

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth One Verse at a Time*

Fundamental Attitudes for Spiritual Maturity, Part 2

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:8

Code: 60-49

We come again tonight in the study of the truth of God to 1 Peter chapter 5. To be honest with you, we're having a little bit of difficulty finishing 1 Peter because he keeps saying so much. It's not me, it's him. There is a richness that at the conclusion of this epistle that demands our careful attention.

I told you last time that beginning with verse 5 as he closes out this wonderful letter he stacks up the imperatives and he makes a rather long list of what I choose to call "Fundamental Attitudes for Spiritual Maturity." And so, from verse 5 through 14 Peter elucidates briefly but in wonderful richness those attitudes which are necessary for us to grow in Christ to effective maturity.

When the Scripture says, "As a man thinks in his heart so is he," it touches on the core of all spiritual life. For everything you do in your spiritual life is a product of how you think. Attitudes determine responses and behavior. And for a Christian then to grow toward maturity in Christ, for a Christian to be productive and effective he must be established in certain essential fundamental ways of thinking. And we've chosen to call these attitudes. If you can train your mind by the power of the Holy Spirit to certain thinking habits that are righteous, if you can have what the New Testament calls a renewed mind, then you have put together the foundation for a godly life.

Peter knows that so at the end of this epistle written to some Christians who are being persecuted, he pulls together a series of final commands and they call for fundamental attitudes that God requires and that lead to spiritual maturity. Let me just give you a brief review and then we'll move on.

The first attitude that he mentioned in verse 5 is an attitude of submission. "You younger men likewise be subject to your elders." He chooses young men because they tend to be the most head strong. They are not the only ones who need to submit but the most likely not to and so he reminds them that they are to submit to those who are their elders. He uses the word elders in verse 1 to refer to the pastors and shepherds and overseers of the flock and we assume he has the same men in mind here. So he is calling on the young men who are generally the head strong, generally those who push hard, those who don't hesitate to share their viewpoints and their opinions and who have to learn submission, he says you set the pace for the whole of the congregation by submitting yourselves to those who are over you in the Lord. It's a call for respect and a call for honor for those who are our spiritual leaders. This is a fundamental spiritual attitude, the attitude of submission that attacks self-promoting pride.

Last time we also considered a second attitude in verses 5 and 6 and that was an attitude of humility. Verse 5 also says, "And all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another for God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you at the proper time." Alongside an attitude of submission to those in authority over us is an attitude of humility in general. And you will note that we are to have humility toward one another in verse 5 and humility under the mighty hand of God in verse 6. Humility in relation to others and humility in relation to God.

The third attitude that we noted last time was an attitude of trust. In verse 7 he says, "Casting all your anxiety upon Him because He cares for you." In submission and in humility we learn to trust the God who really cares for us, trusting in the God who loves you and the God who has the power to do something about that love.

So Peter says then that the building blocks of spiritual attitudes includes submission, humility and trust. Now let's move on tonight to the things that are ahead of us. Starting in verse 8 we find the fourth necessary attitude for spiritual maturity, an attitude of self-control...an attitude of self-control. Verse 8 says, "Be of sober spirit." Be sober minded, that's all we need to read because that's the point, again a very rapid fire almost staccato use of the imperative here...be of sober mind, or sober spirit.

This is not something new in this epistle. Peter has made reference to this before. Back in chapter 1 verse 13 he said, "Gird your minds for action and keep sober." In chapter 4 you'll remember verse 7, he says, "The end of all things is imminent, therefore be of sound judgment and sober for the purpose of prayer."

Now what does this word "sober" really mean? Well it means self-control. It can be used with reference to intoxication, that would be its literal use. But here it is used metaphorically as it is most often in the New Testament to refer to self-control. It means to be in control of the issues of life, having the priorities of life in the proper order and the proper balance. It requires a discipline of mind and a discipline of body that avoids the very intoxicating allurements of the world. It starts with a well-disciplined thought life that is absolutely essential. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 6 Paul says, "Let us not sleep as others do but let us be alert and sober." Watchful and under control. In verse 8 he says, "Since we are of the day let us be sober." And again he's calling for the same attitude that Peter is calling for here, that is an attitude of sober mindedness.

I'm reminded also of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, that great chapter that talks about the heroes of the faith. Chapter 11 verse 8 says, "By faith Abraham when he was called obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance and he went out not knowing where he was going, by faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and

Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise, for he was looking for the city which has foundations whose architect and builder is God." Abraham saw what was invisible. Abraham through the eye of faith understood spiritual priorities and didn't get himself tangled up with earthly enterprises.

This same word "sober" or "sober minded" is used in 1 Timothy 2:15 and there it is translated "self-restraint." It is also used in 1 Timothy 3:2 and there the noun form is translated "temperate." It is also used in that same chapter in verse 11, it is used again in Titus 2:2 and it has always the same meaning, self-restraint, self-control, balancing of priorities. This is essential. And again we're back to Romans chapter 12, "Be not conformed to this world," verse 2, "but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." In other words, you want to have your head screwed on right so you understand your spiritual priorities. It is as Colossians 3 would put it, "Setting your affections on things above," which is another way of saying looking for a city whose builder and maker is God. Having that divine perspective. It is what the Apostle Paul has in mind in Philippians 4 when he says, "Whatever is true and honorable and right and pure and lovely and of good report, let your mind dwell on these things."

Beloved, I remind you that there is a great premium set on a pure mind in Scripture. Being renewed in the spirit of your mind is an essential factor of Christian living. And when your mind perceives what is right and what is best and what is pure and what is holy, then it begins to order the responses of your emotions and your will. It is then an essential fundamental of Christian living that you have an attitude of self-control, that you harness your life. I love the words of Peter that I just quoted you from chapter 1..."Gird your minds for action." And when we went through that a number of months ago I noted for you that that word literally means to tie up your robe in a belt, to pull in all the loose ends in your thinking, all the loose ends in your preoccupation, cinch everything down tightly, get your mind clear and under control. It is essential then as a necessary fundamental for spiritual maturity that you have submission, humility, trust and self-control.

Through the years we have said much about self-control and about self-discipline and the disciplined life. And I would commend you to those teachings. But for tonight I want us to look at the fifth in Peter's list and I want us to dwell on this a bit.

The fifth spiritual attitude that is essential for growth we'll call an attitude of vigilant defense...an attitude of vigilant defense. Look at verse 8. The reason we have to have our priorities right, the reason we need to trust God, the reason we need to humble ourselves under His almighty hand and the reason we need to submit to those in authority over us and to God Himself is because our adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Peter says be on the alert, be on the alert. Not only sober minded, not only having your priorities right but watchful. It's an aorist imperative, stay awake, be ready, be alert, watch out. Now strong trust in God's mighty hand, strong trust in God's care, strong confidence that we can cast all of our anxiety on Him does not mean carelessness and it doesn't mean indulgence. It doesn't mean that because we trust God and

because we throw all our care on Him that we become indolent and lazy and let down our guard or we will become victims of the enemy. The outside forces that come against us demand us to be alert, vigilance. The enemy, by the way, is very subtle. According to 2 Corinthians chapter 11 he disguises himself as an angel of light and his ministers as angels of light. He very rarely shows himself for who he is. He almost always masks himself as a religious personality, almost always endeavoring somehow in some way to be able to approach you subtly so that you can't recognize the reality of who he is.

But let's find out about him. Let's find out why it's so very very important to be alert. Your adversary, the devil...that introduces us to the enemy in spiritual warfare. A very personal designation, by the way, your adversary the devil. He's not only the adversary of God, he's not only the adversary of holy angels, but he is your adversary as well. Adversary, by the way, is a legal Greek word that means the legal opponent in a law suit in a technical sense. In a general sense it means any enemy. So you have an enemy and you better be alert. Even though you can trust God and entrust yourself to God, you need to be alert to the enemy in general.

This enemy here is called the devil, diabolos, slanderer. The term diabolos or slanderer means a malicious enemy who slanders. It can even go beyond that and mean a malicious enemy who attacks. He is also called destroyer and he is called Abaddon and Apollyon and both of those terms mean destroyer. He is the slanderer. He is the accuser. He is the destroyer. And he is prowling about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

He's always active and he's always looking for an opportunity to overwhelm us. His aim is to sow discord, to break fellowship, to accuse God to men, to accuse men to God, to accuse men to each other, to undermine confidence, to silence confession, to get us to stop serving God. He's always after us. He is called in John's gospel three times the prince of this world. He commands the human system. So as he is moving around seeking whom he may devour, it is not that you have to come into contact with him individually to fall prey because he orchestrates a whole realm of demon beings and he orchestrates and controls the whole world's system. And so from his seat as prince of the world he orchestrates an environment which in and of itself can devour us.

He is also called the prince of the power of the air by Paul in Ephesians chapter 2. The power of the air means the supernatural demonic power that exists in the universe. He commands that so he commands the human system, the cosmos, the world and he commands the air, the supernatural sphere in which demons move. And so he individually and he through his demons and through his system is prowling about like a roaring lion wanting to devour someone.

That statement, by the way, is reminiscent of Job chapter 1. In Job chapter 1 you remember that Satan came into the presence of the Lord and the Lord said to Satan, verse 7, listen to this, "From where do you come? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, From roaming about on the earth and

walking around on it." Really, why is he doing that? Why is he roaming around the earth and walking on it? Peter answers it. He is prowling about like a roaring lion seeking whom he...what?...may devour. He is wandering through the earth looking for victims. It's a real spiritual warfare.

"And the Lord said to Satan...Job 1:8...Have you considered My servant Job?" You want to try to chew on him, see if he'll go down? You want to try to devour Job? "There's no one like him on earth, a blameless upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And Satan says, Let me have him and I'll show you how strong his faith is. So God said, All right, have at it." And you know the story, no matter what happened in Job's life Satan couldn't devour him. And Job said, "Thou He slay me yet will I trust Him. And Job said, The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, Blessed be the name of the Lord." And the Lord took everything away from him, everything he owned, his property, took away all of his children, took away all of his wealth, all of his animals. The only thing the Lord left was his wife and I think there were some days when he would gladly have traded her for somebody else because she was always telling him to curse God and die. But even she as an instrument of Satan couldn't bring him to do that.

But, you see, that's Satan's ploy, to move through the world to find somebody he can consume. The prowling roaring lion is a symbol of viciousness in Scripture. I would just commend to you Psalm 22 verse 13, that Messianic Psalm talking about how the bulls of Bashan have encircled me, referring to Christ being encircled by those who hated Him at His cross. They opened wide their mouth at Me like a ravening and a roaring lion. That's a picture of viciousness, of maliciousness. That same expression is used elsewhere in the Psalms with the same intent of one who would be vicious. Psalm 104 verse 21, "The young lions roar after their prey."

So, Satan is going after his prey. He's going out to consume. He's going out to chew someone up. That's his goal.

In Ezekiel chapter 22 and verse 25 is another enriching insight. In Ezekiel 22:25 it says, "There is a conspiracy of her prophets in her midst, like a roaring lion tearing the prey, they have devoured lives, they have taken treasure and precious things, they have made many widows in the midst of her." And, of course, here the judgment of God is coming upon the sins of the leaders of Jerusalem but he says they're like a roaring lion tearing her prey.

So, whenever you see that phrase Peter is borrowing it from the Old Testament, every time it's used it's seen as a malicious kind of thing. Satan is moving around wanting to take someone and literally rip that person to shreds, looking for someone to devour. Satan's goal is to devastate. And you must understand that the objective of his devastation, listen very carefully, is not unbelievers for obvious reasons, right? He already possesses them. He wanted somebody like Job who named the name of God. And I believe that he goes after people who name the name of God wanting to destroy, tear up, devastate. Even though obviously he cannot take away their salvation, he can destroy their life, he

can destroy their testimony, he can devastate them.

So, says Peter, back in 1 Peter chapter 5, you better be on the alert because you have a personal adversary, an enemy, the slanderer, diabolos, Abaddon, Apollyon, the destroyer who is moving all over the earth with one goal in mind, finding people who name the name of Christ and wanting to tear them to shreds and destroy them. You better be alert.

Over the last couple of weeks I've been talking to the students at the Master's College on the subject of spiritual warfare. And because it's on my heart and because it fits so perfectly into this text I thought I might share with you some of the things that I've been teaching them.

If you want to get the best look in the Bible at this whole matter of spiritual warfare...what is the devil doing and how do I respond, how am I going to deal with this roaring lion?...let me take a few minutes and digress to Revelation chapter 12-- Revelation chapter 12. This is the watershed passage on the matter of spiritual warfare. And we can use it as a foundation to pull all of the parts together so we really understand what's going on.

First of all, who are the participants in spiritual warfare? Who are the participants in spiritual warfare? We find in verse 3 of chapter 12 this statement, "And another sign appeared in heaven and behold a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns and on his heads were seven diadems." I won't go into all of the details about that, suffice it to say that that great red dragon is Satan...it is Satan. Look at verse 4, "And his tail swept a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth." What is this? This is what it means when Satan who once was Lucifer, son of the morning, perhaps the highest of all angelic beings, when he opposed God and said I will be like the Most High as recorded in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, he who was the covering cherub, when he decided that he would be lifted up with pride and be equal with God, God threw him out of heaven. But when God threw him out of heaven he didn't go alone. He dragged a third of the stars of heaven...what does that mean? A third of the angels.

You say, "How many is that?" We don't know. Well you say, "How many angels are there?" Well that's hard to answer. In Revelation 5:11 it says there are ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands. You say, "Well that's simple then, all we do is multiply ten thousand times ten thousand, add a thousand and add a thousand." No...no. The problem is in the Greek language there was no word for any number higher than ten thousand, murian, that's as high as they went in their numbering system so that when they said ten thousand times ten thousand they were saying murian times murian and it was really an infinite expression, numberless times numberless and numberless and numberless, many of them. More than ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, those are just expressions for the numbers of angels. A third of them came down with Satan, that left two thirds with God.

Now, what is the status of this third of demons? Let me tell you. Of all of the third that fell there are three categories. Category number one, some of them are bound eternally. Some of them are bound eternally. Jude 6 says they are bound in everlasting chains. We showed you in 1 Peter in our study that those who were bound in everlasting chains were bound because of the sin recorded in Genesis 6 where they took on human bodies, cohabitated with women, produced some kind of demon-man race that had to be drowned in the flood, those demons who did that were bound in everlasting chains. So as far as the number of forces go they're certainly in our favor. Two-thirds of the holy angels remained holy, one third fell, of the one third a number are eternally bound so they're not an issue, so even the third is depleted.

Furthermore, some are temporarily bound. According to Revelation chapter 9 and verse 2, during the time of the Tribulation hell is going to be opened up and belch forth some vicious vile wicked demons. One description of them describes them as if they were unclean frogs. It means that up until that time some of them are bound there. That we would understand that because you remember when Jesus cast the demons out of the demoniac they said, "Don't send us to the pit...don't send us to the pit," the place of bound demons. Some are bound permanently, some are bound temporarily. The temporarily bound ones won't be released until the time of the Tribulation so they're not running around now, so the third is depleted even more.

The rest of the demons that are allowed to run around loose are what we know as demons. They are the principalities and powers. They are the rulers of darkness. They are the spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies referred to in Ephesians 6:12 and we wrestle with them. They're the ones that are after us.

So, who are the participants in spiritual warfare? Satan, the dragon, and his fallen demons. But they're not alone because they work their work through human beings. It says in the middle of verse 4, look at this, "The dragon stood before the woman who was going to give birth." Who is the woman? Israel. "So that when she gave birth he might devour her child." Who is the child? Christ. The Messiah was about to come out of Israel and Satan is poised to devour the child. Why? He's always wanting to devour. He goes throughout the whole earth like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He wanted to chew up Job too. Same pattern. And there he was poised to destroy the child.

And what is fascinating to note here is how did he try to do that? Through demons? No. Through a human being. What was his name? Herod...Herod who went and slaughtered all of the infant children under the age of two. And so we see a third participant in the spiritual battle...Satan, demons and men who are the pawns of Satan. They are the hypocritical liars who preach the demon doctrines in 1 Timothy 4:1 and 2. In John 8 I can't resist reminding you of John 8 verse 44, one of the very important passages in the New Testament which gives us insight into this, in John 8:44 Jesus said, "You are of your father the devil and you want to do the desires of your father." There you are. He says to those

Pharisees, those Jewish leaders who rejected God, "You're of your father the devil and you want to do what he wants." So that's the spiritual struggle right there...Satan, demons and men who are the children of Satan. Those are the participants.

Now what is Satan's strategy? Remember now, he works his strategy through the demons and through people in the system. Through the demons he controls the supernatural. Through the people he controls the cosmos, the world system. Those are the participants.

On the other hand, you have God, holy angels and believers. And that draws the battle lines, right? Holy angels are battling demons, did you know that? Did you know God had to send Michael because God sent to Daniel a heavenly messenger and a demon held him up in the air? And God had to send Michael who is super-angel to go down there and knock that demon out of the way and let that holy angel go on about his business. There is a warfare going on in the air and it comes all the way down to us as we battle with the agents of Satan who are the human beings in this world who serve his kingdom.

Now what is his strategy? We've seen the participants, what's the strategy? Let's go back to verse 1 of Revelation 12. "And a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars and she was with child. She cried out being in labor and pain to give birth." Verse 5, "She gave birth to a son, a male child who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron and her child was caught up to God and to His throne." Who is that? That's Israel giving birth to Christ. But what was Satan's first approach? To devour the child. First strategy in Satan's warfare, oppose Christ...oppose Christ.

He still does it. He still does it. He did it before Christ was born. He tried to wipe out the Davidic line. He's always tried to do it. He tried to kill the child using Herod. He then tried to get the child, Christ, to bow His knee to him, become the servant of Satan and therefore obviate His Messianic work and damn the human race forever. He sent along a man by the name of Antiochus Epiphanes who was an agent of Satan, surely demon possessed for the purpose of destroying the people of God. He sent along a man by the name of Adolph Hitler who we are told by historians when he spoke in public used a voice that was not his own, who was deeply involved with mysticism, the occult, Tibetan black monks, who was in contact with medium spirits and demon sources and was an agent of Satan to try to destroy the Jewish people so the covenant of Israel could never be fulfilled and thus the purposes of Christ destroyed.

That takes us then to the second target, Israel.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

Verse 6, "And the woman...who was Israel in this picture, who gave birth to the child...fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God so that there she might be nourished for a thousand two hundred and sixty days." That's one half of the seven-year Tribulation and during that half of the seven-year Tribulation the Antichrist who is the agent of Satan goes out to destroy the Jews and God has to hide them and protect them. It has always been Satan's first target to oppose Christ, second target, oppose Israel. Wipe out the Messiah, wipe out the people of the Messiah.

Thirdly, Satan goes after holy angels, verse 7. "There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon and the dragon and his angels waged war and they were not strong enough...amen...and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven." When Satan first fell, he scooped up his third who agreed with his rebellion and they made war with Michael who is always the superangel commander-in-chief and Michael and his angels threw him out of heaven.

Verse 9 takes us the next step. The fourth target in the strategy of spiritual warfare is believers. He was thrown down to the earth, it says in verse 9. He deceives the whole world and his angels were thrown down with him. And so here they are, building their system of deception. And then verse 17, "And the dragon was enraged with the woman, Israel, and so he went off to make war with the rest of her offspring...who was that?...those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus," believers.

Now if you have any questions about spiritual warfare, here it is. Satan, demons, children of the devil-the unregenerate world are fighting God, holy angels and believers. The strategy of Satan is to oppose and attack the name of Christ, destroy His name, destroy His character, destroy anything that names His name so that you discredit Him and cause people to turn their back on Him. Attack Israel. Do everything you can to destroy that nation so there is no covenant people and there can be no prophetic kingdom. Fight the holy angels, destroy them, tear them down so you can rule the universe. And finally, fight believers, those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And that's why it says in Ephesians 6 we wrestle principalities and powers, the rulers of darkness, spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies.

I told you in the past about the occasion where demons were shouting at me telling me to get out of the room because they didn't want anything to do with me. That experience I will never forget. I go back to it very often to remind myself that even the demons know whose side I'm on, that's very encouraging. There is a real warfare at that point.

Now what is the program of warfare? How does it work? Let me take you a little deeper into that. First of all, how does Satan deal with non-Christians? Simply stated in Revelation chapter 12 verse 9, he deceives them. He comes down and deceives the whole world. He blinds their minds, 2 Corinthians

4:3 and 4, so the light of the glorious gospel doesn't shine unto them. He deceives them through ignorance, unbelief, false religion, love of sin, fleshly gratification. He deceives them by developing a cosmos and a system that looks alluring, inviting, pleasurable, fulfilling. And he comes at them through the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life.

What is the lust of the eyes? I see it, I want it. What is the lust of the flesh? I feel it, I want it. And the pride of life. And he moves in to developing a deceptive system. When unbelievers sin, it isn't that Satan is there making them sin, it is that Satan has concocted the system that is infested with his demons who keep it moving down its hellish deceptive path and it makes victims out of the human race.

And it can become pretty severe. Let me give you an illustration. Turn in your Bible to 1 Samuel chapter 16...1 Samuel chapter 16. Now we don't have time to go into this whole thing but David had been anointed king to replace Saul and Saul was not happy about that. His pride was devastated. He was a very proud person. More than that, his anger grew and because he was so proud and so angry his life was wide open for a Satanic invasion.

Look at chapter 16 verse 12. David came in and David was ruddy, masculine. He was given beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. "And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him, this is he. Samuel took the horn of oil, anointed him in the midst of his brothers and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel arose and went to Ramah. Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and an evil spirit of the Lord terrorized him." This coming and going of the Holy Spirit is not that which is parallel to the New Testament, this is the moving of the Holy Spirit onto a life for some specific leadership, authority, responsibility. When a person was put in the role of administering God's people, administering over God's people, when a prophet was given the unique opportunity to speak the Word of God, the Spirit would come in a special way. And as long as Saul had ruled, as it were, in behalf of God over the people of Israel, the Spirit was on him to direct and lead him to do the right thing. It didn't necessarily have to be a believer, even Cyrus was the servant of the Lord moved by the Holy Spirit as a pagan to do what he did in freeing the people of Israel from captivity.

But once the Spirit of the Lord left Saul, an evil spirit...listen to this...from the Lord terrorized him. You say, "Is the Lord sending out evil spirits?" No, but what the writer means to say is that evil spirit came upon that man under the allowance of God, because if God wanted to stop it He could have stopped it. When that evil spirit came into the life of Saul because he had opened his heart to that evil spirit, because he was an angry prideful man, anytime there's that kind of sin in your life there is an access. He became unbelievably wicked, unbelievably wicked. And here we see the worst of what can happen when a person gives place to Satan. He started making rash idiotic judgments. He started making bad decisions. He despised the authority of God's prophet. He became a dictator. He even invaded the priestly office thinking that he could function as a priest even though God had so specifically forbidden that. He became terrorized by this demon. He was demon possessed. He

became insane. He became a mass murderer...massacring a whole group of priests. He was so out of control that he stripped himself naked and fell on the floor and humiliated himself. He wound up consulting a medium, contacting demons and ultimately committed suicide.

Sad, tragic, but that's how Satan can get into a person's life. I think insane asylums and mental hospitals are filled with people today who have no psychological diagnosis because they are literally demon controlled. And I think that the things that we see in our culture today...insanity, mass murder, occult involvement and suicide...are very often related to demonic involvement. When a man becomes base and wicked, a man who is devoid of the Spirit of God and who gives place to demonic powers, there's no telling how bad that man can be.

There is another such man who needs your attention in the New Testament. His name is Judas. Look at John 13...John 13 verse 27. One of the most frightening statements in all of the New Testament, John 13:27, after Jesus had given a morsel of food at Judas at the last supper, it says, verse 27, "After the morsel, Satan then entered into him." Dear friends, that is the most tragic occurrence ever to take place in that man's horrible life. Satan entered into him.

Back in Luke 22:3, "And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot and he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad and agreed to give him money."

Satan entered into Judas...why?...to oppose Christ, to kill Christ. Still trying to do the same thing. That's...that's the worst of it. And what did Judas do? He became so crass, he sold the lovely Son of God for a handful of money and then he went out and tried unsuccessfully even to hang himself and he didn't even know how to do that very well, the rope broke and he plunged and his entire bowels were gushed out all over the rocks on which he landed. Committed suicide. Mass murder, occult involvement, suicide, insanity, those are the kinds of things that are produced by Satan and his demons and he does that thing in the lives of those who are his own children when he thinks he can oppose Christ that way, oppose Israel, oppose the holy angels in ways that we will never understand, or oppose the purposes of God for believers.

Now...but how does he attack Christians? How does he attack those who believe? How does he go around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour among us? Well, the system comes at us through the same three gates. First John 2:15 to 17, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life...those are the only three ways he appeals to us. If you want a real simplification of the spiritual battle it all comes down to three things...lusting for what you see, lusting because of what you feel, and pride. That's always and only Satan's approach.

People say, "Well no, Satan cannot have anything to do with a Christian." That's not true...that's not true. There are a number of ways in which Satan can get involved in a believer's life. I'm going to give

you a little bit of insight into it. Follow very closely.

First of all, sometimes God allows Satan to attack a believer. That's right. God will allow Satan to attack a believer in a very intimate way. And when I say Satan I mean Satan and his whole army of demons. For example...Job, Satan comes before God and he's roaming around as I noted, looking for somebody to devour and the Lord says, "Why don't you try swallowing Job? There's nobody like him. He's the best man on earth." Did you hear that? He was the best man on earth and Satan was allowed to have at him. Did you hear that? Do you know that even as a believer there may be times when God allows the devil for His own purposes to come after you?

Satan said, "Well, does Job fear God for nothing?" Of course he fears You, look at all the stuff You gave him. He's got a wife and all those kids and got all those flocks and all that land and he's the richest guy in the world, of course he fears You. You put a hedge around him. You blessed the work of his hands, his possessions increased. I'll tell you what, You put forth Your hand and touch all that he has and he'll curse you to his face. He's nothing but a fair weather friend.

All right, the Lord said, "Satan, all he has is in your power only you can't kill him." So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord and went out and took everything he had. Unbelievable. Killed his family. Took away everything. And Job said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I shall return. The Lord gave and the Lord's taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Didn't change his faith one bit. Satan tried to chew him up and devour him, couldn't do it.

Chapters 3 through 10 chronicle Job's sorrow. And then you have a whole lot of chapters that chronicle his friends' well meaning attempt to explain what was going on in total ignorance. They had no idea what they were talking about. And finally at the very end he says, "I...I know what this is all about, O God. I heard of You with the hearing of mine ear and now my eye sees You and I repent in dust and ashes." He says I have a vision of God I never would have had if it hadn't been for this. God had a positive thing in mind.

You say, "What was God's purpose?" I think it was two-fold. Number one, to show Satan the strength of salvation. You realize, don't you, that Job lived in the patriarchal time, back in the time of Genesis? So very early on in the redemptive plan God wanted to show Satan how strong salvation was, how strong faith was. And He said, "All right, have at him." And Satan couldn't touch him effectively. And it was a lesson to Satan. You see, sometimes God is doing things with Satan that involve us.

But I think there was a secondary issue here. I believe He was strengthening Job, don't you? And when it was all said and done, Job was a greater man than ever he would have been. So sometimes God allows Satan to come after a believer for some divine purpose to make a point to Satan on a level we don't even understand. And sometimes God allows Satan to come after a believer just to put him through the kind of tests that makes him all that much stronger.

How about Paul? In 2 Corinthians chapter 12, the Apostle Paul says this, verse 7, "Hey," he said, "I had a lot of great revelations. I had so many revelations..." You know, he saw the risen Christ three times...three times he had visions of the living Christ...caught up to the third heaven, I mean, he had some amazing revelations. So he said, "You know, with all those revelations I can be a very proud guy." I mean, you can see what his billboard would be like...you know, "Come and hear the man who saw Christ three times...the man who has been to heaven and back." So he says, "Because of this...listen to this, 2 Corinthians 12:7...for this reason to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me to keep me from exalting myself and I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me and He said no, My grace is sufficient, My power is made perfect in your weakness." God says you need it. Satan is going to inflict it on you, but it's going to keep you humble. So sometimes God lets Satan do things to us to humble us.

What about Peter? Look at Luke 22. In Luke 22 this is a most amazing situation. Jesus looks at Peter, Luke 22:31, He says, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat." Isn't that amazing? You know Satan can't do anything unless he has...what?...permission. He has to go to God and say, "God, I want Peter." And just like Job, God knew the strength of Peter's faith, He said have at him. Now Peter didn't fare quite as well as Job, right? On three occasions what did Peter do? Denied Christ. But Satan was not victorious and in Luke 22:31 He says, "Satan has demanded to have you but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail and when you have been converted, strengthen your brothers. When you've turned again, when you've come back around from your denial, you'll be a strength to your brothers." Why? Because you will have been through a struggle with Satan and you'll be able to show them how to win the victory. So God let Satan go after Peter, put Peter in a terribly compromising situation, shatter Peter's spiritual commitment to the point where he vocally denied Jesus Christ on three occasions. God let all that happen from Satan in order that Peter might come out stronger so that he could strengthen other people. See, God has His purposes for releasing Satan sometimes in our lives.

Look at Revelation chapter 2...Revelation chapter 2. "I know your tribulation," He says to the church at Smyrna, it's a good little church. "I know your poverty. You're a poor church and you had a lot of trouble. And the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not but are a synagogue of Satan, do not fear what you're about to suffer, behold the devil is about to cast some of you into prison." Now there it is again. Here's this little church in Smyrna and the devil wanted to chew them up and spit them out, too. God says all right, have at them. And the devil is going to come down, He says, and throw some of you into prison. It will be a short time of tribulation, ten days, you just be faithful to death, I'll give you the crown of life.

You say, "Why did God allow Satan to go down there and throw those believers in Smyrna in prison?" Maybe to test them. Maybe to prove their spiritual strength. Maybe to make a point to Satan again about the strength of faith, the same point He made with Job, the same point He made with Paul, the

same point He made with Peter.

How about Revelation chapter 6? In Revelation chapter 6 verse 10 you have the saints who were martyred during the Tribulation. They're crying out, "O Lord," verse 10, "How long holy and true will you refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Here are the Tribulation saints and what are they saying? Lord, they're saying the devil is out there through the Antichrist slaughtering all of us, how long are You going to let it go on? They were literally killed at the hand of the Antichrist...killed at the hand of the Antichrist. They were the victims of Satan through Antichrist, that's yet to come in the future. And they say, "How long are You going to let it go on?" It may well be that God would even let Satan kill believers for divine purposes.

God had His purposes. Now that's positive. What about negative? Does God ever let Satan come after you for negative reasons? Sure...sure. Look at Acts 5, here's a negative situation. This wasn't to make a point about the strength of faith, Ananias and Sapphira, they said they were going to sell some property, give all the money to God. They sold the property and didn't give it to God so they lied. Peter said, verse 3 Acts 5, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" Ananias and Sapphira lied because Satan filled their heart which means before they ever lied they had some wickedness in their life, they had given place to Satan and God let Satan move right in, not to prove the strength of their faith but to prove that they were sinful and to make a very strong point.

You know what happened? Right after that they died in front of the church, dropped dead. God killed them on the spot, let Satan into their life and then executed them because of their sin. And the whole church concluded...you better not lie to the Holy Spirit, serious stuff.

Look at 1 Corinthians chapter 5. First Corinthians chapter 5 verse 1 says, "It's reported commonly among you that there is immorality, sexual sin. And what kind of immorality? It doesn't even exist among the pagans, incest. Someone has his father's wife...either his mother or his step-mother." Here was a son having some kind of sexual relationships with his father's wife, his mother or step-mother. "Not only that, you're arrogant, you haven't mourned, you're not even dealing with this," verse 5 Paul says, "I decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh...the destruction of his flesh, his spirit may be saved."

Sometimes...listen...God sets Satan after one who calls himself a Christian to judge him, to destroy him. So it may well have been that this person doing this was turned over to Satan without the protection of God and his flesh was destroyed in some terrible way with the diseases that come on those who are sexually promiscuous.

Look at Revelation chapter 2 and we'll wind this down and complete it next time, Revelation chapter 2 verse 19, He writes to the church at Thyatira, this is our Lord writing to the city of Thyatira in Asia Minor. He says, "I know your deeds," verse 19, "love, faith, service, perseverance," and so forth. I

mean, you've got a lot of good things going. But He says, "I have something against you, you tolerate the woman Jezebel, this woman you allow to come in your church and be a prophetess. She teaches and leads My bondservants astray so they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols." She's got them in sexual sin and idolatry. "I gave her time to repent, she doesn't want to repent." She wants to go to bed, does she, I'll put her in bed all right. Verse 22, I'll put her in bed, "I'll put those who commit adultery in bed with her if they don't repent and I'll kill her children with pestilence and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts and I'll give to each of you according to your deeds. But I say to you, the rest that are in Thyatira who do not hold this teaching...listen to this...who have not known the deep things of Satan." What are the deep things of Satan? The stuff being taught by this woman, immorality, sexual sin, idolatry. So He said I'll give them what they deserve. They're in to the deep things of Satan and it will cost them their life.

And then there were the leaders in Ephesus, finally. First Timothy chapter 1 verse 20, he says, "Among these false teachers, those who are shipwrecking the faith, are Hymenaeus and Alexander whom I delivered over to Satan that they may be taught not to blaspheme." Paul says I took Hymenaeus and Alexander, two who were pastors in the church at Ephesus, because they were shipwrecking the faith, I turned them over to Satan so they would be taught not to blaspheme. "I turned them over to Satan" simply means God takes His hands of protection off and lets Satan do whatever he wants. And I'll tell you right now, when God does that Satan will take that individual who claims to be a preacher of Christ and make a laughing stock out of him. We've seen it in our own society. I think we've seen it today. I think we've seen preachers turned over to Satan.

So, God has some purposes in mind. Sometimes He turns us over to Satan for good reasons, to make a point to Satan about the strength of faith, to make us stronger, to make us to know Him better. Sometimes He turns people who name His name over to Satan to destroy them, to punish them, to chasten them. So by God's holy, sovereign design, Satan and his demons get involved in our life. Sometimes to prove us true, sometimes to punish us. Don't you think for a minute that we're not wrestling in combat with these spiritual beings because we are.

Now how do they approach us and how do we deal with them? That's for next time. Time's up. But can I just repeat one thing Peter said? Be alert. And part of being alert is knowing what to look for, right? And I'm going to tell you next time how he basically attacks four entities. He attacks you as an individual. He attacks your marriage and your family. He attacks the leaders of your church. And he attacks the unity of the body. Those are his four major attacks. We're also going to find out how we deal with it.

Father, thank You tonight for a reminder of these basic things that we need to know about our enemy. We thank You that in Jesus Christ we have the victory, we've overcome the world through our faith, and we have overcome the wicked one, says John, through the knowledge of the Word. Satan has no

part in us ultimately, he cannot damn us, he cannot condemn us to hell, he can only function with permission. But, Lord, we know that he comes very subtly and he wants to destroy. Help us to be on the alert to gain the victory. And when Satan is working on us and his demons, may it be that we like Job and Paul and Peter and the saints at Smyrna come forth as gold and prove the validity of our faith and trust. May it not be that we are like Ananias and Sapphira and the Corinthian fornicator, the Thyatirans, those who in disobedience knew the chastening, the punishment, the devastation of Satan's supernatural power. Father, we pray that You will bless us with wisdom from on high to face the enemy, to know the victory in Christ's name. Amen.

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