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

Satan: How Does He Operate?
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 1356

Tonight we are going to do the third in our brief study on Satan: Is He? Who Is He? And What Is He Like? The apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians, chapter 2 and verse 11, says that we are not to be ignorant of the schemes, or the plans, or the stratagems, or the tricks of Satan. We need to know how he works. We need to know something of his character, something of his person, something of his approach. And since we have the Word of God, which unmasks Satan's disguises, and which reveals his schemes, there's really no reason to be ignorant. What we're attempting to do in our study together is simply open the pages of the Word of God, and show you what God has revealed about our enemy. We have already seen that one of his most clever ploys is to make men believe that he doesn't exist. If there is no enemy, then there doesn't need to be any defense, and if there is no defense, then victory is easy.

For those who insist on believing that he exists, Satan would rather set forth false ideas about himself; that he does exist but he's something less than what he really is. Some would imagine him to be a sort of a mythological figure representing general evil. Others would see him as a satin-suited, horned, red, forked-tail, pitchfork, sort of degraded fairy-tale monster. Others would see him as somebody to be feared, and somebody to torment Christians, from whom we have to run and go somewhere to get delivered. Believe me, Satan would rather be non-existent, and if he can't be non-existent, at least in the mind of a man, he would certainly like to be, at least, invisible in his reality. So he masks himself and the Bible unmasks him. It's amazing that even those who claim to worship Satan are really not worshiping the Satan that exists, but a manufactured Satan that Satan himself uses to trap men. He is a deceiver. He is the master deceiver of the universe. And we've seen in past weeks how careful we need to be in understanding that.

For religious people, for people who not only believe in the devil, but believe in God, and maybe believe in the true God, Satan has another approach. He likes to be mistaken for God. Tertullian once said: "*Diabolos est Dei simia,*" and that translates into "The devil is God's monkey." What Tertullian meant was that the devil likes nothing better than to ape God, and believe me, there are a lot of unwitting Christian people who think God is doing something when it isn't God at all. Now, we have in the past several weeks carefully tried to explore his character, in an effort to explode the myths that he has authored to hide his true self. We have tried to unmask him. We have studied the question is he, and determined that he is. We've studied the question who is he, and we've unmasked him as a fallen angel. We've talked about what he is like, and we've gone to study what he is like from the standpoint of his names and his titles and the terms used to describe him.

And tonight we come to the fourth point in our outline: how does he operate? And this really brings it down to the practicum of our own living. How does Satan operate in the world to bring about his own ends? Now, this gets us into the very nitty-gritty of living. Hang on to your Bible, because we'll be pointing out many important things.

Now, in the operation of Satan we simply need to understand that he operates in two categories. He operates in his own children, and he operates on the children of God, and those are the two spheres in which Satan functions. Now, let's look, first of all, at category number one, and see how Satan works in his own children. And, I believe, that all people in the world who are without Jesus Christ, who are outside the family of God, are the children of Satan, and I would take that from 1 John 5:19, where it says: "And the whole world lies in the wicked one." Jesus said in John 8:44 of the Pharisees: "Ye are of your father the devil," and I believe it could be broadened to include anybody who's not a child of God.

Now, how then does Satan work in his own children? Let me suggest to you three ways, generally, and some specifics under that. First of all, his work of preventing; Satan is busily engaged in the work of preventing. There are several items we could talk about under this, but for a beginning, look at the eighth chapter of Luke, and then we'll compare with it the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. The eighth chapter of Luke, and we'll skip the initial instruction of our Lord in the parable and we'll go right to His explanation of it in verse 11, Luke 8:11. "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God," and of course, you know a sower was sowing seed. The sower speaks of that one who spreads the Word, who spreads the truth. "The seed is the Word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear. Then cometh the devil and taketh away the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."

And you will notice back at verse 5 that the wayside is described there as trodden down; a path that is pressed down, that is rock hard. The seed falls, it just sits there and the birds take it. And that's emblematic of the Word of God being spread on hard soil that does not receive it, and the devil comes and takes it away. The devil is in the business of preventing, and the first area is he snatches away the Word. He snatches away the Word. Further, to understand the complete picture of the parable, we should look at Matthew chapter 13; there are some other items there that would add to our understanding. Matthew chapter 13, we have the parable again here. Verse 19: "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and understands it not, then comes the wicked one, catches away that which was sown in his heart; this is he that received seed by the wayside." Here comes the devil and snatches it away. Now, in this parable we have four kinds of hearts, four kinds of soil. We have the unresponsive heart in verse 19, "Understandeth it not." It doesn't register; there is totally an unresponsive heart.

Then we have the impulsive heart, verse 20 and 21: “Receive the seed the same, and hears the Word and immediately with joy receives it, yet hath he not root in himself, endures for a while, tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, and immediately he’s offended.” This is the impulsive heart. The person who makes an impulsive commitment to Christ that has no real root. Verse 22 tells us about the preoccupied heart. “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the Word, and the care of this age and the deceitfulness of riches, chokes the Word and he becomes unfruitful.” Here is the case of somebody who’s too preoccupied with the system to give himself to the Word. Then there is in verse 23 the good ground, the responsive heart. So we have an unresponsive heart, an impulsive heart, a preoccupied heart, and a responsive heart.

We find, then, that in our look, we are looking at an unresponsive heart; and the Word of God lands on that heart where there is indifference, where there is callousness, where there is unresponsive attitude, there is rejection, and the devil comes along and just snatches the Word away. Now notice this: the devil can do that because the heart is hard. The issue here is the hardness of the heart. The parable teaches that the result of hearing the gospel is always dependent on the condition of the heart. And it is only where the heart is hard that Satan can move in and take away the Word, and that is precisely what he wants to do. Before the person can meditate on it, or think about it, or allow it to become in any sense significant, Satan snatches it away by dragging new allurements that are more appealing, new allurements that haven’t been rejected, in front of the attention, and those divert, and the Word is lost.

There is a second passage that would help us to understand his work of preventing, and that would be in 2 Corinthians, chapter 4, verse 3. Here the apostle Paul is talking somewhat about his own ministry, and about how God changed his life, and he was transformed from one who propagated the hidden things of dishonesty to one who spoke the truth. And he says in verse 3: “If our gospel be hidden, it is hidden to them that are lost, in whom the god of this age” – who is that – Satan – “has blinded the minds of them who believe not.” And here again, the inference is that Satan can only blind one who willfully won’t believe. That it isn’t the idea that God wants you saved and Satan wants you lost and you cast the deciding vote. It isn’t the idea that you’re being victimized by Satan; you’re sort of trapped, you’d like to vote for God, but you’re blinded. It’s the idea that because there is an unbelieving heart Satan can move in and make you blind.

Satan is in the business of preventing. And to such people with hard hearts, the gospel is irrelevant. In 1 Corinthians 1:18, “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish” – what – “foolishness.” Satan moves and snatches it away. But not only is Satan involved in the work of preventing in terms of his work in his own children, but secondly, in the work of perverting. He not only desires to prevent the truth, he desires to pervert the truth, so that what people are hearing isn’t the truth at all. And he does this by several means. Number one is by teaching false doctrine. Dr. Pentecost has a very helpful statement. This is what he says, and I quote: “Satan, of course, would rather not have to do the work of taking away the seed that has been sown. He would rather so control the one who is doing the

preaching that something other than the good seed of the Word of God is proclaimed. Now listen: think of the work that Satan has to accomplish when the Word is preached. If there are 500 people present when the true Word of God is planted in 500 hearts, he has to have 5O0 demons getting into 500 different lives to take out that which has been sown. Well, I don't know if that's true, he could have one very fast demon, or any multiple of such, but the point is obvious. What an economy of operation it is if he can have those people who think they will be taught the Word of God, hear some lie of the devil. He had to work with only one individual instead of 500. But knowing that the Word of God will be proclaimed, and that the truth of God will be declared, Satan has prepared to prevent the good seed of the Word from falling into the good ground if he can."

I'm sure that he's right in this sense, Satan would much rather pervert than prevent. That's after the fact. He is actively perverting by teaching false doctrine. Believe me, Satan's ministers speak every Sunday from thousands of pulpits, don't they? In 2 Corinthians, I would draw you to a familiar portion of Scripture that must be considered in relation to this, 2 Corinthians chapter 11, and verse 13, says: "For such are false prophets, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." You want to know where Satan is most active, it's within the framework of religion, and in our case, the framework of the Christian religion. "No marvel" – don't be surprised – "for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light; therefore it's no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness." Satan does the work of perverting by putting his own demon-influenced and demon-possessed people in pulpits, propagating false doctrine.

In 1 Timothy, for example, you're familiar with the passage in chapter 4, which says: "The Spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies and hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron." They go right ahead speaking hypocritical lies and it doesn't even seem to bother them. False prophets – and they are myriad – they are Satan's great weapon. In 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2 and verse 9, we find that Satan is going to do some amazing things, apparently during the period of the tribulation. It says, "Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." Not only do they sometimes speak lies that sound like the truth, but they sometimes do deeds that are Satanic but appear to be godly, and there we have again Satan aping God. Have you ever analyzed what the core of Satan's false doctrine is? Let me just give it to you in a nutshell; as one guy said, "If you can get this in your head, you've got it in a nutshell."

But just one thought – what is the basic false doctrine that Satan propagates? Number one is always denies the authority of Scripture – always. You see, if you can destroy the authority of this book, there isn't any authority anywhere, and then nothing matters – nothing. Everything becomes arbitrary. He began in the very beginning, in Genesis 3, when he said to Eve, "Hath God" – what – "said?" Did God say that? How do you know God said it? Casting aspersions on the truth of God; that's typical. Second Timothy chapter 4, he not only did it at the beginning, he's going to do it all the time till the end. "They shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables." Verse 3: "The

time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, false teachers, tickling their ears." Satan denies the authority of Scripture.

Secondly, Satan invariably denies the deity of Christ. False teachers will invariably deny the deity of Christ, denying the Lord that bought them, and that includes the doctrine of salvation. If you wipe out the deity of Christ, you've wiped out the doctrine of salvation with it; the two have to go together. If Christ was not the God-man, and if He was not God Almighty in human flesh, dying on the cross, then the atonement that He purported to accomplish, He didn't accomplish at all, and so salvation is gone. And that fits Satan, because his great lie in the area of salvation is that you're not saved by faith, you're saved by what? Works. There's only two ways to get saved; one is the religion of divine accomplishment, and the other is the religion of human achievement. That's Paul's great argument in the book of Galatians; that a man is not saved by human achievement but by divine accomplishment. So Satan denies the authority of Scripture, he denies the deity of Christ. "Test the spirits," said John in I John 4, "and find out whether they're real. Any spirit that denies Jesus is Christ, God come in the flesh, is spirit of antichrist."

Another thing that Satan always denies, along with the authority of Scripture, the deity of Christ, and salvation by grace through faith, is he always denies the second coming. Because the second coming is connected with judgment, and you'll find that usually false teachers have the most messed up eschatology conceivable because they've got to get rid of ultimate judgment. In 2 Peter 3, it tells us that the false teachers are saying, scoffingly, in verse 4, "Where is the promise of His coming, for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Peter says, "Are you willingly ignorant of the flood, or is that an oversight? All things haven't continued as they were." And so they are busy propagating false doctrine – denying the authority of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith and the second coming.

In its place, they propagate a lot of other false doctrine. For example, one of Satan's very favorites is that you can get away with rebellion; he loves that one. As I told you last week, Satan is trying to prove that rebellion against God works. That's the whole plan that he's trying to unfold, and that is what God is trying to show you is not the case. Rebellion against Him will not work. God wants the universe to know that. And so, Satan is able to run the gamut of his rebellion, that God may show every creature in the universe that rebellion run out as far as it will go won't work. But Satan wants men to believe that you can do just exactly what you want, and everything's going to come out all right. Rebellion will work. That's the lie.

I always remember reading the story of Hemingway. It was in an article written in *Playboy* magazine, which was quoted in *Eternity* magazine, where I read it. It stated the fact that – it was right after Hemingway's death – and it was regarding the fact that at his heyday, it was said that he had proven that you could sin and get away with it. He had destroyed biblical morality by doing exactly as he pleased and having the world on a string. It said he had won wars and tumbled women and done this

and had drunk as much as he – on and on it went, giving him every bit of credit for having just obliterated the biblical morality. And then 10 years later, to the very day, he took a gun, put it to the side of his head, and blew his brains out.

Satan says you can get away with rebellion. Don't you believe it. That's one of his false doctrines. You can sin all you want, everything will be all right.

Another thing that Satan is propagated historically is that idolatry is the thing to do. It's wonderful to have a god. He'd love everybody to have a god, as long as it's the wrong one. He doesn't want everybody to be an atheist, he just as soon have everybody a religionist, worshiping the god who isn't there. That's why the Bible tells us that the gods of the nations are demons. Man wants to worship a rock, Satan will let him worship the rock, and have a demon impersonate the god he thinks is in the rock, and hold him hooked to the rock. Psalm 106, I think it is, verse 36 says: "They serve their idols which were a snare to them; yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto demons." When they were sacrificing to idols they were sacrificing to demons, for demons had impersonated the god they assumed to exist. Satan would love people to be religious, as long as it's the wrong god. Satan even promotes angel worship. Read Colossians, chapter 2, verses 18 to 23; he would like people to worship angels. There are people today who do that. They do that even in the Roman Catholic Church. So, Satan perverts by false doctrine, counteracting true doctrine and propagating false doctrine.

Another way that Satan perverts is by molding a damning life style; not only by false doctrine, but just by trapping people in a damning life style, from which they are unable to be extricated. And we find that in Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 1 to 3: "And you hath He made alive who were dead in trespasses and sin, in which in time past you walked according to the course of the world." Satan would love to get people trapped in his system, so that they walk according to the course of the world, so that they are under the prince of the power of the air, so that he is working in them, "the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience." He wants to trap men, as it says in verse 3, "in the lusts of the flesh, so that they fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and are by nature the objects of God's wrath." Satan wants to get men trapped in a damning life style from which they cannot extricate themselves. Not just propagating theory, but dragging them into practice that becomes binding.

And then more specifically – and those may be somewhat general – more specifically, Satan works in his own children by oppression. And that's just a word; it isn't trying to be a distinct word, it's just a word that covers a lot of things: possession, obsession, oppression, whatever you like. He works in his own people by a very direct oppression. There are many ways to illustrate it. Through lusts – there are lots of different demons. Did you know that some of them are more rotten than others7 Apparently there are degrees of evil. Some of them apparently, by the terms used to describe them, are especially wicked ones. Satan would like to drive men into the total abandonment to their lust, and he was successful. If you'll look at Romans, chapter 1, you'll see, for the most part, that the world did just

that. It says in verse 24: “God gave them up.”

That’s the way they wanted to go, they exchanged God for Satan, “So God gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts to dishonor their own bodies between themselves.” Verse 26: “For this cause God gave them up to vile affections, for even their women did exchange the natural use for that which is against nature.” You’ll notice the body seems to be the major feature of 24, whereas the heart seems to be, the affection seems to be the major feature of verse 26, and the mind the major feature of verse 28. “Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind.” So, body, heart, and mind – body, affections and intellect – all corrupted. “And they were filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, whispers,” et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. “And even thought they knew the judgment of God,” verse 32 says, “that they who commit such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same but have pleasure in the others that do it.” And so Satan would desire to oppress people through abandoning them to their lusts. And my, don’t we see that in our world today? Don’t we see people who have lost control? They are totally abandoned to all the lusts.

Other ways that Satan can oppress his people, not only through their lusts – and I’ve talked to people who have gone so far in the area of lust that they despise themselves; there are people who have killed themselves because of that. I talked to a girl one time who couldn’t look in a mirror because the sight of herself made her sick. But he also oppresses his own people through sickness. The Bible in the gospel record gives us accounts of people who were made dumb – they couldn’t speak – by Satan and his demons, others who were made blind, others who had physical deformities, others who had epilepsy – people who actually had diseases that were propagated by Satan and his demons. Further, he not only oppresses his people through lusts and through sickness, but through mental illness. I believe that one of the great causes of mental illness in the world, and even today, obviously, is Satanic effort. Have you read Mark, chapter 5, recently, about the maniac in Gadera, the man living among the Gadarenes, who was living in the tombs? They were trying to bind him; he kept breaking everything with which they bound him, and he was cutting himself and he was crying out. He was a horrible creature. His insanity was due to the fact that he was absolutely possessed by demonic hosts. He was a maniac.

In Mark, chapter 9 and verse 22, there was a suicidal maniac who was trying to kill himself, strictly as a result of demonic power. I’m sure that not only much mental illness but much suicide is a result of the activity of Satan – his oppression of his own people. And then, of course, the illustration of Mark 5 also points out that Satan can oppress his people not only through insanity and suicidal desire, but even masochism, where they’re tearing themselves up. And then another thought that maybe you haven’t thought about too much, but Satan apparently also, when God allows, can oppress his own children through death. You say, “Where do you get that information?” Look with me for a minute at Revelation chapter 9, verse 14, 13 really, we’ll start.

“Sixth angel sounded, I heard the voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God” – it’s the sixth trumpet – “saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Loose the four angels who are bound in the river Euphrates.’ And the four angels were loosed, and prepared for an hour, a day, and a month, and a year to slay a third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand” - two hundred million – and I heard the number of them and I saw the horses in the vision” – and so forth; it describes them. “By these three was the third part of men killed, the fire, the smoke and the brimstone which issued out of their mouths.” Here is a Satanic army, it’s a demon-inspired army that literally destroys one third of the earth. God gives Satan the power to take life. So he can oppress his people through lust, through sickness, through mental disease, and through death, if God gives him that right.

How does Satan work in his own children? Through preventing and through perverting. Let me give you a third way – through politicking. Satan works in his own people by influencing governments and nations. You say, “How does Satan influence governments and nations?” I had a most interesting conversation about a year ago with a young man who had been very involved in a society called the Mark Age Society which is a very upper echelon, demonic, séance-oriented, witchcraft-oriented group. They have contacts with many mediums. They meet in Santa Monica in a very large house, and they’re very wealthy people that are involved in it; some of them are very well-known people in the music industry. And he was meeting with them quite regularly in this Mark Age Society, and he was finding out amazing bits of information, which he was passing on to me. And I was getting information to which nobody in the world was exposed except this little group of people.

He was telling me, for example, that those people have the knowledge of certain demons, and they know where certain other demons are assigned. Now, whether or not you can believe all the demons say is a good question. But what he found out, be it true or not, is very interesting. Likely there’s some truth to it. He was saying that the demon who is in charge of America, the one who is responsible for propagating certain demonic influence in America, is very high up in the U.N. He indwells a certain figure who has some connection with America in the United Nations. Now, that’s just one little piece of information he gave me. I don’t want to tell you too much, or you’re liable to get your brain boggled. He also said they told him where in the universe – supposedly on Mars and Jupiter – was the location of the headquarters of the demonic force, and this all was being passed on to him from mediums and spirits that they were contacting. And he was saying that the demons have a network in the governments of countries like our own by which they control these countries.

Now, if you think that’s something brand new, you ought to go back and read the tenth chapter of Daniel. That’s nothing new at all. Demons have been politicking since the beginning. When Satan was unmasked in Isaiah 14, and when he was unmasked in Ezekiel 28, both times the prophet was really speaking to a human ruler, wasn’t he? And then going behind that ruler, to the Satan who was really there; in the case of Daniel, chapter 10, you’ve got certain nations being governed by men, but

men being possessed by demons. So Satan has always been active politicking. In fact, when he tempted our Lord in Matthew chapter 4, he had the audacity to say to Him, “If You will bow down to me, I will give You” what? “All” what? “The kingdoms of the world.” Well, you know something? He could have done that. That’s the astounding fact.

Ephesians 6 says, listen: “When you realize the reality of the Christian life, you will realize that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness” where? “In the heavenlies.” Demons are really ruling this domain around us; from Babel on – Satan has run the nations of the world by his demon hosts, and God has allowed it, and God has kept control of it by the Holy Spirit, who is a restrainer. But nevertheless, Satan is active. So he operates in his own children by preventing, perverting, and politicking.

How does he operate on Christians? Let’s look at that. How does he operate in our lives, you and me? Why, this is really important; I’ll give you several ways. Number one: by creating doubt. One of the things he loves to do with Christians is to make us doubt; to make us struggle with reality. In the last two days I went through such a struggle in my own mind over some doubt. You know what Satan was saying to me? This whole Christian thing is a bunch of baloney. That’s right. And I’d say, “Oh, no, it isn’t. I didn’t come this far to hear that.” And I struggled with it. And I reassured my confidence by looking at the Word of God and by reciting verses; that “I know my Redeemer lives, and I know that what I’ve committed unto Him, He’s able to keep against that day.” And I started saying all the “I know” verses. Satan tempts us all that way. He loves it.

In the very beginning, in Genesis 3, what did he tempt Eve with? Doubt God. Doubt God’s word. Doubt God’s goodness. God made a mistake. He should never have done that to you – dirty deal you got. Doubt God’s concern. Doubt God’s security. And that’s why Paul says, in two places, “put on the helmet of the hope of salvation, and get rid of those doubts.” If He said He saved you, that’s what He meant, and when Satan comes with the big *rhomphaia*, the big broadsword of doubt, it will glance off that helmet. You are His. You are secure.

Another thing he likes to do, secondly, is this: not only creating doubt, but motivating persecution. Satan loves to motivate persecution. We see him creating doubt in Genesis chapter 3. We see him motivating persecution in Revelation chapter 2. Revelation 2:10 says: “Fear none of the things which you shall suffer,” and this is the church of Smyrna, “behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, you may be tried.” Here we have an illustration that Satan loves to persecute the church. In fact, we’ve just taken up where Israel left off. He’s always persecuted Israel; read Revelation chapter 12, it’s all there. He’s always persecuted the people, the woman that brought forth the man-child, people of God. He persecutes the church today. And here we find him in the church in Smyrna, giving us an illustration of the fact that “the devil cast some of you into prison, you may be tried and have tribulations 10 days. Be faithful unto death and I’ll give you a crown of life.” Satan wants to persecute

the church.

So Satan creates doubt. Satan persecutes the church. Expect it – that's what he's going to do. Get ready for it. Three – and we're going by these quick, so hang on – Satan loves to hinder service. He's set about to hinder our service. Sometimes it's a tremendous struggle to get through everything to get to this place to teach you. Now, I don't know if there's any connection or not, but last night I couldn't sleep all night. I was sick to my stomach all night; I kept waking up with terrible pain in my stomach. And I just spent the time praying, saying, "God, I don't know if this is really what I think it is, but if it is - get him! I know he doesn't want me messing around with him tomorrow night, don't let it stop." And then I got here, and I realized I'd forgotten in the first two services today to announce that church was gonna start at 6:00 instead of 7:00 – nobody will be here. And he kept me well, and now no one will be here. But you were here. And we dilly-dallied around a few minutes, just to make sure a few others got here that we knew needed to hear this.

Satan likes to hinder our service. Let me show you where that is in the New Testament. First Thessalonians, chapter 2, and verse 18 – as I said, these aren't speculations; these are just biblical illustrations. First Thessalonians 2:18, and we're just pulling out the point that says: "Wherefore we would have come unto you." And, you know, when Paul left Thessalonica, the desire of his heart was to return, he wanted to return, and there are a lot of speculations about why he never got to go back. Some say, "Well, it was because Jason was bonded, and if they went back Jason would have forfeited the bond." Others say that the polyarchs, the people who ruled the city, would have been very hard to deal with. So whatever it was, it says in verse 18: "We would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again but" what? "Satan hindered us." Satan is in the business of hindering the ministry. Expect it. If you think, "Well, I think I'm going to develop a ministry, and everything is going to be" – and as soon as you run into the first obstacle, "Op, I'd better quit; apparently it is not God's will."

You better check it out. You better check it out well, because it's Satan who hinders. He's busy doing that. And I'm sure the more effective you are, the more he hinders. In fact, the Apostle Paul went through his ministry with a terrible hindrance; he called it "a thorn in the" what? "In the flesh," and he said it "was a messenger of" whom? "Of Satan sent to buffet me." It's always there banging away at me, and Satan wants to make me miserable, and he wants to make me quit, but I stay at it. And if God says that's good for me to have that struggle to keep me humble, that's fine because when I'm weak, then I'm what? Strong. And believe me, with all of Satan's hindering, he never short-circuits God's plans. He just filters out the weaklings.

Fourth, Satan not only hinders our service, but – and here's a biggie – he infiltrates the church. He infiltrates the church. He's really good at this. You say, "How does he do it, John?" First of all, through phony Christians; he gets the church to take in people who appear to be Christians, and we really can't tell them apart, and they're really the devil's people. And then he gets them on the inside and

they really create havoc, and they do it a lot of ways. They do it by having a lifestyle that doesn't match up to what their claim is, and so it confuses the world as to what a Christian is. They become difficult to deal with. We don't know how to handle them. Many things. They usually try to worm their way into leadership, so that you've got Satan getting a voice in everything.

In Matthew 13:38, it says: "The field is the world, the good seed are the children of the kingdom, the tares are the children of the wicked one, the enemy that sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels." The only way the wheat and the tares are ever going to be separated is by God in the end. We can't always tell them. Satan infiltrates the church with false Christians. Grace Church has got them. I know we've got them, because Satan does that. If I knew who they were we'd do everything we could to bring them to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and if they were apostate we'd throw them out, but we can't find them. Find some of them once in a while; sooner or later they have a way of being unmasked, but not all of them. We know Satan does his work. If you're a tare, we know you're here, we just don't know who you are.

Not only does he infiltrate the church through false Christians, but through false teachers. We saw that earlier. He loves to get false information in the church, somebody propagating false doctrine that sounds good, somebody who appears to be approved by the leadership of the church, teaching something that sounds okay, but it's not true. The church is always loaded with false teachers, always has been, always has been. First Timothy chapter 4, we read earlier, it's going to happen in the end times, "speaking lies and hypocrisy." First John 4, he says, "Look for it; they're going to be there." Second Peter 2, he says, "You're going to have false teachers; they're always going to be around. "There were false prophets and there will be false teachers among, you secretly bringing in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction; and many shall follow their evil or pernicious ways, by whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." And that's why in the armor of the Christian we are given the sword of what? The Spirit, which is the what? The Word of God, because we've got to counteract Satan's infiltration of the church through false doctrine.

He infiltrates through false Christians and false doctrine, and one other thing, and this is really critical, he infiltrates the church through division. Satan loves to divide the church, just brings him glee. Let me give you an illustration of this In 2 Corinthians, chapter 2; this is most important. Second Corinthians, chapter 2, and verse 5, I'm going to read it to you from the New American Standard, which helps to unscrew the unscrutable here; it's a little difficult in the King James. Verse 5: "But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree, in order not to say too much, to all of you." If somebody has been trouble to you, it's not to me, but to you that he's been trouble. "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted by the majority." Now here we have a man who created trouble. Some say he's equated with the man of moral malcharacter in I Corinthians 5; that's a moot point. Whoever he was, he was an immoral man at some point, and Paul had instructed the Corinthians to deal with that man.

There was a letter written between First and Second Corinthians, and in that letter Paul had very likely instructed them to deal with the man. Now he's heard back from Titus that the Corinthians had taken the essential step in disciplining the man. There were perhaps only a minority who disagreed. The majority agreed, and there was a disciplining of the man. Now Paul is satisfied at this point that the man has been sufficiently disciplined, and that the discipline was sufficient to accomplish what it was intended to accomplish. And he is concerned that they cease to be penal administrators, and turn to the opposite gracious privilege of being forgiving and restoring friends. And so he says, "Look, if he's caused sorrow, it isn't to me; I mean don't prolong it for my sake. I mean I've had enough. I'm satisfied, I hope you are. He's had enough pain; sufficient to the man is the punishment."

Now, verse 7: "On the contrary, you rather should forgive him and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." In other words, instead of his punishment being remedial, it will simply drive him into despair if you don't lay off of him. Once a man has been disciplined, up to the point where he repents, he then is to be restored, right? Galatians 6:1. If you continue to browbeat the man, or continue to punish the man, instead of having a remedial effect, the discipline will have a despairing effect, and you'll drive him into sorrow. So he says in verse 8: "I would beseech you that you just confirm your love to him." Just let him know you love him. "This is the reason that I wrote you, that I might know the proof of you, whether you be obedient in all things. To whom you forgive anything, I forgive it also." If you've forgiven the man, I have too – don't stretch it out for my sake. "If I forgave anything to whom I forgave it, it's for your sakes forgave I it."

I want unity in the church, and you've got to have forgiveness to have unity. If you create this problem in the church by not forgiving the man, and by browbeating the man, and maintaining this authoritarian penal attitude toward the man, you're going to have division in the church and a lack of forgiveness. And verse 11 says: "You better forgive the man, you better love him, lest Satan should get an advantage of us for we are not ignorant of his devices." And what are his devices? He loves to split the church, and there's no greater way to split the church than to have a discipline situation, says Paul, where there's an unforgiving spirit. His device is division. "Once he has been disciplined, love him."

Listen, what is the general principle? Listen to me: an overemphasis on doctrine to the exclusion of love can be deadly to the church. Do you notice that Satan's subtlety here is that he moves right in behind the church acting doctrinally correct?

They had done the proper thing, and that just made a perfect move for Satan to move in behind sound doctrine and bring about one of his devices. As we've said so many times, the church is built on two things: love and sound doctrine. Too much sound doctrine, not enough love - division. Too much love, not enough sound doctrine - confusion.

Another thing that Satan does, and this is the major thing, He tempts us to sin. He tempts us to sin. Now, he may do it through your flesh, he may do it through the world, he may do it with his demons, he may do it by himself, but he tempts you to sin. He is the tempter. Now, I'm going to list for you, just very briefly because our time is gone, the sins particularly that are listed in the Bible that he tempts us toward. Number one: he tempts us to trust in our own resources; you ever noticed that? He tempts us to trust in our own resources. I woke up this morning, finally, after getting to sleep for a while. My wife said, "How's the pain?" And I said, "It's a little better." And I said, "I think I know one of the reasons that God let me get sick last night."

And what I expressed in so many terms, not these exact words, was the fact that I had myself prepared for today. I believe in preparation. And one of the temptations that I fall into is to trust in my preparation, rather than the Spirit of God, 'cause I do my homework. And I said, "I just think that what I needed to do was spend the night realizing that I couldn't open my mouth unless God allowed me to do it." Satan would love to make you trust in your own resources. You know why? Because you can't handle Satan in your own resources; did you know that? You can't handle him.

I'll give you an illustration. Turn to 1 Chronicles 21. You know, Israel was having a lot of wars at this time, as a rather typical period in their life, struggles with enemies, and David, of course, wanted to be victorious, so look what happens in verse 1 of 1 Chronicles 21. "Satan stood up against Israel, and be tempted David to do" what? "Number Israel" – count heads. "And David said to Joab and the rulers of the people, 'Go number Israel from Beersheba to Dan.'" That's from top to bottom. "'And bring the number of them to me that I may know it.'" I want to know how big a nation we've got and how big an army we've got. You go out there and you count every head. "And Joab answered, 'The Lord make His people an hundred times as many more as they are, but my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? Why then doth my lord require this?'" Look, if we're all working for God, what's the difference how many we've got? Boy, Joab, you better watch your lip; you're talking to the king, even if you are right.

Verse 4: "Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab, wherefore Joab departed," and he did what he was supposed to do, obeyed the king, went throughout all Israel and came to Jerusalem. That's a big job, going and count everybody – census. "And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David, and they all of Israel were a million and a hundred thousand men who drew the sword." That's an army, folks. That's a good army. "And Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew the sword." And David was saying, "Oh, oh, are we in good shape. Come one, come all – we'll take on anybody." Verse 7 – I like this: "And God was displeased with this thing, therefore He smote Israel." "Let's see you handle that, David. You don't need Me, I don't need you." Who enticed David to number the people, verse 1 says? Who did it? Satan would love to make you trust your own resources. When it comes to chapter 6 of Ephesians, and verse 10, Paul says: "Be strong in" what? "The Lord, and in the power of your own might." Is that what it says? "Power of His

might." Satan wants you to trust your own resources.

Second thing, Satan tempts us to lose faith in God. He really does. Satan tempts us to lose faith in God, to give up on God. Luke 22:31, here we find the apostle with the foot-shaped mouth, Peter again, and all of his problems: "And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon,'" which the Lord said daily, probably, "Simon, Simon." I think God was more eager for the glorification of Peter than any other person. "The Lord said, 'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you like wheat.'" You know what sifting was? Get the chaff and the grain separated; take a basket, throw it up in the wind, the wind blows the chaff away, the seed falls down, and you've got separation. "Satan's trying to separate you, Peter, he's trying to throw you in the wind and blow away something, and leave something left." What is he trying to do? "Oh, I've prayed for you that your" what? "Faith fail not." You know, what I believe Satan was trying to do is separate Peter from his faith. He was trying in the wind of adversity to blow away the faith of Peter, so Peter didn't trust anymore. "I prayed for you that your faith fail not." I'll tell you something. If He prayed for him that his faith failed not, then his faith failed not. Satan wanted to separate him, see. The devil wanted to sift him, to separate him from his faith. Satan would love to separate you from your faith – so you cease to believe God.

In 1 Peter, we find the very same thing illustrated to us in chapter 5, verse 8. It says this: "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion walking about, seeking whom he may devour." Now listen, he's going to devour you. What does he mean by this? "Whom resist steadfast in," and the article isn't there, "in faith." Satan wants to gobble you up in the sense that he wants to destroy your faith. That's why in Ephesians 6:16, it says: "And above all taking the shield of what? "Faith, with which you shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked." Satan wants you to trust your own resources, and he wants to separate you from your faith in God.

Another thing, he wants you to lie. Satan loves you to speak lies. In Acts 5:3, he moved right inside Ananias and Sapphira, Peter looked them eyeball to eyeball and said: "Why has Satan entered you that you should lie to the Holy Spirit?" Satan wants you to lie. Just remember, when you lie, when you shade the truth, who is the source of that. Fourthly, Satan wants to tempt you to immorality. He is very busy doing this, believe me. He's got the media now as the agency, among other things. One good verse on this is 1 Corinthians 7:5. You know, sometimes in counseling sessions, you get this situation where the man comes in and says, "Well, I've got to get my – my wife and my marriage straightened out." And you say, "Why?" And he says, "Well, because my wife won't sleep with me until I change, and I can't take this." Is that a good thing to do? So you're not getting along with your husband, start depriving him?

Look at 1 Corinthians 7:5, it will give us some help here. Let me give you what the Greek would say: "Stop depriving one the other." If you're doing that, cut it out. Don't do that, "Unless it be with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer." If you're doing it for that reason, that's all right. Not too many do, it's a good way to do it. For any other reason, cut it out "and come

together." Why? "That Satan tempt you not for your lack of self-control." If you do that to your partner, you're putting them in a position to be out of control with that area of desire. Do you see? And Satan would love to tempt people to be out of control. One of the areas where Satan wants to tempt us, illustrated here, is the area of immorality.

Another area – and we'll hasten and be done, and I've kept you too long, but that's all right – it's important truth. One other thought: he wants to tempt us to be preoccupied with the world, and we saw this so much we're not even going to beggar the point, except to just tell you that 1 John 2:15 says: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. But all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world." Satan wants you to get absorbed in the system, because that means you've turned your back on God.

Second Timothy 4:10, one of the most pensive statements in all the Bible, Paul said: "For Demas has" what? "Forsaken me, having" what? "Loved this present world." Satan wants to tempt you to trust your own resources, to lose faith in God, to get separated from your faith like wheat and chaff, to lie, to be immoral, and to be preoccupied with the world.

Satan also wants to tempt you to be proud – to be proud. Oh, does he want to do that, and he does it a lot of ways, but one illustration is 1 Timothy 3:6. When you're choosing bishops, or pastors, or – or elders in the church, it says: "Don't choose a novice," that means a recent convert, "lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." The devil loves to push people up and make them proud, because when they do that they collapse. I can tell you; I've seen that in the church throughout my life, recent converts, immature people given too much responsibility. Pride goes to their head, and the fall is great.

One other one that I can relate to, and you can too, that the Bible tells us specifically; Satan loves to tempt us to discouragement – to discouragement. He loves the Christian to just get tired of it all. First Peter 5:6: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care on Him, for He cares for you; be sober, be vigilant because your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour, whom resist steadfast in faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you've suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." Satan will move in, he'll shoot at your faith, he'll try to wear it down, he'll bring discouragement into your life. Verse 7 says, "Take all your care," and do what with it? "Put it on Christ." And then read verse 10: "The God of all grace, when He's done with all your suffering, He's going to make you" what? "Perfect." Hang in there, friends, God's on your team. Don't get discouraged.

These are the ways Satan attacks us. He attacks his own children by preventing, perverting and politicking. He clobbers us by making us trust our own resources, by causing us to lose faith in God, to lie, to be immoral, to love the world, to be proud, to be discouraged with spiritual struggles – and that way he can try to gain the victory. But you know something? We have a great promise. In every bit of that temptation, beloved, listen to this – James 4:7 says don't run. It says: "Resist the devil and he will" what? "Flee from you." Let's pray.

Father, we do acknowledge Your power and superiority, absolute sovereignty, and we know that greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. We thank You for the victory that is ours in Christ. Father, we thank You that that victory belongs to every man who names the name of Jesus Christ. And, O God, we would pray tonight that if there's any dear soul in our midst who has not confessed Jesus as Lord, who has not come out of the power of Satan, who has not been born into the Kingdom of God, a child, an heir, a joint-heir with Christ, that that might happen tonight; that the miracle of the new birth might be accomplished by the Holy Spirit. O God, may it happen tonight.

And those of us who are Christians, Father, help us to be wary, help us to be alert, to see how our adversary operates, to build our defense in the area where we are vulnerable. Thank You, Father, for giving us this precious book, and opening it to us to understand not only you, but the enemy, that we might be able to follow in the train of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the victory that has already been won. We pray in His blessed name. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).