

Satan (Genesis 3:1-6)

Intro: Going to look at a passage this morning that probably wouldn't show up in the top ten verses on Thanksgiving or for the Christmas season, but this morning's passage is especially timely no matter what season we are in because what we are going to talk about affects us every single day.

1 Peter 5:8 - Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

So based on this passage we have an enemy (an adversary) in the devil who roams about seeking someone to devour or ruin. And really all throughout Scripture we read of a literal, real devil who will do everything he can to deceive us, lie to us and turn us away from God. His role is to derail the mission of Christ and he is actively pursuing this at all times.

But maybe we hear that and the modernist in us rolls our eyes and goes - really? A devil? I mean haven't we progressed past these myths about a cartoon character who is red with horns and a pitch fork? Come on, we went to college and are far too educated to believe in something so silly as a literal devil - right?

Yet, if and when we dismiss his existence we are actually falling for one of his most important tricks.

Know this, the goal of the devil is **not** to get you to fear him - but to ignore him... to assume he doesn't exist. If you don't believe there is a devil or at least ignore him ... he is winning because that means we will give him a total free pass.

C.S Lewis in his book "Screwtape Letters" which is a fictional book about an elder demon coaching or mentoring his nephew who is a younger demon on how to get people to sin and not follow God... there is a part where Screwtape tells his nephew demon...

"I do not think you will have much difficulty in keeping your patient in the dark. The fact that 'devils' are predominantly comic figures in the modern imagination will help you. If any faint suspicion of your existence begins to arise in his mind, suggest to him a picture of something in red tights, and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that (it is an old textbook method of confusing them) he therefore cannot believe in you.¹"

¹ Screwtape Letters, CS Lewis, Chapter 7 p. 32

The devil has many tricks up his sleeve—but one of his most successful is to make us believe he doesn't even exist so we ignore his reality every day.

And once he has convinced to ignore him, he can operate however he wants because we are not threatened by him.

But the Bible specifically cautions us about this.

Paul says in:

2 Corinthians 2:10-11 - Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, ¹¹ so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

This is so important, we can't miss this... Paul is saying the devil is real and has tricks and strategies and techniques that we do great harm to ourselves and others when we are ignorant of. So Paul is saying we can't be ignorant of his schemes or tactics - which begs the question:

What are his strategies? What are his tactics?

If he is our enemy - and has strategies for our harm... it absolutely behooves us to know those strategies and designs so we can avoid them.

Illustration: When we send military troops into a foreign land for battle, we expect them to know their enemy and if they know the enemy has historically set landmines in areas, we would expect them to be aware of that and to do whatever it takes to avoid them. It would be insane for military troops to march forward without striving to use the knowledge to avoid enemy's tactics. Yet, as Christians often we go through our days with that type of strategy. We march forward throughout the day almost willfully ignoring our enemy.

And so today we are going to look at some of his main tactics in Genesis 3 and even though it is 2018, Satan's schemes have not changed. It has been said "Satan doesn't need new strategies because the old ones still work."

First thing we will see and that Satan is masterful at disarming us. He convinces us there is an enemy but it is not him. Genesis 3 - verse 1

1. He Disarms us

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Listen to what the serpent is saying. He is telling Eve - God put you in this garden full of delights but now he is denying them to you! There is this good thing out there but because God is not a loving God - He is withholding it from you. What kind of God would deny you pleasure and joy if He really loved you? God must be restrictive and selfish to not allow you to eat from the good trees.

And so get this - God gives a whole garden full of yesses but one tree of "no" - and the crafty serpent twists that into evidence that God is not to be trusted - that God is the enemy - the enemy of your happiness.

He puts into her heart a suspicion of God which leads her to rebel against God. She has a distorted view of God and doesn't believe He is a loving God commanding her for her good, but a God withholding good from her. A cruel God, not a loving Father.

And the same thing happens to us. We believe the lies of the serpent about God and His love, and when we don't believe His love, we sin. We make him the enemy. The devil is very good at making us believe God is withholding good things from us, and when we believe that lie we sin.

The devil first attempts to disarm us and make us think God is our enemy. But if that doesn't work, he then will just try to make us the enemy of each other.

Really the devil will do whatever it takes to get us to think he is not the enemy someone else is - so he convinces us to think that our real enemy is the person who maybe has a different political view as us or a different belief than us. To the point where we believe the lie that if you don't agree with me you must hate me and we can't be friends. This is the work of the devil because he is great at dividing us. He is the cause of disunity and he loves when he creates conflict and unforgiveness. So he tempts us to gossip, slander and criticize other people and sin against them and to not forgive those who dare sin against us.

When we think the enemy is not the devil but the person sitting in a different chair this morning, or that person in our community group - our enemy the devil is winning. He wants us to believe we have an enemy - but it is not him.

I have had opportunity to sit with many people struggling... I have sat in counseling settings and heard countless times statements like:

“I am angry at God for allowing me to be in this marriage” and I have heard...
“I am angry at my spouse for giving us this marriage”

but I have yet to hear...

“I am angry at the devil for his relentless attack on my marriage”

We just give the devil a free pass. The devil disarms us into thinking we have an enemy - but that enemy is God or someone else. But I think this morning we need to remember we have an enemy...

But that enemy is not your spouse.

But that enemy is not person in your community group.

But that enemy is not your co-worker or boss.

The devil is masterful at turning us against each other. Making me think whatever you have done to me or whatever you believe can't be forgiven.

The way we combat this is as we remind ourselves of the gospel - we acknowledge we are all sinners in need of forgiveness... that because I know the mountain of sin I have been forgiven - I can forgive you... I don't get self-righteous and think I am better than you because I know how flawed I am.

When we fail to remind ourselves of that though... we will make God and others our enemies because the devil disarms us. But not only that, we also see in Genesis that the Devil also...

2. Distorts God's word

*He said to the woman, “**Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?**”² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”*

The Serpent starts lying to Eve and presents the lie that to this day we all buy into. "Did God actually say you couldn't have the fruit on that tree?"

Eve responds with "Yeah, he said we can't eat it or even touch it, or we'll die."

And the Devil goes - "Man, that's not true. He just knows if you do that, you'll have the knowledge he has, and you'll make a better god than he will. You're a better sovereign. You're a better ruler. You would make a better god."

*So he uses a little Scriptures mixed with lies.
What does this practically look like in our day?*

The devil knows our sinful hearts love to hear things that make us feel good. So he feeds us nonsense from well meaning friends like:

"God wants you to be happy - he wouldn't want you stuck in a marriage that is hard. You should leave your husband"

Now you won't find that in the Bible but its sounds good. Or we hear things like...

"God will never give you more than you can handle." - also nowhere in Scripture...

So when we face trial or suffering, we default to thinking we need to muscle our way through it. We think its on us - and we get anxious when we fail - rather recognizing our God is good and Sovereign and can lean on Him when we are going through difficult seasons. We can cast our care upon Him because He cares about us!

Or he will twist Scriptures like John 10:10 that says God wants you to live the abundant life - and he will convince us to be greedy because then you can have all you want. Don't be generous with your resources - because then you won't have enough for you and you won't live that abundant life God wants you to. The devil will twist Scripture to make us think his lies are true and we can't be ignorant of that tactic or strategy!

So he will disarm us and he will distort Scripture... and finally one more we see is...

Satan is he a thief - he steals our joy and wants to steal our hearts and our children's hearts - and the way he does that...

3. Disguises sin as good

*⁶ So when the woman **saw that the tree was good** for food, and that it was a **delight to the eyes**, and that **the tree was to be desired to make one wise**,² she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.*

Satan makes the sin look “good” “a delight to the eyes” and “desired”

So when Eve sees it's pleasing to the eye and good for food, she takes it, and she eats it. She hands it to her husband. And devastation follows.

Puritan book - that states Satan “paints sin in virtues colors.” Satan will present sin so it looks attractive to us.

Example: Pursue that extra-marital relationship - because then and only then you will feel loved and appreciated. He makes it look good and to be desired. He doesn't present the horrible harm and hurt that it causes. Just the thrill and adventure.

Example: He tells us to indulge that craving for pornography and that it is not harmful to anyone but just an innocent escape. But he hides the truth that it destroys you, other relationships, besides the fact that it normalizes exploitation of women as they are degraded and dehumanized.

The devil just presents what's attractive and leaves out the damage, the hurt and brokenness and separation that undoubtedly follows.

I know this - the worst moments of my life have been when I bought into his lies and chose the allurements of sin without considering the consequences. It is never worth it. Satan never treats us better than our Father does.

“Obedience may seem boring or inconvenient in the short-term, but it's richly and deeply satisfying in the long term.”³ - Following God is much better than falling for the devil's strategies.

So in light of all this we are commanded to resist the devil.

² Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices

³ <https://careynieuwhof.com/5-signs-the-enemy-not-god-is-winning-in-your-life-and-leadership/>

James 4:7 - *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

The way we can do this is in the same way that Jesus resisted him when He was tempted in the wilderness. Jesus resisted the devil by appealing to the Scriptures.

Matthew 4:1-11 - *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" ⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶ and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you, and "On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" ⁷ Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" ¹¹ Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.*

When the devil commanded Him to turn stones into bread, Jesus said, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone." When the devil told Him to jump off the pinnacle of the Temple, Jesus said, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." When Satan offered Him all the kingdoms of the world, Jesus said, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Every time Jesus is tempted - he rebuts the temptation with Scripture. He uses Scripture to combat temptation.

But here is a point that I think is important to make - (*and if you are going to disagree with a part of the sermon - this might be it*).

The way I have been traditionally taught what this passage teaches us is that when we are tempted we need to have a verse handy to quote... so when I am tempted to lust I go "Job 31:1 - "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman." and when I am tempted to complain I pull out "Phil 2:14 "Do all things without grumbling or disputing" - Where Scripture is some sort of tool belt with weapons on it and you are to be a John Wayne - ready to sling verses at temptation.

I don't think that is what we are seeing Jesus do here.

We need to know the Scriptures - not **only** to have verses at the ready to quote in the face of temptation - but we need to know the Scriptures to know God - and when we do... when in the moment of temptation - we say "Nah... there is a something better than this... there is a better treasure, a superior pleasure. A relationship with a living, all powerful God and Father, is what gives us victory and we know Him through His word. That is what Jesus is doing. Jesus is saying I want His bread, I want to worship Him, I want to serve the God of the Bible not your false idols.

Illustration: If you know me for years, after awhile you could pick up on the fact that I can be a bit of a food snob. So when people are trying to meet with me sometimes they will say something like "Hey can we meet at Pizza Hut" and I will reply "Get behind me Satan... but really "Happy to meet but I know a better place to get pizza - could we go to this other place instead?" The reason for this is I don't want to spend a meal eating fake pizza from Pizza Hut when I know something vastly superior exists. Pizza hut is just a cheap imitation of something majestic like Fiorella's pizza.

And I think the most effective way to resist the devil is know God and what He has done for us in such a way, that when temptation to lust comes... we say "Nah... something better exists. I don't have an appetite for that." Or when I am tempted to get anxious - Nah... I don't need to because I know God and I know He is in complete control.

Jesus resisted Satan by knowing what Satan was offering was not better than His relationship with His Father. When we know the Word and we spend time in it, we will know all that the devil is offering up does not compare to what we have in Christ.

Conclusion:

Satan's goals are outlined in John 10:10. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy." He wants to steal our joy, kill our hope, and destroy our faith. But we have a God and a Father who offers far better. Our Father has come to give us life, forgiveness, freedom, and a relationship with Him. He has made this possible by coming to this earth and willfully going to the cross to pay for our sins.