

Systematic Theology: Satan

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We're going to continue our study of systematic theology. We're going through from the Bible to eschatology over time and last week we opened a discussion on the spirit world. We considered good angels last time and tonight and next week, we're going to turn our attention to Satan and demons.

And I had a most unfortunate encounter with the power of darkness as I was preparing this message. A true story. A very true story. I usually study and prepare at home. On Friday this past week, I was here doing my work preparing, and sometimes I like to come into this auditorium when it's empty to stand at my pulpit and just to kind of remember and think about things and contemplate ministry when the room is empty. It's something that I like to do. Well, on Friday I was preparing and reading and studying on Satan and on demons so I came in here for a little break with these things of study fresh on my mind, and as I was walking into the auditorium and reaching to turn on the light switch, the phone rang and it was our friend, D. C. Washington on the phone. So I tried to get the light and answer the phone at the same time. It didn't work out to do that and so to talk to my friend D. C., I wanted to walk up to my favorite spot, I was going to set my phone here and talk to him while I stood at my pulpit but I did not get the light turned on and so what happened was this. You've probably never been in this room when the lights are not on but it is very very dark, but I know my way around, right? I know my way around by pulpit and so as I was walking up these steps in the dark talking to D. C. Washington, I tripped over this monitor and fell flat on my face and I was bleeding and I was a little bit disoriented and so I just hung up on D. C., you know, straighten things out with him later. Here I was, I was in the middle of this study on Satan and demons and this really weird accident, this really weird stumble happens and the question is: is this a result of Satanic opposition to what I'm about to preach? Is Satan working to frustrate my efforts? Well, the way that you answer that question will be informed a bit by what we talk about tonight but my encounter with the power of darkness had nothing to do with anything spiritual whatsoever. If I had simply turned on the light, I would not have tripped and so when I say the power of darkness, I know that you were expecting something different with the way that I introduced it, but I simply tripped because I was foolishly walking in the dark and had not taken time to turn on the lights.

Now there is actually, believe it or not, a very important principle embedded in this. What is it that we look for when we talk about Satan and demons and what is the kind of

opposition that they provide to us? Should we attribute simple stumbles to the work of a demon? Or should we just not get so superstitious and just realize that what happened there was a foolish act of carelessness that could have happened to anybody that was trying to climb up stairs in the dark, not seeing a black monitor in the dark. By the way, I want some reflective tape on these things in the future to protect me. You see, we need to understand because there are those who would make a big deal out of what I had been studying and the fact that in the middle of my studies I tripped and I got hurt and all of that, but that's silliness. It's foolishness and that is not the way that Scripture would teach us and condition us to think about the opposition that we face as we walk with Christ in the midst of opposition from the powers of darkness.

So we want to think about this with a sober spirit and we want to think about this not from being superstitious and attributing every little thing to the devil, but rather to see what Scripture says about the reality of the danger that Satan and his demons present against us. If we trivialize it to attributing little trips to Satan, we're really going to underestimate the true threat that Satan is to believers and to the Church of Christ. So we don't want to do that and at the end of the message, I think you'll see why I so quickly attribute my little stumble to my own foolishness and not to any supernatural spiritual event that took place. We need to deal with this earnestly.

Systematic theology. Satan. Who is Satan? Let's answer that question tonight and deal with it in a way that leads us to think rightly about him. Satan is an evil spirit who has some manner of access to God, would be an easy way to start, a starting point, and I invite you to turn to the book of Job 1 where we find Satan introduced to us in the account of the righteous man, Job. In Job 1:6 it says,

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. 7 The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." 8 The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." 9 Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face." 12 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

And you know what happens after that. Job is afflicted. Job's family is killed in calamities and he loses his fortune all at the hands of Satan. And I read that passage by way of introduction simply to acquaint us with this thought: that Satan is a personal evil being. He's not simply a power, a force of evil, an impersonal force of evil. You see him in this passage engaging God in conversation. He has knowledge and an awareness of what is

happening around him. He points out Job and speaks about Job. So he is an intelligent being, not simply a force as if he were somehow the evil equivalent of gravity. He is a real spiritual being who is shown as having some manner of access to the presence of God.

Now, this is all still by way of introduction. Based on passages like Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, many if not most Bible teachers, conservative ones, believe that Satan fell from his position as a good angel through the sin of pride and wanting to be like God, and he misappropriated his angelic power that had been given to him in creation, turned it for evil purposes and now is the adversary of God and the people of God with great power to inflict harm and deception upon the world. Our goal tonight is not to speculate on the manner of Satan's ways with God in the presence of God, what we want to do tonight is more narrow, to understand his threat to us and how to be protected against it and to have a sober consideration of things.

Part of the reason that I introduced this message like I did and use a play on words on the power of darkness, literal physical darkness which was my problem as opposed to the spiritual prince of darkness, referring to Satan, and making a sharp distinction between the two. I had a conversation with a friend a while back, not anyone that's anywhere in this area, no one that any of you would know except perhaps in my family, but going through a difficult time in life and this friend told me that Satan was trying to discourage her, tell her about the future outcome of a disease that she was facing. She felt like she was fighting Satan in the midst of her disease. That's a really sad way to think about spiritual life and the thought was, "Satan told me that this was going to happen to me." Well, beloved, the truth of the matter is and I didn't say this to her, it was not nearly appropriate for me to do it, but that's just superstition. That's attributing your internal carnal fears to a spiritual being that we really should have nothing to do with that. We should not think that way. We should not be so superstitious. We should not attribute thoughts in our mind or feelings in our heart as coming from Satan or from God, either one. Just say, "The thought occurred to me. I was thinking about this," without trying to attribute in a way that you could never verify and you could never do objectively to say that this thought originated with Satan, or that this thought originated with God. They are both equally wrong ways to think and talk and we plan to address that in future weeks on the God side. We want to understand the truth about Satan and to separate fact from fiction, superstition from truth, so that we could walk in truth and walk in confidence and walk, most importantly, according to the revealed way in the revealed word of God. That's what matters and we live in an environment in a spiritually flabby time in the church today where doctrine is diminished and people freely attribute the impulses of their mind as being, "God spoke to me," or if it's a negative thought, "Satan spoke to me." We need to get out of that mindset. That's dangerous quicksand to fall into and can only divert your attention from the word of God and divert yourself from Christ to think that these spirits are speaking directly to you. That is something that we need to address seriously and we start here tonight.

So what can we say about Satan? Well, the name Satan, Satan goes by a number of different names in the Bible. The name Satan appears over 50 times in the Old and New

Testament, and that's a term that means adversary. Satan as an adversary. Satan, meaning an enemy. The term devil is used as an equivalent term that means that Satan is an accuser of the people of God. We see him accusing Job of selfish motives in serving God in the passage that we just read. This evil being is also called the deceiver, if you look at Revelation 12. We'll probably circle around to this text a time or two this evening. Revelation 12:9 says,

9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan [both names there being used], who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

There you see the name devil, the name Satan, and that which is attributed to him is deception. So this gives us an introduction, the names that he is called by gives us an introduction to who he is and here's what I would have you see and have you understand: is that Satan is a real, a personal, a deceptive and an evil threat to the well-being of the people of God and Scripture tells us to be aware of him, to understand him, and to take guard against him.

So what we want to do is we want to break this into four points here this evening that we'll go through rather quickly and to some extent, using his names as an outline for our message here this evening. Number 1 is that Satan is an adversary. Satan is an adversary. He is an enemy. And in popular literature, popular mindset, you know, we think of Satan as being a little red guy in pajamas and a pointy tail, and we have this trivialized image of him as if he were some kind of cartoon character that was perhaps basically harmless in the end. And here's the thing: when you think about Satan in those cartoon image pictures, when you want to attribute a stumble to the devil, when you want to attribute a fear about the future as something that Satan has directly inspired in your mind, the common thread to all of this is diminishing, marginalizing and making him someone small and on your level. That is not the way that we should think about Satan at all. Satan is a great and powerful enemy. He has supernatural power. He has much at his disposal to cause us harm and so we should think about him truly in accordance with revelation and not simply attribute our earthly events in our day to day things and trivialize it down to a point that misses the overall threat that Satan is to us and to the people of God.

Satan is an adversary which means that he seeks to lead us astray. He seeks to inflict harm, to disparage the name of God and to bring harm to the people of God, and his evil plays out in many different ways. And as we start to go through this, what I want you to see and what I want you to appropriate is this, having introduced it with silly examples that are not the way that we should think about this whole matter and topic, to compare it with the actual threat, the actual things that Scripture attributes to him and to realize that we are in a supernatural realm, not something that can be explained through earthly circumstances. Think about it, in Genesis 3 for example, what did Satan do as the serpent? He tempted Eve and mankind fell into sin and cast our entire race into sin. From a position of a perfect environment and an innocent soul, Satan tempted men and mankind fell into sin and judgment and chaos has been the result ever since. This is

serious. This is weighty. This is a reflection of the power of Satan and what he is able to do as measured by the consequences of the temptation that he brought Eve and Adam following her into.

What else can we say about him? Well, he blinds men to Gospel truth. Look at 2 Corinthians 4 with me. 2 Corinthians 4 and we'll look at verse 3 to begin with. 2 Corinthians 4:3, the Apostle Paul says,

3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Satan as an adversary of the souls of men blinds them, hardens them, confuses them so that the simple truth of the Gospel becomes impenetrable to their minds, something that they cannot understand. So that here they are in judgment, the Gospel is presented to them which could save their souls and Scripture says Satan has blinded them so that they cannot see and understand. This is of eternal consequence.

This is of great significance and reminds us of another passage in 2 Timothy. You don't need to turn there for the sake of time. I'll simply read it. In 2 Timothy 2 beginning in verse 24 it says,

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

Scripture telling us that Satan holds men captive, blinding their minds, blinding their eyes and holding them captive to be instruments of his will. This is far more significant than some kind of earthly event that takes place, this is speaking about large swathes of humanity under the domination, under the blinding effect of an evil wicked being that is bent on their destruction to pull them ultimately into hell with himself in the end.

This is not to be trivialized. And might I add that as a pastoral matter for all of us with loved ones who resist the Gospel, who just seem to refuse to get it, who cannot get it and we wonder about them, we get a little bit frustrated or irritated with them even perhaps, beloved, remember as you interact with those that are lost and hostile to the Gospel, even foolishly and stubbornly so, remember what Scripture ascribes as part of the contributing factor of their condition, that there is a supernatural wicked foe that has blinded their eyes, that is keeping men from understanding the Gospel, and let that inform you and drive you to a sense of compassion, a sense of prayer, realizing that they are under a supernatural bondage that man and you in particular cannot break. We need help from above if people are going to have their eyes opened and receive Christ because Satan is a

supernatural adversary to their souls and in our humanity we don't have the power to break that. The only thing that pierces that veil, the only thing that brings light to that darkness is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So it doesn't matter if you have a great human intellect, they are under bondage of a greater supernatural power that they are blind and unaware of even.

Well, not only that, Satan in addition to leading man into sin in Genesis 3, blinding men to Gospel truth, Scripture attributes him and calls him the ruler of the demons in Matthew 12:24. Satan rules over a realm of other wicked spirits, other lesser wicked spirits, that oppose God and oppose man as well. So in Matthew 25, if you want to turn over there, Matthew 25:41, and these surveys and these one time messages on things, we can never do good justice to the topic. We're just trying to introduce matters. In Matthew 25:41, Jesus is speaking about the judgment day to come and he says,

41 "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared [here it is] for the devil and his angels';

The wicked spirits are called his angels, that they belong to Satan as being under his authority, under his command. Revelation 12 gives a similar statement. We won't take time to look at it for now but, beloved, power is increased when there are people under your authority. I like to make this comparison when we think about Satan as a ruler over demons. We all have some measure of acquaintance with Mafia bosses and crime syndicates. The individual men who rule these syndicates are powerful in and of themselves but their power is exponentially multiplied because they have their own henchmen under their authority who carry out their directions, who do what they tell them to do. So they are able to multiply their wicked intentions because they have men under their authority who do what they tell them to do. Well, so it is with Satan. A supernatural being under his own right with other lesser supernatural beings under his control that he sends out to do his bidding, and so his power is greatly multiplied. We will see more of this next week when we consider demons as an individual topic. But all of this simply to say Satan is an adversary and he is a strong and supernatural adversary that going to issues of eternal truth, going to issues that deal with the eternal salvation of men's souls, and so we should think about his opposition and we should think about him as an adversary in the realm of spiritual truth and Gospel proclamation and to realize that that is where our battle lies with him.

So Satan is an adversary. Point 2 here this evening: we could say that Satan is a deceiver. He is a deceiver. He is a liar. Jesus said in John 8:44, I'll just read it for you. John 8:44, speaking to the Jews he said to them,

44 "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

So at the very core of the nature of the very character of Satan is deception and lies and murder. By definition, he is a liar. And what does he do from that power of deception? Beloved, you must understand it in the cosmic conflict of the proclamation of the Gospel and understand it in that realm. 1 Timothy 4 says this in verses 1 and 2,

1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,

He goes on and describes it. It sounds like he's describing the Catholic church in verse 3,

3 men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.

What does Satan do? He cultivates false systems of religion, deception that lead men into a works-based approach to trying to find favor with God; a works-based approach that men thinking under the deceiving influence of Satan that they are pleasing and serving God with what they do, not realizing that they are actually rejecting the righteousness of God revealed in Christ and walking further down the descending steps that lead to doom, all the while thinking that they are working themselves up and walking up the steps that lead them to heaven. That's how great the deception is that Satan perpetrates through false doctrine.

Turn over to 2 Corinthians 11, if you would. 2 Corinthians 11. The Apostle Paul says in verse 13, 2 Corinthians 11:13 talking about the false teachers of his day, those who had set themselves in opposition to his ministry. He said,

13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

So again we see Scripture attributing this great supernatural power of deception to Satan, so much so that he can make himself appear as an angel of light, an emissary, a representative of truth, all the while being a wolf, as it were, in sheep's clothing; all the while not being at all what he appears to be.

And here's the point: because Satan is a deceiver, because men are lost in darkness, they are dead in trespasses and sins, they are under the wrath of God, here's what we should think and say about this, the only light in this realm, the only truth that counters this deception is the word of God. You can't go by visions that you think you've seen to be any kind of reliable source of truth and guidance because there is absolutely no way for anyone who thinks that they are seeing an angel to not know that it's a demon in disguise.

In fact, Scripture tells us as we saw last time in Hebrews 13, that the true ministry of angels is something that happens and we're not aware of it. The immediate presupposition, the immediate assumption that someone should make if they think they are seeing an angel is saying, "I'm in the realm of demons here," because Satan disguises himself in that way. And here's my point for this evening and a point that really kind of informs the whole nature of why we do what we do at Truth Community Church: Satan is a supernatural deceiver who is an enemy to our souls who would find nothing but great delight in seeing us led astray, led into destruction, to see people even under the teaching of God's word ending up in hell and destroyed forever. That's his aim. He is a ruthless enemy of men.

And here's the point in saying all of that: when you recognize that, you should immediately see something really critical, that biblically illiterate people, people who are theologically careless, are utterly defenseless. The defense against Satan is found in the truth of the word of God, the 66 books of the Bible, and that is why it is so important for you to individually personally be a reader and a student of God's word. That's why I'm so delighted that you are here this evening under the sound of God's word because, beloved, it is when we gather together as the people of God under the teaching of the word of God, the true teaching of the word of God, whoever is doing it, this is our place of safety; this is where we build up our fortress; this is where we build up the defenses that guard us and guide us against the relentless assaults of the enemy of our soul. People who are careless and thoughtless about such things and are indifferent to the word of God and live their life without thought of the word of God, they are in the trap of Satan because it is only the word of God that can open their eyes to lead them out of it. Satan is a deceiver. Satan is a liar. And when you add to that, when you add to the fact what Scripture says about your own heart, that your own heart is deceitful and desperately wicked above all else, Jeremiah 17:9, you should start to have a great appreciation that God has given us his word and also have a great sense of earnestness and desire for us to say, "I need this word to protect me because there is a wicked realm that I cannot see and that I cannot fight on my own." That's a true understanding of the doctrine of Satan which pushes you to the word of God. 1 John 5:19 says "that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one," a reference to Satan.

So let me circle back around. I'm kind of going in circles here tonight and that's okay. I want to keep making the same point again and again. We should think about Satan in the realm of philosophies and false doctrine and that this is where he is carrying out his wicked intentions; that it is through false teaching that deceives men and leads them into eternal destruction. This is where he plies his wickedness. This is where he deceives people. Or conversely, tempts people to minimize him or to even deny his existence. For you and I tonight, beloved, we should not think about the devil in this way, we should not think about the devil as the one who is tempting you to eat an extra piece of chocolate cake because he is far more sophisticated than that. That's not the realm of his opposition to us and when you trivialize it, you blind yourself, you diminish your perception of where the real battle lies.

I think I left you in 2 Corinthians, turn to 2 Corinthians 10. Paul is speaking about the nature of his ministry again and in verse 3 of 2 Corinthians 10, he says,

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

What kind of fortress is he talking about? Verse 5,

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

There is the realm in which Satan works, it is in the realm of speculations and philosophies and systems of thought and false religion that lead people away from the true knowledge of God. And what is our weapon in that battle? What is it that is our force to fight against it? Beloved, it is the systematic exposition of God's word that unfolds truth and brings the thoughts of God to bear on the hearts and consciences of men.

And at the risk of irritating friends with what I'm about to say, a ministry that is purely based on counseling people in their individual problems does not have that same impact. You need the teaching of the word of God, you need the doctrine of the word of God, not simply someone to help you get through another day. This is where, it is in the systematic teaching of God's word that we find that which destroys fortresses, satanic fortresses and systems of thought as God uses his word, uses the teaching and the proclamation of his word to expose error by its contrast with truth and to bring convictions into your heart that teach you to turn away from evil, to turn away from deception and to embrace truth so that you walk in obedience to it and you know what is real in accordance with what God has made known in his word. And it's only the teaching of the word of God that does that and we don't apologize in this era where maybe the teaching of the word of God is somewhat diminished and downplayed. We don't care about that because we have a little bit of a sense of what is at stake and what's at stake is far more important to us than the approval of men.

Now, Satan is an adversary, Satan is a deceiver. The opposition, the way that we repel that, the way that we counteract that, the way that we fight that, the way that you fight deception is with truth. "Thy word is truth. Sanctify them in the truth. Thy word is truth." Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1 and 2, he said, "I command you, I charge you to preach the word in the presence of God and Jesus Christ and the angels. Preach the word." It's because that's what's so serious, it's what's at stake. And we combat Satan, the adversary, the enemy of men, by proclaiming the friend of sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ to them, the one who is a true friend, to those that realize that they are lost in darkness, to realize here is the one, the eternal Son of God, crucified, buried, risen and ascended on high. He is the one who can deliver you from sin, forgive you of your sins, and deliver you, he alone, from the power of darkness. Satan is an adversary, we preach the friend of sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan is a deceiver, we teach the truth of the word of God

to combat it. Notice that we are not saying anything about binding Satan or anything like that. That's all just another realm of foolishness. We'll talk about that more next week. I don't want to step on my own toes.

Point 3 for tonight. For all that we've said, let's get to some good news here. Point 3: Satan is limited. Satan is limited. Despite his strength and cunning, the Bible gives us great hope and tells us all that we need to know. As we sang earlier in "A Mighty Fortress is Our God,"

"The Prince of Darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo! his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him."

So while we recognize that he has this supernatural power, beloved, we come back to what Scripture teaches us is true and what we have in Christ and what Christ has done for us and what Christ does for us and we realize that in Christ we are safe and that we are protected in him so that we should not have a craven fear of Satan but a healthy fear that guides us in our approach.

Let's talk about that here for just a moment. Satan is limited, first of all, in the reality that God restrains him. God restrains him. It is not like the true God and Satan are coequal forces battling out on a tough line of scrimmage and it's not really clear who is going to come out on top. That's not the picture of it at all. Satan operates only within the bounds which God has set for him. You saw that in the narrative that we read about Job earlier. Satan could not touch Job without the permission of God. God set limits and you see more of it in chapter 2 as well, set limits on what Satan could do and he could go no further.

Not only is he restrained by the active power and restraint of God, Satan is nothing like God, and I get great joy out of saying this to diminish this wicked spirit through the truth of the word of God. God is omnipotent, God is all-powerful and God is omnipresent, God is omniscient, Satan is none of those things. Satan even in the narrative in Job, God asked him, "Where have you been?" He said, "I've just been out and about roaming around the earth," going from one place to another, having to do that because he's not omnipresent like God is. He is in one place at one time, whatever that's like in the invisible spiritual realm. He is not omnipresent as God is. He does not have all power as God does and so he is under the restraint of God. He is, let's put it this way, for all of his supernatural power, we delight in making the statement that Satan is of an infinitely lower order than God himself is. God is uncreated, holy and majestic, eternal and Satan is none of those things.

So he is limited. Secondly, God restrains him, secondly, God will condemn him. The doom of Satan is sure as we sang earlier. Look over at Revelation 20:7. Scripture

describes a coming day where Satan will be bound and banished forever and in Revelation 20:7, his condemnation is described by the Apostle John.

7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations,

Again, see the deception and see the broad scope of his power.

which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. 9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 [Here it is] And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

God will cast Satan into hell and Satan will suffer torment forever and ever without relief. His torment will be eternal. That gives us the clearest indication of the limits that God has set upon Satan. Satan will be condemned. He is destined for judgment. He does not have an unfettered unrestrained realm of operation. God restrains him now, God will condemn him in the future. So while he is great and supernatural in power, his doom is sure and we take great comfort from that.

Fourth and final point: Satan and you. Satan and you. We need to take a little bit of time to think here and we'll expand on this a little bit more in our discussion of demons next week. We need to take some time to think here. Paul says to take heed in 2 Corinthians 2:11, he says to take heed,

11 so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

That's 2 Corinthians 2:11. So what should we draw from this? How should we think about this in terms of our own spiritual lives? Well, in simple terms, general terms, we should think along these lines with what we have said: Satan rules over an invisible demonic realm and a world system that tempts and deceives and destroys men. This is not a hyperventilating view of the world or an overreaction, this is just the pure clear teaching of Scripture that this is what Satan does and that the whole world lies in his power. So his agents of destruction, his means of destruction are sin and deception and false teaching because that is the entry way to take men's souls captive and to lead them away into judgment, as if he was leading away captives with chains, spiritual chains. What that means for you and me tonight, beloved, is that we should have a healthy fear of Satan and a healthy fear of those things which we know to be the instruments of his work: sin and false teaching and the spiritual world of mediums and Ouija boards and astrology and all of those things that lead us into a realm that God has forbidden us to enter. It means this, beloved: it means that you and I should not trifle with false teaching; we should not trifle

with the spiritual world because that is Satan's front line in the battle to destroy you. We respect in the sense that we recognize where the danger is and we say, "I need to stay away from that." That means that you and I and men in general should be very careful about who they allow to become their spiritual teachers. We want to be careful. We need to be discerning because when you enter into the realm of spiritual teaching, you're entering into the place where the battle takes place.

Now, with all of that said and kind of rounding third and coming home, heading toward home here, having said that and having a healthy respect and fear for Satan and his realm, beloved, here's the thing and this is equally important to say: you should not be paralyzed with fear in response to the things that we have heard tonight unless you realize you are a child of Satan and then you should come to Christ. But you need not be paralyzed with fear over these things because Scripture has told us how it is that we can successfully go through the battle, successfully resist, and we'll look at those things in a moment, but a brief moment of illustration will help you.

You know enough to stay away from the bad areas of town. You have a general idea of where crime goes down, where people are subject to assaults and robberies and all of those things and you say, "I'm just going to stay away from there, stay in the realm where it's safe." You know that on a physical level. You know enough not to go sticking knives into electrical outlets. You may not understand the power of electricity, you may not understand all of the realm and why that's such a danger and how all of that stuff works, but you know enough not to actively seek it out, not to stick a knife into an outlet and experience the awful shock of that. Those of you that need to do this, you know enough to lock your doors. You can keep evil out by simply locking your door. My point in all of those little earthly examples is that a little bit of common sense enables you to live without craven fear even though there are a lot of real threats right at your fingertips if you're not careful. Well, when it comes to Satan, Scripture teaches us, yes, the threat is real but so is the protection, and actually the means of protecting yourself are not complex.

Look over at the book of James 4, just after Hebrews and before 1 Peter. James 4, beginning in verse 6, let's say. It says,

6 [God] gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Scripture presents it in such a simple concept. You don't need the long books that used to be written by guys like Neil Anderson on how to fight spiritual warfare, Scripture says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

In like manner, turn one book to the right in your Bible, or scroll down on your device to 1 Peter 5. Peter also quotes the same Old Testament passage from Proverbs.

5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

Now look at what he says in verse 8. A lot of us are familiar with that verse 7 and we think about it rightly a lot, "casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you," but look where Peter goes immediately.

8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

He's an enemy. He's deceitful. Verse 9,

9 But resist him,

You have the ability to resist him already in the resources that Christ has given to you in your salvation.

firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

And here's the ultimate comfort in all of this. Here's the ultimate place where we repose our rest. Having stated the reality of Satan, the call to resist him, he gives you this comprehensive promise of the protection of your heavenly Father. Verse 10,

10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

Beloved, the call to action, the call to response when you've considered who Satan is and the power that he has, is simply this: recognize that you do not have the power to defeat him on your own; recognize that he is a very real threat; and yet at the same time, to realize that in the Lord Jesus Christ you are perfectly safe. 1 John 3 tells us that Christ came to destroy the works of the devil. Romans 8 tells us that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, including our most dangerous foe, Satan himself. Ephesians 6 says that you can resist the devil in the strength of the armor of God that he has already supplied to you.

So full provision has been made for you to withstand Satan, that is encouraging, that is strengthening, there is no need for fear, and yet it also gives you responsibility and to realize this, one final point of application, I guess: is to take the spiritual responsibility for your spiritual life for when temptation comes and to realize that Satan does not have the power to make you sin against your will. You have the power in Christ to resist the

temptations of the devil. You have the power in Christ to resist false teaching. Satan cannot inflict things on you and make you participate with him against your will. No biblically informed Christian should ever say what the comedian, Flip Wilson, used to say, "The devil made me do it," because the devil does not have the power to do that. Instead, you have the power to resist him in the power that has been given to you by the indwelling Spirit, the teaching of the Word of God, and a firm reliance on our Savior and the Captain of our salvation to lead us safely home.

Let's bow together in prayer. My friend, have you fled to Christ for refuge from Satan and from your sin? If you are not a Christian, oh my friend, I hope you realize that you are in the hands of the enemy who intends to inflict eternal destruction upon you. And so I would advise you if you are in that condition, to turn to Christ and to call out to him and to flee to him to save you not only from your sin but from the domination of Satan because Christ alone has the power to save you, to keep you, and he has the willingness to do that to the uttermost. So I invite you to Christ. For the rest of us,

Our Father, we thank you for our salvation in Christ, for our security in him, for the knowledge that we are safe from every foe to our souls. Our sins have been completely erased. We have been credited with a righteousness not our own that entitles us to approach you boldly with a sense of confident access knowing that one day we will be with you in heaven and that Christ himself is with us even to the end of the age. In light of the spiritual realities that we've looked at tonight, our Father, we realize that's no small blessing. That is a great great gift to have been delivered from the domain of Satan and to be brought into your kingdom where we have God as our Father instead of the devil, where we have a loving Savior over our souls rather than a deceitful enemy. O God, O God, how great our salvation is. And we have just peeked into the spiritual realm here this evening, but we've seen enough to know afresh that the salvation that we have in Christ is of infinite value. We thank you for it. We honor your name and we renew our sense of praise in you once again for the deliverance, for the salvation that is ours in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is in his name that we pray. Amen.

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