside of God's authority and knowledge and ultimate plan for humanity. God is working everything that the devil does for his own glory and for our good. God is in control over the devil. Now Christians will disagree about whether the devil can still access heaven after Jesus died and rose again. Some will say, no, he cannot anymore. That is a possible translation of a passage in revelation.

Some will say we believe he still can and that that passage in revelation refers to a future banishment from heaven at the end times. Either way, it doesn't really matter. Why do I say that? The devil still has to give an account to God for everything that he does. The devil is still accusing people before God, at least non-Christians. And we'll get to that at the end of our message. And he still must operate under the authority of God's ultimate plan and wisdom. So if he can, that should not scare us.

Another important detail we need to know about Satan is that he is not in hell right now. Many people believe that Satan is in hell, you know torturing people who don't accept Jesus by faith and that he's somehow the ruler of hell. But I want to encourage you that he is not the ruler of hell. There will be a final judgment one day. Everyone will stand before the great white throne of judgment of God. And Scripture tells us that there is a final place for God's wrath and punishment for sin, and it's referred to as the lake of fire or outer darkness.

And yes, we believe as a church that if you don't put your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, you will one day be cast into this eternal punishment. But Jesus in Matthew 25 clarifies that this place of punishment was originally prepared for the devil and the other fallen angels. We read in Matthew 25:41, "Then he will say to those on his left, depart from me, you who are cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." The devil will one day receive his eternal punishment, but he's not there yet.

And God is the ruler over this eternal punishment, not the devil. Our next question is, "Can the devil read our minds?" This honestly has a complex answer. The easy answer is no, he cannot, at least not in the way that God can read our minds. Because the devil has limited knowledge and authority, God knows everything. This is what we refer to as omniscient, meaning that God is all knowing. We read about this in Psalm 139, verses one through four, "You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.

You know when I sit and when I rise, and you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going and my lying down, you are familiar with all of my ways. Before a word is on my tongue, you, Lord, know it completely. And in 1 Kings 8:39, we read, "Then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Forgive and act. Deal with everyone according to all that they do since you know their hearts. For you alone know every human heart.

However, there are a few things we need to remember when we think about the devil having limited knowledge of our thoughts. First, Satan and his demons have had thousands of years to study the patterns of humanity, to see how we are tempted, to see how we might act in certain situations. I want you to think as a parent, if you saw your child every day, everything they said, everything they did, you would have a pretty good idea what was going on in their mind and how they might respond in a certain situation.

The devil and his angels have had thousands of years to study humanity. They could make some pretty educated decisions. And we also don't have a clear understanding of what the spiritual realm even looks like to spiritual beings. Let me give you an example. If Pastor Joel walked through the front door, his leg came down and then shot to the side, and he's limping the

whole way. And he comes all the way down to the front row. I don't have to be inside of his leg to know he has a broken leg. It's obvious.

So when we have internal addictions to lust and hate and unforgiveness, in the spiritual realm like that broken leg, that is likely very obvious to demonic forces. Scripture is also clear that the devil attacks us at an internal level of thought and desire. This can often be the primary battlefield for believers, that crazy, wicked, out-of-the-blue thought that popped into your mind and you go, "Where did that come from?" It's that internal desire towards a sin that you've continued to struggle with that seems to have an otherworldly force behind it.

It's not your average temptation throughout the day. That's not to say that every evil thought and every evil desire within you comes from the devil or demons. We are very capable of our own wickedness. Come back next week and the third week to find out how. But we don't fully understand the spiritual realm. So no, the devil does not know your thoughts like God knows them, but let's not oversimplify the reality of internal spiritual warfare happening. Another question is, what power does the devil have?

First, remember, as I stated earlier, that any power that the devil has is under the authority and plan and purposes of God almighty. But under that sovereign authority, the devil has immense power. Three times in the Gospel of John, Jesus refers to Satan as the ruler of this world. In Ephesians and 2 Corinthians, the apostle Paul refers to Satan as the prince of the power of the air or the God of this world, little G.

In 1 John, we read that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. And he's referenced as the prince of demons in Matthew 12, speaking of his authority over all the other demons. Throughout Scripture, we see stories of the devil creating great atrocities, sickness, natural disasters, oppressing people, literally possessing people, and even causing death. He's been at work behind every evil world power and every evil world leader.

He's been at work behind every wicked and false religious movement and every anti-religious movement throughout history. Doesn't mean that he's responsible for every choice or action. We're going to talk about that next week. You can't just say, "The devil made me do it." But it does mean that all evil ultimately falls under his kingdom and accomplishes his destructive purposes. Every person apart from the saving work of Jesus Christ in their life as Lord is a citizen of the kingdom of the devil.

That may sound harsh. That's the bad news. I want to shift to the good news, though, as we conclude today. Because for everyone who does receive the free gift of God's grace, by placing their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we become citizens of a new kingdom. Ephesians 2:1 says this, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work and those who are disobedient.

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of His great love for us, God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions. It is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

This is the miracle of salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. In Christ, I am a new creation. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old is gone. The new is here. In Christ, the devil can no longer accuse me before God.

Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." And in 2 Corinthians 5:21, we read, "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." In Christ, I have all that I need. 2 Peter 1:3 says, "His divine power has given us everything that we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.

In Christ, I can resist the devil." James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "The Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power and love and self-discipline." In Christ, I don't have to keep on sinning. Romans 6: 6:18 says, "For we know that the old self was crucified with Him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.

You've been set free from sin, have become slaves to righteousness. In Christ, death is not my end." John 11:25 says Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even though they die. And whoever

lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this? In Christ, my pain is not purposeless. James 1:2 through 4 says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters."

Whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. In 2 Corinthians 12:9, we read, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you." We sang about it. "Your grace is enough, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me." And one of my favorite verses, Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things, and that includes the schemes of the enemy and the tactics of the devil, in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purposes." The devil is real, and Jesus has won the victory.

1 John 3:8 says, "The one who does what is sinful is of the devil because the devil has been sinning from the beginning." The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. And then we read this hope in Romans chapter eight, verses 37 to 39. "No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I'm convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any power, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So where do we go from here? If you're here this morning and you've never placed your faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and accepted Him as Lord of your life, I want to be very honest with you. You are a slave to the kingdom of the devil and you will one day share in His eternal punishment. But you don't have to be a slave anymore. God loves you. He sent His Son Jesus into the world to live a perfect life and die for our sin on the cross. And he rose again to defeat the works of the devil.

And he set up a new kingdom, a heavenly kingdom. And by placing your faith in Jesus, you can be free. You can be forgiven. You can have hope. We would love to pray with you this morning if you'd like to make a decision to be part of that kingdom. If you say, I don't want to live for the ways of the enemy anymore. I don't want to live in the pride of my own heart. I want to submit to the God who created me, and I want to be forgiven, and I want to know what it is to walk with Him. We would love to walk with you in that journey.

Members of our prayer team will be at each side of the stage as we have our closing song, or you could see a pastor after the church. Don't wait. There's hope. If you're sitting here this morning though, and you've already made that decision, I want to encourage you, you have a very real enemy. He wants to destroy you. And his master plan is and has always been to tell lies. Jesus tells us that the devil is a liar and the father of lies.

Lies about God, lies about you, lies about the people around you, lies about God's plan for your life and the future that He wants for you. And I want to encourage you with three things as we fight the lies of the enemy as believers. Number one, instead of fixing our attention on the enemy, focus your attention on Jesus. He's the way, he's the truth, he's the life. Number two, I want to encourage you to desperately kill any root of pride in your life by the power of the Holy Spirit.

It's at the root of all sin. It will destroy you. In our own strength, we can do nothing. But as we submit our thoughts and desires and perceptions under the truth of God's Word, we can win this battle in His strength. And then our third encouragement goes along with that. Let's practically walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul spells this out for us in Ephesians chapter six. I invite you to look that up this week.

We have sermons that we've preached in the past on this topic, but there's a step-by-step way to prepare for battle every day against the lives of the enemy. Let's humble ourselves and walk in them. And in all these things, I want to encourage you that in Christ, this battle we fight is already won. So let's pray together this morning. God, I thank you for the truth that you are Lord of all creation. You are not somehow worried or put off by the power that the devil has because you created him.

And though, Lord, he's chosen to walk in sin and rebellion and pride, you are still in control. But Lord, this morning, I know that your heart grieves for that which the enemy has stolen and killed and destroyed. Lord, there are people in this room who have been blinded by the lies of the enemy and have never said yes to Jesus. I pray today that the scales would fall from the eyes of their heart. Lord, that they would walk in obedience and they would take that step of faith as Your Spirit prompts.

And Lord, as a church, as we think about having a war for our souls and for those around us, I pray that You would help us to be aware. Help us to be fixing our gaze on Jesus and walking in humility and in the fear of the Lord. And God, that you would give us daily tools to win that battle in the Spirit. It's not in our strength. So God, would you give us what we need each day? And God, thank you that this battle that we face, as we submit to Christ, it's already been won. So we end in that hope this morning, in Jesus' name.

Amen.