



Almont Vineyard Church

Sermon Series: Targeted (Week 1)

September 5, 2026

Opening Monologue

Welcome to the AVC App. This is where we go deeper into the sermon. Here you will find spiritual reflections and commentary that line up with the sermon topic of the week. You can also submit prayer requests, sign up for events, listen to or read the Bible, and much more. Dive in and enjoy.

This week we are starting a brand-new sermon series titled Targeted. Whether we want to admit it or not, as Christians we have a target on our backs. I am not talking about a target from a person or an individual. It is much deeper than that. I am talking about being targeted by Satan and his hosts.

This all started in a cosmic war in the heavens, described in Revelation 12. You can read it for yourself, but here is the short version: Satan wanted to exalt himself. He and his demons rebelled against God. A battle ensued. They fought against Michael the archangel, but they were not powerful enough. They were cast out of heaven to this earth. That same chapter tells us that Satan leads the whole world astray.

As Christians, we need to play offense and defense. We need to be on our game. We cannot afford a lackadaisical attitude that says, “I go to church. I do daily devotions. I’m good.” Those things are good—and they matter. But our faith has to go much deeper than that if we are going to stay protected. In this series we are going to get down to the things that protect our Christian lives—mind, body, and soul.

That starts with evaluating our lives. Yes, you heard that right: we must evaluate our lives. What does that mean in simple terms? I will bring this out in the sermon as well.

What are you listening to? What are your eyes watching? What filters do you have in place to protect yourself?

Make no mistake about it: Satan does not care how he pulls you into his darkness.

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

I am convinced Satan uses three tactics to keep people from Jesus:

1. Distracts & Confuses people from Meeting Jesus (2 Cor. 4:4, 11:3, Gal. 1:7)
 2. Steal People from Jesus (Jn. 10:10, Mt. 13:19, Lk. 22:3-4)
 3. Puts People’s Lives in Bondage (Lk. 13:16, Acts 10:38, 2 Tim. 2:20)
- Friends, as Christians we have the empowerment of the Holy Spirit living inside of us. We need to be several steps—if not miles—ahead of Satan and his demons.

In this series we are going to learn, from Scripture, why and how Satan and his demons attack us. We are going to be equipped with God’s Word and with tools to fight—to protect our lives and our families’ lives from being targeted and taken down.

This passage helps explain the kind of targeting we experience:

Galatians 1:6–9 (NIV) “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!”

Come join us this Sunday to be encouraged and equipped by God’s Word.

In Christ,

Rev. Pastor Brad

To Listen to this week’s Sermon: “Targeted Series” Go to the Sermon tab here in our APP or use the links to our website or YouTube Channel where you can also listen to our Sermons:

Web: <https://www.almontvineyardchurch.org/media>

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>

Key Sermon Text

Revelation 12:7-17

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2012%3A7-17&version=NIV>

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%2010%3A3-5&version=NIV>

Philippians 4:6-7

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%204%3A6-7&version=NIV>

Galatians 1:6-9

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians%201%3A6-9&version=NIV>

Spiritual Reflection

Living Targets/ Read Revelation 12.

When many of us think of Revelation, we treat it as only a book about end times. It is not. Revelation speaks to the past, the present, and the future. That may surprise some, but it is a biblical fact. Revelation 12 is a clear example. It pulls back the curtain on Satan’s fall from heaven and then shows us why the church still feels the heat of that war today.

There is no shortage of opinions about this chapter. Here is a faithful way to hold it together with the rest of Scripture.

A war broke out in heaven. Satan and his demonic hosts fought against heaven itself. Michael the archangel and his angels engaged them. The dragon and his angels were not strong enough. They lost their place in heaven and were hurled down to the earth. John identifies the dragon as “that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray” (Revelation 12:9).

But Revelation 12 will not let us stop at Michael’s sword. A heavenly voice announces:

“Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” (Revelation 12:10–11)

Satan was not defeated by angelic muscle alone. Michael is God’s instrument, carrying out what Christ has already accomplished at the cross. The war in heaven is real. The victory behind it is the blood of Jesus.

Thrown down, Satan does not retire. He comes down “in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short” (Revelation 12:12). His aim on earth is to lead the whole world astray and to take down as many of Christ’s people as he can along the way. He still “prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). He still works through deception, power, and counterfeit signs (2 Thessalonians 2:9–10). And he makes war on “those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12:17).

That is why Paul can say: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12)

Satan’s campaign on earth sits inside a war already decided in heaven. He is defeated—but he is not yet destroyed. His end is sure: “And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

(Revelation 20:10)

Revelation 12 holds both realities at once. The outcome is not in doubt. The fight on the ground is still fierce. That is why spiritual vigilance is not optional for the church in this present age.

We are the living targets on earth.

So we must fight only through the power we receive from Jesus Christ our Lord. That is the only power we have. If you think you can take the devil down in your own strength, you will be shredded like a log in a wood chipper. We have no sufficient power in ourselves. What we do have is Christ. Jesus has already won the victory. Our place is behind the cross—fighting for our own souls and for our families until the Lord calls us home.

That fight is not casual. Going to church and keeping a daily devotion are good gifts. They are not the whole armor. We have to go deeper. What are you listening to? What are your eyes watching? What filters have you

put in place? Satan does not care how he pulls a believer into the dark. He will use distraction, confusion, theft, and bondage if we leave the door open.

We do not fight with the world's weapons.

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:3–5)

And we do not stand bare.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.” (Ephesians 6:10–13)

God has not left us to do this alone. He has promised, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). So let us not shrink back.

“But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.” (Hebrews 10:39)

The accuser is furious. His time is short. The Lamb has already overcome. Stand in that victory—mind, body, and soul—until Christ brings us home.

(Rev. Brad Standfest, Logos Bible)

Commentary on Main Texts

Revelation 12:7-17

Jesus gives John the outline right at the front of the book:

“Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.” (Revelation 1:19)

In plain language, Revelation is not only a book about “the end.” It is a book about:

- what John already saw
- what was happening then—and still happens now
- what God will finish later

Think of it like looking at a mountain range. From a distance it looks like one mountain. Get closer and you see several ridges stacked behind each other. Revelation often shows the same spiritual conflict from more than one angle. It is not always a straight timeline: first this, then that, then the end. Sometimes it loops back and shows the same war again in a new picture.

Past.

Some of it had already happened when John wrote, or it describes what God had already done. Revelation 12 is a clear example. It looks back to Satan's rebellion and his fall from heaven. The dragon is thrown down. That is not only future news. It is a window into a real war that already took place.

Present.

John first wrote to real churches in Asia Minor—ordinary believers under pressure. They needed courage then. We still need the same courage now. The conflict in Revelation 12 did not stay in heaven. After Satan is hurled to the earth, he goes after “those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12:17). That is the church. That is us. We are living targets in a war that is still on.

Future.

The book also looks ahead to what is not finished yet. Satan is defeated, but he is not yet destroyed. Christ will return. Evil will be judged. The devil will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). The story ends with God making all things new. That part is still ahead.

So when someone says, “Revelation is only about the end times,” they are cutting the book too short. When someone says, “It was only about the first century,” they are cutting it too short the other way. The safer reading is the one Jesus gave John: what has been seen, what is now, and what will take place later.

That is why Revelation 12 matters for this series. The war in heaven is behind us. The fury on earth is around us. The final victory is ahead of us. We do not fight as people who hope we might win. We fight as people who belong to the Lamb who already overcame.

THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON 12:1–17

The seventh trumpet (11:15) ushers in the bowl judgments (15:1–16:21), but in the intervening chapters (12–14), an interlude, John saw several signs regarding the cosmic warfare in Revelation—the conflict between God and Satan. He saw the source of all sin, evil, persecution, and suffering on the earth, and he understood why the great battle between the forces of God and Satan must soon take place. In these chapters the nature of evil is exposed, and Satan is revealed in all his wickedness.

In 12:1–6, the reader is given a description of the scene; the rest of the chapter (12:7–17) amplifies various parts of that basic scene. The picture of warfare between good and evil—between God and Satan—is found in 12:1–6. The next three sections—12:7–12; 12:13–17; and chapter 13—expand the story of 12:1–6. Much like a symphony where the first movement sets the theme and the rest of the movements supply variations on the theme, so the first six verses set the theme and the next three “movements” supply the variations. The scenes focus on three characters—the dragon, the woman, and the child. The first scene records the birth of the child (12:1–6), the second highlights the expulsion of the dragon from heaven (12:7–12), and the third shows the dragon attacking the woman and her children (12:13–17). Not many of these details can be traced to specific people or events but are used to depict God's victory over evil and our need to trust in him.

Interestingly, God chose as his pattern for telling this story a common theme in the mythology of other religions—a prince is born, a usurper wants to kill the prince, the prince is protected, the usurper is killed. Such

a story occurs in the Greek myth of Apollo and the Egyptian myth of Isis and Horus. This use is called “redemptive analogy.”

12:1 A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. A clue to understanding this chapter is in the first phrase—what John would describe as a sign—a picture of something with deeper significance. The woman here represents much more than a woman. Pictured as a superhuman figure, she was clothed with the sun and had the moon under her feet. She was also wearing a victor’s crown, a crown of twelve stars.

In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel is pictured as the wife of God (Isaiah 54:5–6; Jeremiah 3:6–8; 31:32; Ezekiel 16:32; Hosea 2:16). This woman represents the faithful people in Israel who had been waiting for the Messiah who would be born from among them (Isaiah 9:6–7; Micah 5:2). They had recognized and had accepted the Messiah when he had come. Later in the chapter, this woman will represent all believers—Jews and Gentiles.

Three other symbolic women appear in Revelation: (1) a woman named Jezebel, symbolizing paganism (2:20); (2) the scarlet woman, symbolizing the apostate church (17:3–6); (3) the bride of the Lamb, symbolizing God’s people, the true church (19:7). The woman’s crown of twelve stars symbolizes the twelve tribes of Israel.

THE FRONT LINES

The great and wondrous sign of the woman and the dragon that John saw reveals the mighty force of the conflict between good and evil. This may seem far removed until we realize that much of the daily conflict we experience reflects the much larger conflict of Christ against Satan. Those for Christ stand against the evil system of this world. Those who fight with Christ against evil are on the front lines of battle in this war.

12:2 She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. God had set apart the Jews for himself (Romans 9:4–5), and that nation had given birth to the Messiah, who would “rule all nations with an iron rod” (12:5; see also Psalm 2:9). In this part of the vision, John saw that this woman, Israel, was pregnant and ... about to give birth to the Messiah (see also Isaiah 26:17–18; 54:1; 66:7–12; Hosea 13:13; Micah 4:9–10; 5:2–3; Matthew 24:8). When Mary gave birth to a tiny baby in Bethlehem, the entire universe took notice, for this event held cosmic significance.

This picture also symbolizes the nation of Israel agonizing for centuries as it awaited the coming Messiah, the deliverer, who would destroy evil and usher in God’s eternal kingdom.

12:3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. In these verses another sign appears in heaven. This time, it is not a “great and wondrous sign” as in 12:1, but merely a sign—for the wonder of the dragon pales in comparison to the glory of the woman.

In this sign, John saw an enormous red dragon, who was Satan (12:9). He had power over the kingdoms of the world, signified by his heads, horns, and crowns. The color red is probably not that important to the vision; however, it may symbolize blood, for the red dragon had killed the saints. Satan is described as “a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44 NLT). John’s original readers would have immediately identified this dragon as the enemy of God’s people because such creatures are mentioned by the prophets (see Psalm 74:14; Isaiah 27:1; Ezekiel 29:3). A dragon, or leviathan, in the Old Testament, often stood for a king who opposed God and his people.

Satan was originally created for God's glory. But Satan arrogantly rebelled against God because he desired to be like God instead of giving glory to God (1 Timothy 3:6; Jude 6).

Satan first appears in the third chapter of the first book of the Bible. God created humans for his glory, and he placed Adam and Eve in a paradise called the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1–2). Satan, disguised as a serpent, led Adam and Eve into sin (Genesis 3). That first sin enslaved all future people—"When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned" (Romans 5:12 NLT). People are enslaved to Satan, the prince of evil (Matthew 12:22–32; 1 John 5:19).

Scripture describes Satan as the "ruler" or "god of this world" (John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19). His rule pervades every area of this world. Oppressive and unjust political structures reflect Satan's reign (Revelation 12:13; 13:4–8; 18:1–20). Even the curse of death and sickness that God pronounced in Eden is the result of Satan's work (John 8:44).

THE RED DRAGON

Satan, the prince of this world, is an angel who rebelled against God. Satan is real, not symbolic, and is constantly working against God and those who obey him. Satan tempted Eve in the garden and persuaded her to sin; he tempted Jesus in the desert but was not able to persuade him to fall (Matthew 4:1–11). Satan has great power, but people can be delivered from his reign of spiritual darkness because of Christ's victory on the cross. Jesus is much more powerful than Satan. Jesus' resurrection shattered Satan's deathly power (Colossians 1:13–14). To overcome Satan we need faithful allegiance to God's Word, determination to stay away from sin, and the support of other believers.

After Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden, God had promised to destroy Satan and his demons and reestablish his own kingdom. Speaking to the serpent, God had said, "You and the woman will be enemies, and your offspring and her offspring will be enemies. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15 NLT). The offspring who ultimately crushes Satan's head is God's promised Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus demonstrated his power over Satan through his miracles and exorcisms (Matthew 12:28–29). Hearing of his disciples' success on their first mission to spread his word, Jesus had said, "I saw Satan falling from heaven as a flash of lightning. And I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:18–19 NLT). Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross and his resurrection sealed his victory over Satan. Christ "disarmed the evil rulers and authorities" (Colossians 2:15 NLT; see also John 12:31; 16:11).

Although a great battle had been won, the war was not over. Since Eden, Satan has been the avowed enemy of God and his people, as pictured in John's vision. In the end, Satan will fight against God's people and will wage a final war against God. At that time, Satan will be decisively defeated.

This dragon is pictured as having seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. These are not supernatural, heavenly crowns, as the crown of twelve stars on the woman's head (12:1); instead, these heads and crowns symbolize nations over which Satan has control. Throughout Revelation, the number seven signifies completeness, so the seven heads and seven crowns could picture the totality of Satan's control over the earth. The dragon has authority only in this world. The "ten horns" allude to Daniel 7:7 and 24, "Then in my vision that night, I saw a fourth beast.... It was different from any of the other beasts, and it had ten horns. Its ten horns are ten kings that will rule that empire" (NLT). The ten horns, or ten kings, are also mentioned in Revelation 17:12. The huge statue in Nebuchadnezzar's vision also had ten toes (Daniel 2:41–42). It is unclear

whether these ten kings will be actual kings and nations or even the exact number ten, but Revelation 17:12–14 says they will make war against Christ. As the King of kings, Christ will conquer them.

12:4 His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. This verse describes the fall of Satan. Next, John saw a vision of the dragon standing in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. This reminds us of the slaughter of the young boys in Bethlehem by Herod (Matthew 2:16). Herod was Satan's emissary, used by Satan to attempt to kill the child Jesus.

12:5 She gave birth to a boy who was to rule all nations with an iron rod. And the child was snatched away from the dragon and was caught up to God and to his throne. The woman gave birth to a boy. This boy child is Jesus, born to a devout Jew named Mary (Luke 1:26–33), born to the entire nation of Israel. But this boy would not be killed by Satan, for he would be born to rule all nations with an iron rod (see Psalm 2:6–9). As a shepherd defends his flock, so Christ will defend his church against those who attempt to destroy it. The iron rod pictures Jesus as the ultimate warrior. His life on earth is not pictured in this story, for John immediately saw the child snatched away from the dragon and caught up to God and to his throne. Jesus came to earth, accomplished his work, and then returned to heaven. This is the Ascension (Acts 1:9). Satan may have fought Jesus, but nothing stopped him from doing what he had been sent to earth to do.

12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where God had prepared a place to give her care for 1,260 days. The wilderness represents a place of spiritual refuge and protection from Satan, probably not meant to be literal because this chapter is mostly symbolic. John the Baptist had lived in the wilderness before beginning his public ministry (Luke 1:80; 3:2). After he had been tempted by Satan in the wilderness, Jesus had been ministered to by the angels (Mark 1:13). Jesus had withdrawn to the wilderness with his disciples before returning to Jerusalem the last time (John 11:54). After the apostle Paul had been converted, he had gone away "into Arabia" (most likely, into the wilderness, Galatians 1:17) before returning to begin his ministry. Thus, in this verse, the woman fleeing into the wilderness is a picture of her escaping to a place of protection.

In this place prepared by God, he cared for her for 1,260 days—the same number noted for the trampling of the holy city (11:2), the ministry of the two witnesses (11:3), and the rule of the Beast (13:5). God would care for his people during the entire time when evil would be in control in the world. In the wilderness, God's people would be hounded by the people on the earth (those who would follow the Beast), but God would watch over them. Many would be martyred, but God would care for them. The word translated "care for" is literally "nourish." The woman will be provided with food miraculously, just as Elijah was cared for in the wilderness by God (1 Kings 17:2–4). God also provided manna in the wilderness for his people (Exodus 16:4).

Some think that this woman pictures the Jewish believers only. Others suggest that she symbolizes all believers, the true Israel. Depending on one's view of when the believers will be taken to heaven (before, in the middle of, or after this time of Great Tribulation), these symbols may be identified in different ways. Because God has chosen not to make it clear, it is best to simply understand that God is promising spiritual protection for his people who are still on the earth during this difficult time.

TRUE SECURITY

Because God aided the woman's escape into the desert, we can be sure that he offers security to all true

believers. Satan always attacks God's people, but God keeps them spiritually secure. Some will experience physical harm, but all will be protected from spiritual harm. God will not let Satan take the souls of God's true followers. When Satan's attacks seem overpowering, remember that God is ruler over all. Trust him.

12:7–9 Then there was war in heaven. Michael and the angels under his command fought the dragon and his angels. And the dragon lost the battle and was forced out of heaven. This great dragon—the ancient serpent called the Devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world—was thrown down to the earth with all his angels. This is the first expansion on the pictures described in 12:1–6. What John saw next fills in for the readers more detail of what was described in 12:4 regarding Satan's expulsion from heaven: "His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth" (NIV).

Satan's expulsion from heaven began as a war in heaven between Michael and the angels of God and the dragon (Satan) and his angels. These events most likely describe the time of the second binding of Satan associated with the death and resurrection of Christ (see 12:4). Some believe it relates to the eviction of Satan before the creation of humans in Genesis, but that view is based more on conjecture. Others see it as something that will occur just before the return of Christ. If the passage refers to the Resurrection, Christ's victory over death caused Satan to try to reestablish himself in heaven. According to Scripture, Satan had some sort of access (Job 1:6–7; Zechariah 3:1). In either case, this event fulfills a portion of Daniel's vision (Daniel 12:1–2).

Michael is a high-ranking angel (called an archangel). Throughout Jewish literature, Michael is named as the one who comes to the aid of God's people. He was seen as one of their protectors (see also Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9). Notice that the battle here was not between God and Satan or between Christ and Satan but between Michael and Satan. Warfare raged, and the dragon lost the battle. As a result, Satan and his minions were forced out of heaven. Having lost their place, they are already vanquished foes. Satan was thrown down to the earth, and he went about his work of deceiving the whole world—his final revolt before his destruction (20:10).

Here, the great dragon is identified as the ancient serpent called the Devil, or Satan. The devil is not a symbol or legend; he is very real. The devil, God's enemy, constantly tries to hinder God's work, but he is limited by God's power and can do only what he is permitted to do (Job 1:6–2:6). The name Satan means "accuser" (12:10). He actively looks for people to accuse and attack (1 Peter 5:8–9). Satan likes to pursue believers who are vulnerable in their faith, who are spiritually weak, or who are isolated from other believers. He "prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour" (1 Peter 5:8 NLT). Members of the first-century church understood Satan's intentions. They warned one another to resist evil (James 4:7) and even expected "to enter into the Kingdom of God through many tribulations" caused by their enemy (Acts 14:22 NLT; see also John 16:33). Although Satan's final destruction is certain, believers are presently waiting for Christ to crush Satan and to end all evil (Romans 16:20).

Some consider this verse to describe warfare in the ancient past, but others think that Satan's fall to earth took place at Jesus' resurrection or ascension and that the 1,260 days (12:6) are a symbolic way of referring to the time between Christ's first and second comings. Still others say that Satan's defeat will occur in the middle of a literal seven-year Tribulation period, following the rapture of the church and preceding the second coming of

Christ and the beginning of Christ's one-thousand-year reign. Regardless of the interpretation, God's clear teaching is that Christ is victorious—Satan has already been defeated because of Christ's death on the cross (12:10–12). Even though God permits the devil to do his work in this world, God is still in control. And Jesus has complete power over Satan; he defeated Satan when he died and rose again. One day Satan will be bound forever, never again to do his evil work (20:10).

Satan fell to the earth with “all his angels”—referring to demons. This world is their prison, where, as the enemies of God, they work against God's people. Satan is not omnipresent—he cannot be everywhere at once, so his demons work for him. Demons are fallen angels, sinful spiritual beings who have Satan as their leader (Matthew 25:41; Luke 11:15). Revelation highlights three evil powers who will oppose God's people during the end times: Satan, pictured as a dragon (Revelation 12:9); the Beast, better known as the Antichrist (13:1–10); and the false prophet (13:11; 16:13). Demons serve as agents of this evil trinity. They seduce people, will establish the notorious kingdom of Babylon, and will lead a worldwide offensive against God's people (16:1–14).

REAL ENEMIES

These are demons over whom Satan has control. They are not fantasies—they are very real. Believers face a powerful army whose goal is to defeat Christ's church. When a person trusts in Christ, these beings become that person's enemies, trying every trick to turn him or her away from Christ and back to sin. Although assured of victory, believers must engage in the struggle until Christ returns because Satan is constantly battling against all who are on the Lord's side. Believers need supernatural power to defeat Satan, and God has provided this by giving his Holy Spirit and his armor. If you feel discouraged, remember Jesus' words to Peter: “On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18 NIV).

12:10–11 Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, “It has happened at last—the salvation and power and kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ! For the Accuser has been thrown down to earth—the one who accused our brothers and sisters before our God day and night. And they have defeated him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of their testimony. And they were not afraid to die.” Verses 10–12 comprise a hymn of praise to God for the defeat of Satan when he was thrown out of heaven. Despite Satan's power on this earth, he is and always will be a vanquished foe. This hymn has three stanzas, shouted by a loud voice that was heard across the heavens—possibly an angel. Some have suggested that this could not be an angel because the words “our brothers and sisters” usually refer to humans. In 19:10, however, an angel says, “I am a servant of God, just like you and other believers who testify of their faith in Jesus” (NLT), thus, in a sense, equating the angels and humans in their being servants of God.

First, the voice proclaims the victory of God's kingdom and Christ's authority: “It has happened at last—the salvation and power and kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ!” Salvation means deliverance—not just spiritual salvation from sin, but freedom from the clutches of Satan. This had occurred because of God's power (strength exerted for believers) and kingdom (his rule in believers' lives), and because of the authority of his Son. Both the Father and the Son have given this deliverance.

Second, the message describes the victory and its appropriation by believers through their faith in Christ: “For the Accuser has been thrown down to earth.” This has already been described in 12:4, 8–9 (see commentary above).

Third, there is a promise that Satan is ultimately and forever defeated because of the blood of the Lamb and because of their testimony. The critical blow to Satan had come when the Lamb, Jesus Christ, had shed his blood for sinful humanity. The victory had been won by sacrifice—Christ’s death to pay the penalty for sin. Those who accept this sacrifice become victors along with the Lamb. They confirm their loyalty to the Lamb through their testimony—some even to the point of death. The martyrs who were not afraid to die revealed their ultimate victory in that final act of faith. When a believer dies, Satan may think he has gained a victory. In reality, however, he has lost. In fact, he loses every time a believer dies. The victory of the saints is the heart of Revelation. In each of the letters to the seven churches (chapters 2–3), Christ had promised that those who are victorious will receive great reward.

12:12 “Rejoice, O heavens! And you who live in the heavens, rejoice! But terror will come on the earth and the sea. For the Devil has come down to you in great anger, and he knows that he has little time.” This third stanza of the hymn calls those in heaven to rejoice. But those left on earth will face terror. The reason? The Devil has come down to you in great anger, and he knows that he has little time. Knowing that his doom is sealed and that he will ultimately be defeated, Satan, in great anger, lashes out, attempting to take as many people with him as he can, as well as causing suffering and pain to those who are on God’s side.

The Devil began to step up his persecution knowing that he has little time. Some believe that all of church history has been the “last days,” so Satan has been constantly battling against God’s people. Others interpret this as happening right before the end of history, when Satan will increase his persecution of God’s people. Although the devil is very powerful, as can be seen by the condition of our world, he is always under God’s control. That is, he can only do what God permits him to do. One of the reasons God allows Satan to work evil and bring temptation is so that the false believers will be weeded out from Christ’s true believers. Knowing that the last great confrontation with Jesus was near, Satan was desperately trying to recruit as great an enemy force as possible for this final battle.

THE WAR IS WON

The angel shouted the victory cry, “Rejoice, O heavens!” because Satan would be defeated. The war will be won by God. In the process, we need to make sure we don’t lose our individual battles. Too many Christians sing “Victory in Jesus” but then sit idly by, assuming that the work is all God’s to do and they will be carried along in the victory. Not only must we be spiritually fit and morally strong, but we also must not be a hindrance to the cause of Christ by hurting others or dividing the church. The war is real, and we must be on guard to serve in the battle well.

12:13 And when the dragon realized that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the child. Verses 7–12 describe the war in heaven and expand on verse 4; verses 13–17 describe the war on earth, expanding on verse 6. The dragon realized that he had been thrown down to the earth and was angry. He had lost the war in heaven (12:8), lost access to God, and, thus, no longer was allowed to accuse the believers (12:10–11). He could not attack the child because the child had been taken up to heaven (12:5), and knew that his time was short (12:12). In his attempt to bring as many people with him, and in his anger at God’s people, the dragon pursued the woman who had given birth to the child. The word “pursued” is the same word translated “persecute.” Satan is stalking and killing God’s people, hoping to do as much damage as possible.

The woman had “fled into the wilderness” (12:6 NLT) because of the pursuit of the dragon, but God would care for her there (see 12:14). The woman symbolizes God’s people. It is unclear if this refers to the Jews or to all believers. But those on earth at this time who believe in Jesus will be hounded by Satan. His anger at Christ will be redirected at Christ’s people.

12:14 But she was given two wings like those of a great eagle. This allowed her to fly to a place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be cared for and protected from the dragon for a time, times, and half a time. This verse repeats 12:6, “And the woman fled into the wilderness, where God had prepared a place to give her care for 1,260 days” (NLT). The text says that the woman was given two wings like those of a great eagle, picturing divine protection and deliverance (see also Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:10–11; Psalm 91:4; Isaiah 40:31). Eagles were the largest birds known in Palestine. These great wings allowed her to fly to a place prepared for her in the wilderness, a place of safety, where she would be cared for and protected. God had prepared this safe place, as noted in 12:6.

The 1,260 days mentioned in 12:6 correspond to the time, times, and half a time mentioned here. “Time” means one year; “times” means two years; and “half a time” means half a year. This equals three and a half years, or forty-two months (see 11:2), or 1,260 days (forty-two months multiplied by thirty days per month). Thus, the woman would be protected during the time of persecution. This could refer to the time period of the trampling of the holy city (11:2) or to the time when the Antichrist reigns (13:5) or to both, depending on how these time periods fall. The point is that God has prepared a place of spiritual protection for his people during the time when Satan will rampage across the earth. Many will die, but that will be their greatest victory over Satan. The time of that rampage has an end because God will bring an end to Satan and all evil.

12:15–16 Then the dragon tried to drown the woman with a flood of water that flowed from its mouth. But the earth helped her by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that gushed out from the mouth of the dragon. The dragon spewed water from its mouth, hoping to drown the woman. A flood is a common Old Testament picture of overwhelming evil (see Psalms 18:4; 32:6; 69:1–2; 124:2–5; Nahum 1:8). This is a flood of lies and deceit in an attempt to drown the woman in sin. This could refer to the river of lies that will threaten Christians in the last days (see 13:14; Matthew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:9–11). This provides an interesting contrast to the river of life flowing from God’s throne (22:1).

Next, John saw that the earth helped her by opening its mouth and swallowing the river so that the flood could not hurt the woman. God used the earth to protect his people. God delivered Israel from Pharaoh by parting the Red Sea; once again, God supernaturally intervenes on behalf of his people (see Exodus 14:21–22; see also Isaiah 26:20; 42:15; 43:2; 50:2).

12:17 Then the dragon became angry at the woman, and he declared war against the rest of her children—all who keep God’s commandments and confess that they belong to Jesus. If the woman represents faithful Jews, then the phrase “the rest of her children” could refer to all believers—the entire church. If the woman represents all believers (both Jew and Gentile), then “the rest of her children” could refer to all who come to Christ through the testimony of God’s people or to those specifically chosen for martyrdom. Because Satan could not bring down the group (the Jewish believers or the church at large), he waged war against individuals.

“The rest of her children” could also refer to all of God’s people after the first child, Jesus. All believers are considered to be Jesus’ family (Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:11).

The dragon was very angry. The reasons are noted in the commentary on 12:13. The woman had escaped to the wilderness, and the dragon had not been able to kill her, even with a great flood. So Satan declared war against the rest of her children—all who keep God’s commandments and confess that they belong to Jesus. This stresses the obedience that is a central part of endurance.

NO TIME FOR INDECISION

The apostle Paul wrote that believers are in a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:10–12). John wrote that the outcome has already been determined. Satan and his followers have been defeated and will be destroyed. Nevertheless, Satan battles daily to bring more into his ranks and to keep his own from defecting to God’s side. Those who belong to Christ have gone into battle on God’s side, and he has guaranteed them victory. God will not lose the war, but we must make certain not to lose the battle for our own souls. Don’t waver in your commitment to Christ. A great spiritual battle is being fought, and there is no time for indecision.

12:18 Then he stood waiting on the shore of the sea. Some versions place this verse at the beginning of 13:1 to accommodate a textual variation, “I stood upon the sand of the sea,” (KJV), referring to John. But better textual evidence affirms the reading, “he [i.e., the dragon] stood.”

The Beast was foreshadowed in 11:7 as the one who would attack the two witnesses. He was described there as “the beast that comes up from the Abyss” (NIV). At this point, John would see the Beast arrive. The dragon stood on the edge of the sea (the Abyss), ready to call out one who would help him pursue God’s people. In 9:1–2, John had seen the abyss opened and an army of locusts ascending from it. As noted in the commentary there, the people of John’s day would have pictured the “Abyss” as the depths of the sea. The sea usually represented evil in the ancient world. Later, John would describe the new heaven and new earth as a place where the “sea” no longer exists (21:1).

The dragon (Satan) had tried to kill the woman’s child (Jesus) but could not. Then he had chased the woman (at first picturing God’s people, Israel, then seeming to picture all believers), but she had been protected by God. So he had turned his attention to the rest of the woman’s offspring and had “declared war against the rest of her children—all who keep God’s commandments and confess that they belong to Jesus” (12:17 NLT). As noted in 12:17, having realized he could not bring down the church as a whole, the dragon had begun an assault against individual believers.

Sources: 3

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 – Waging War

10:3 We are human, but we don’t wage war with human plans and methods. In this verse the Greek word *sarx*, commonly translated “flesh,” is translated here as “human plans and methods.” With this word, Paul was clearly contrasting human standards with God’s standards.

Paul freely admitted that he was human. Paul lived in a human body that was susceptible to all kinds of difficulties, oversights, and weaknesses. Yet he refused to admit that he waged spiritual war with human plans and methods. As he would do in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul equated the Christian life to a war. This war

isn't "against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12 NIV). The Christian life is a spiritual battle against spiritual forces aligned against Christ. Fighting this spiritual battle with weapons of the world—with physical strength, worldly strategies, and material wealth—would be foolish. A spiritual battle requires spiritual weapons that can only come from God.

10:4–5 We use God's mighty weapons, not mere worldly weapons, to knock down the Devil's strongholds. With these weapons we break down every proud argument that keeps people from knowing God. With these weapons we conquer their rebellious ideas, and we teach them to obey Christ. According to Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, God's mighty weapons are faith, truth, righteousness, the gospel message, and the Word of God. The Holy Spirit equips Christians for the struggle, providing the weapons they need (see 6:6; Ephesians 6:10–20).

Worldly weapons—wealth, fame, and political might—may wield some power on this earth, but they are useless in spiritual battles. Trickery and deception may be effective in dealing with other people, but only truth will achieve success in the spiritual realm. Cynicism may protect a person from betrayal, but only faith in God will empower a believer in his or her spiritual struggles. A willingness to flout conventional morality might gain someone a following in this world, but only persistently following God's righteous ways will ensure victory in the spiritual realm.

Paul didn't consider the mighty Roman armies and the extraordinary affluence of the Roman emperor as the true strongholds of evil (see Proverbs 21:22 for an allusion to strongholds). Instead, he saw the strongholds of evil as being proud arguments against Christianity, and rebellious ideas. The world of ideas is the real battleground for God and the Devil. In Greek, the words for "proud argument" connote logic or reasoning that attempts to divert people from the gospel. Rebellious ideas in Greek is "high things raised up." The wording recalls the story of Babel, where people attempted to build a high tower to celebrate their own greatness (Genesis 11:1–9). Paul described these "high things" as being raised up "against the knowledge of God" (NRSV). Paul wasn't referring to a tall building here, but to every complex theory or philosophy that blocks people from knowing the truth about God and worshiping him. These false philosophies that divert glory from God and hide the truth are the Devil's strongholds. Just as an army would attack a fortress, so Christians must take apart and defeat these false and evil arguments.

In Corinth, where advances in Greek philosophy were held in high esteem, the believers were tempted to evaluate the gospel with the various tools of Greek philosophy. In an earlier letter, Paul had already told the Corinthians that the gospel would appear as foolishness to those who saw the world through the lenses of secular Greek philosophy (see 1 Corinthians 1:22). Paul had experienced this himself. When he had presented the gospel to the philosophers who gathered in Athens, they had responded with insults and taunts (see Acts 17:32). To these philosophers, the gospel was pure folly.

GOD'S WAR

Like Paul, we are merely weak humans, but we don't need to use human plans and methods to win our battles. God's mighty weapons are available to us as we fight against Satan's "strongholds" (10:4). The Christian must choose whose methods to use, God's or the world's. Paul assures us that God's mighty weapons—prayer, faith, hope, love, God's Word, the Holy Spirit—are powerful and effective (see Ephesians 6:13–18)! These weapons

can break down the proud human arguments against God and the walls that Satan builds to keep people from finding God. When dealing with the pride that keeps people from a relationship with Christ, you may be tempted to use human weapons and methods. But only God can break down these barriers.

Sources: 4

The World has Blinders on

Corinthians 4:1–18/ SATAN BLINDS, BUT GOD GIVES LIGHT

Paul was under attack at Corinth. His authority and honesty were being questioned. Charges of duplicity were circulating in the church. Paul was facing a church in revolt.

How did Paul handle opposition? At every step, he deflected criticisms of his abilities. He simply refused to defend himself. He even submitted to his opponents a list of his weaknesses and the trials he had endured. Why did Paul do this? He knew that this list would focus the Corinthians on what was important: God's glorious plan of salvation. God had commissioned Paul to tell Jews and Gentiles alike the Good News. He was sent to minister to them. Paul's apostolic authority was mercifully given to him by Jesus. Paul was hoping that the Corinthians would recognize his God-given authority. Listing his own abilities, accomplishments, and credentials and defending himself would encourage the Corinthians to evaluate him and other preachers in the same way. By responding to criticism this way, Paul was encouraging the Corinthians to evaluate all preachers in the light of the truths of God's Word.

One way to handle conflict in the church is to keep bringing the church back to the truth that God has called all believers to work together for the cause of Christ. There will be disagreements and differences in the church. Personalities will conflict. People will have different agendas. In the end, however, believers must recommit to their fundamental purpose for gathering together: to further Christ's kingdom.

4:1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. With grand language and persuasive analogies in the last chapter, Paul painted an appealing picture of what it means to be a Christian minister. This chapter comes down to reality. What does all this mean for everyday life? How does God's plan of salvation change anything?

First of all, it imparts courage to not lose heart. The Greek for this phrase can mean anything from not becoming discouraged to not acting like a coward. In other words, the glorious plan of God gave Paul hope and courage to face his day with great confidence in God (see 3:4, 12; 5:6–8).

Paul underscored, again, that his confidence was not in his own abilities (see 1:12; 3:4–6, 12). Instead, he was a minister of the gospel only because of the mercy of God. Before his conversion, Paul had hunted down believers, vowing to imprison them and destroy the budding church. Despite Paul's anger and hatred of Christians, God showed him mercy (Ephesians 2:4; Titus 3:5). Even though Paul was a self-proclaimed enemy of Jesus, God was patient with him. Christ himself stopped Paul on the road to Damascus, rescuing him from the path that leads to eternal death. Christ also commissioned him to preach the gospel (Acts 9:1–19). Paul deserved none of this, and he knew it (see 1 Timothy 1:12–16). Only God's kindness allowed him to serve.

4:2 We reject all shameful and underhanded methods. Earlier, Paul had spoken of his opponents as “hucksters ... who preach just to make money” (2:17 NLT). This verse contrasts the way Paul preached with the methods of some of the traveling preachers who had come to Corinth. These preachers had sought a platform on which to speak and ask for monetary support. Most likely, these were the ones who had been leading the attack on Paul’s travel plans (1:23–24), honesty (1:12), and credentials (3:1–3). This verse (as well as 1:12 and 12:16) answered Paul’s opponents’ accusation that he had somehow tried to mislead the Corinthians.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul categorically denied using any dubious techniques in his preaching. He and his fellow evangelists had rejected all shameful and underhanded methods. This expression denotes methods, motives, and actions that are shrouded in secrecy because they are intrinsically scandalous. The implication is that some of the preachers who had visited Corinth had greedy motives. Paul could perceive their hidden motives because of the havoc and confusion these men were causing in Corinth.

We do not try to trick anyone, and we do not distort the word of God. One of the telltale signs of the impure motives of these preachers was the way they handled God’s Word. Instead of a straightforward presentation of the truths of the gospel, they used tricks to captivate their audience. In so doing, they were twisting God’s Word.

The Greek phrase translated “trick” (see 11:3, where the same Greek phrase is used) literally means “to walk in ways that are capable of anything.” In other words, these teachers would do anything to get what they wanted. They would even distort the word of God for their own benefit. The Greek word translated “distort” was commonly used for tampering with merchandise in order to make it more profitable. Some merchants of the first century would cheat their customers by diluting wine or changing the accuracy of scales. In Ephesians 4:14, Paul wrote of false teachers as cheating gamblers who loaded the dice to trick people. The false teachers who had visited Corinth were diluting God’s Word or twisting it to serve their own selfish purposes.

We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know that. Paul had rejected such deceptive and cunning ways when he preached to the Corinthians. He had “walked” by faith instead of placing his trust in the ingenious, deceptive ways of the world (see 5:7). In other words, Paul always reminded himself of the spiritual realities that were behind his ministry. When he preached the truths of God’s Word, he reminded himself that he was preaching it before God. He stood in the presence of God. The Lord God, the One who knows all secrets, could look into Paul’s heart and discern his motives. Because God was always watching him, Paul was careful to preach for the right reasons. He consciously submitted his motivations to God’s scrutiny, so that no shameful act or motive could disqualify him as a minister. Paul opened up his entire life and honestly told the Corinthians the truth. He hid nothing.

Because Paul’s preaching and motives had been called into question by the Corinthians, he pleaded with them to evaluate his behavior among them to see if he had been devious. Paul was confident that if they fairly judged him, he would be judged innocent of all of the charges against him.

TWISTERS

Paul condemned those who twist God’s Word. Preachers, teachers, and anyone else who talks about Jesus Christ must remember that they stand in God’s presence—he hears every word. Many Christian ministers and leaders twist Scripture in their attempt to motivate audiences. Others take Scripture out of context to promote

their own views. When you tell people about Christ, be careful not to distort the message to please your audience. Proclaim the truth of God's Word.

4:3–4 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. Paul took up the charge that his message was obscure or unclear—a charge he had repeatedly defended himself against in the first part of his letter (see 1:12; 3:12–18). In the previous section, Paul had explained at length that his gospel was a straightforward presentation of God's plan of salvation, while Moses' ministry concealed parts of God's plan in order to prepare the people for Jesus and his greater message (see 3:7–18).

Although the message Paul preached was a clear presentation of salvation, he admitted that the gospel would be veiled, or obscure, to some. He explained that there are two types of people—those who will receive eternal life and those who are perishing. Paul had already explained that the fragrance of his message would be the smell of death to those who were dying (2:15); this verse states that their understanding will be obscured (4:3). The gospel will confuse and confound them. In 1 Corinthians, Paul had already explained how the wisdom of God is foolishness to the wise of this world (1 Corinthians 1:18). The same idea is being expressed here. Those who stubbornly refuse to believe in Christ and insist on placing their trust in their own abilities and intellect will never understand the truth of the gospel.

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. Paul's description here of the way Satan blinds unbelievers is reminiscent of his conversion experience on the Damascus road. Although Paul could see perfectly well, he had been blinded to spiritual truth. Naively and zealously, he had persecuted the Christians, vowing to destroy them in any way possible. Unknowingly, Paul had been an instrument of Satan. In one magnificent moment, however, Christ had broken through Satan's deception and had revealed the truth to Paul. A glorious vision of Christ finally had opened Paul's eyes to the truth. Appropriately, Paul had been physically blinded for a while (Acts 9:1–18).

Why can't everyone understand the truth of the gospel? Out of his own experience, Paul answered this question. It is because the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers—and, at one time, had blinded him—to the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

The "god of this age" is a title for Satan, the great deceiver. This present world is in Satan's grasp. But Jesus' life and death began an all-out war on Satan. The church—the community of believers—is awaiting Jesus' victorious return, when Satan will finally be imprisoned and Jesus will reign forever (2 Thessalonians 1:7–10). In the meantime, however, Satan continues to try to trap believers in sin (1 Timothy 3:7). A Christian's refuge and defense is in the victor, Jesus. He will guard believers from the evil one (2 Thessalonians 3:3). Believers can be certain of Jesus' protection by reading God's Word and praying for his protection (Ephesians 6:17–18). Then they will be able to feel safe from the attacks and deceptions of their spiritual enemies.

Instead of being blinded by Satan like unbelievers are, believers recognize that Jesus is the exact visible representation of God, the image of God (see also Colossians 1:15). God the Father as spirit is invisible (1 Timothy 6:16). God's Son, however, is God's visible expression. Jesus not only reflects the Father, but, as God, he reveals God to us (John 1:18; 14:9; Hebrews 1:1–2). Christ's glory expresses divine glory. Jesus is not a copy but the very embodiment of God's nature. He is "the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being" (Hebrews 1:3 NRSV). To know Jesus is to know God (see John 10:30; Philippians 2:6).

BLINDED

The gospel is open and revealed to everyone except those who refuse to believe. Satan is “the god of this age.” His work is to deceive, and he has blinded those who don’t believe in Christ (see 11:14–15). The allure of money, power, and pleasure blinds people to the light of Christ’s gospel. Those who reject Christ and prefer their own pursuits have unknowingly made Satan their god. Do you know someone Satan has blinded? Pray that the light of Christ will penetrate their darkened minds.

Sources: 5

Preaching Another Gospel

Galatians 1:6–9

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

Paul is not annoyed. He is alarmed.

The Galatian churches had received the real gospel: God called them by the grace of Christ. They were turning from a Person, not only from an idea. “Deserting the one who called you” means they were walking away from Jesus Himself. A different gospel always does that. It does not usually start by denying Christ out loud. It adds something, subtracts something, or confuses something until grace is no longer grace.

Then Paul says the hard sentence: that other message “is really no gospel at all.” Good news with extra chains is not good news. If you must add circumcision, extra rules, secret knowledge, or your own performance to be accepted by God, you no longer have the gospel. You have a religious system wearing Jesus’ name.

He names the method: confusion. “Some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.” That fits the series. Satan does not only roar. He muddies. He mixes just enough truth with a lie that tired believers cannot tell the difference. The early church faced this immediately. Judaizers did not say, “Abandon Jesus.” They said, “Jesus, plus the law.” That is a perversion: the same word turned the wrong way.

Verses 8–9 are a fence around the flock. Paul puts even himself under it. “Even if we or an angel from heaven...” No title, no vision, no personality, no spiritual experience outranks the gospel they already received. If the messenger is impressive and the message is different, the message is still cursed. Paul says it twice so no one can soften it.

That is how the first churches learned to fight. They did not measure teaching by how sincere it sounded. They measured it by whether it left people with the grace of Christ or sent them back to themselves.

For Targeted, this passage is the inside attack. Revelation 12 shows the dragon thrown down in wrath. Galatians 1 shows one of his favorite earthly tactics: get Christians to desert the One who called them by offering them another gospel that is no gospel at all.

Paul usually opens a letter with thanks. Not here. He skips the compliment and goes straight to shock: “I am astonished...” The problem was not only that they were drifting. It was how quickly they were drifting. To turn from the gospel is never a small course correction. Guzik notes that they were not merely changing ideas. They were turning away from a Person—“Him who called you by the grace of Christ”—and toward a false message. Leave the true gospel and you leave Jesus. Leave grace and you are not moving closer to God. You are moving away from Him.

The Life Application notes press the same point into daily life. These believers had heard the real good news: God saves by the grace of Christ, not by religious performance. Then teachers arrived who said, in effect, “Faith in Jesus is good—but not enough. Keep the Jewish law. Be circumcised. Add the extra requirements.” That is “Jesus plus.” And “Jesus plus” is how a church deserts Christ while still using His name.

Paul immediately corrects himself in verse 7. He will not even grant this message the dignity of being “another gospel.” Guzik lists three facts packed into that verse:

1. It is **illegitimate**. There is not a second saving gospel sitting beside Paul’s, as if both were valid options.
2. It is **trouble**. The teachers did not advertise confusion. They brought it. False gospels never “just appear.” People carry them, often with sincerity and charm.
3. It is a **perversion**. They did not invent a new god. They used familiar Christian words and then twisted them. That is what makes the lie so effective.

“Gospel” means good news. This was not another version of good news. It was bad news dressed up as improvement. The Life Application emphasis is the same: there is only one way to be saved. Add human effort to the finished work of Christ and you have not strengthened the gospel. You have emptied it. Grace that must be earned is no longer grace.

Why would anyone want to pervert the gospel of Christ? Guzik is blunt: the true gospel offends us.

- It offends our pride: you cannot save yourself.
- It offends our wisdom: God saves through a crucified Messiah.
- It offends our sense of control: a dead man rose, and we must believe what we did not invent.

So people sand the edges off. They keep Jesus and add a ladder. The early church’s ladder was the Law of Moses. Ours may be morality, politics, spiritual experience, extra rules, or “I go to church and do my devotions, so I’m good.” Different rungs. Same desertion.

Verses 8–9 are the fence around the flock. Paul puts even himself under the curse: “even if we or an angel from heaven...” No apostle, no vision, no personality, no supernatural appearance outranks the gospel they already received. He says it twice so no one can soften it. Accursed (anathema) is covenant-curse language. Paul is not having a tantrum. Guzik asks the right question: Where is Paul’s love? His love is for souls heading toward a rescue ship that cannot float. A false gospel cannot save. Warning people away from it is mercy, not meanness.

The Life Application takeaway is pastoral and sharp. Do not judge a message by the speaker’s title, warmth, or claimed encounter with God. Test the content. If it moves trust from Christ’s finished work onto your performance, it is not another gospel. It is no gospel at all. The Galatians show how fast that can happen. The

church in every age is still a living target for the same tactic: confuse the good news until Jesus is no longer enough.

Sources: 6-10

Resources: (1) Rev. Brad Standfest, (2) Logos Bible Commentaries (3) Barton, Bruce B. 2000. Revelation. Edited by Grant R. Osborne. Life Application Bible Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. (4) Barton, Bruce B., and Grant R. Osborne. 1999. 1 & 2 Corinthians. Life Application Bible Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House. (5) Barton, Bruce B., and Grant R. Osborne. 1999. 1 & 2 Corinthians. Life Application Bible Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House. (6) David Guzik, “Galatians 1 – Challenging a Different Gospel,” Enduring Word Bible Commentary, (7) Life Application Study Bible notes on Galatians 1:6–9 (Tyndale / Zondervan). (8) Bruce B. Barton et al., Life Application New Testament Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House), on Galatians 1:6–9. (9) J. B. Lightfoot, cited in Guzik on Galatians 1:6, regarding Paul’s unique omission of a thanksgiving. (10) Martin Luther, cited in Guzik on Galatians 1:7, on the devil’s disguise of error.

Sermon Notes:

Happy Labor Day weekend to everyone... I mean, I can’t believe it’s already Labor Day weekend. To all you campers out there—blessings to you. Have a great time. Drop in the comments where you’re watching from.

Let me share with you the AVC Connections... YouTube, App, Facebook and the website.

Let’s pray.

I titled today’s sermon “Targeted.”

Christians... whether we want to admit it or not, we are being targeted.

I’m not talking about by a person or a group of people. I’m talking about by Satan and his demonic hosts. Let me give you a bit of history to what has been labeled the Cosmic War in Heaven—Revelation 12.

Here’s the story of that great war in heaven:

- Satan and his demons rebel against God in heaven.
- Michael the archangel of heaven fights against them.
- Satan and his demons lose the battle because they are not powerful enough and get cast out of heaven.
- The dragon, who is Satan, tries to kill God’s Messiah, Jesus, but fails.

Let’s read about this cosmic war that occurred.

Revelation 12:7-17

Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.”

When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach. Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Key words here:

- Satan leads the “whole world astray” (v. 9).
- He has been “hurled to the earth.”
- Satan has waged war against the people who hold to the testimony of Jesus (v. 17).

Look... I want to make something perfectly clear:

I am not sharing this to incite fear in your lives, nor is this a scare tactic. This is real and raw truth! You want to know what you and your families are fighting against? It’s not the boogie man!

As Christians we need to play offense and defense... and be on our game.

We cannot have an attitude of: “I go to church... I do daily devotions... I’m good.”

Christians, we must evaluate our lives. We must get to the core issues.

- What are you listening to?
- What are your eyes watching and seeing?
- What filters do you have in place to protect yourselves?

The fact is... Satan does not care how he sucks you into his darkness.

Friends... we must learn how to fight. Scripture says this: 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (Align our minds, hearts, and eyes with Christ.)

In this series we are going to discuss the divine weapons from Christ that we can use in the warfare we are in.

When we start watching and looking at this world... it’s like watching a sci-fi horror film.

(YouTube highlight)

- Zombie land across America and multiple different countries.
- This can’t be real... It is!!

Based on Scripture I am convinced Satan uses these three tactics to keep people from Jesus:

Satan's Tactics

- Distracts and confuses people from meeting Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:3; Galatians 1:7)
- Steals people from Jesus (John 10:10; Matthew 13:19; Luke 22:3-4)
- Puts people's lives in bondage (Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38; 2 Timothy 2:26)

Let's read a few of these Scriptures from Satan's tactics.

2 Corinthians 4:4

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

1 Timothy 4:1

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

So... is this all supposed to scare us? Are we supposed to lock the doors of our homes and never come out?

No—that's what Satan wants.

Philippians 4:6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

I want to conclude today by reading a closing passage that explains the targeting we are experiencing.

By the way—I put some spiritual applications of protection in the app.

Let's read in closing.

Galatians 1:6-9

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

Amen.

Spiritual Applications of Protection

Satan wants to get into your life by any means.

- Install filters on your smart gadgets to protect your eyes.
- Pray Psalm 91 over your life daily (or pick a different passage). Try to do this before the Work and before daily life begins.

If you do this for one week straight, you will probably have Psalm 91 memorized. It will be in your mind, and you can go after it whenever you need it.

- Put power passages in your phone or commit them to memory—like 1 John 3:8b:

“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”

Recite this when you feel spiritual attacks or temptations coming on. It will drive the enemy away.

- Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7). Say this out loud into the atmosphere. “Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”
 - Play praise and worship music. Praise drives Satan and his demons away.
 - Refrain from toxic movies, music, and video games.
-

Devotional Questions:

1. Read Revelation 12:7–12

What does this passage say happened in heaven, and what does it say Satan does after he is hurled to the earth? Why does verse 12 say he is filled with wrath?

2. Read Revelation 12:11, 17

How did believers overcome the dragon, and whom does he now wage war against? What does “the word of their testimony” look like in your life today- right now (your testimony)?

3. Read 2 Corinthians 10:3–5

According to this text, what is different about the church’s weapons, and what are those weapons meant to demolish? Which thought in your life right now most needs to be “taken captive” and made obedient to Christ?

4. Read Galatians 1:6–9

Paul says the Galatians were deserting “the one who called you” and turning to “a different gospel.” In your own words, what makes a message “no gospel at all”? Where are you tempted to add something to God’s Word?

5. Read 2 Corinthians 4:4 and 11:3

How does Satan keep people from seeing Christ, and how does he lead believers astray? What are you listening to or watching that could slowly move your mind away from “sincere and pure devotion to Christ”?

6. Read John 10:10 and Matthew 13:19

Jesus says the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy, and that the evil one snatches the word from the heart. Where do you see that “stealing” in your home, your habits, or your faith right now?

7. Read Philippians 4:6–7 and Ephesians 6:10–13

This sermon is not meant to lock you in the house in fear. What does God tell you to do instead of anxiety, and what does He promise will guard you? What is one specific way you will play offense and defense this week—for your own soul and for your family?