

Truths That Transform, “Satan and our Struggle”, Chris Faith, BCF 2010-5-2

The Black Death swept across Europe, and Asia in the first half of the 14th C. Some calculate that more than a third of Europe’s population died. In 1348 the Pope sent word to Paris seeking the opinion of the medical faculty as to the cause. They determined that the death was caused by an unfortunate alignment of Jupiter, Mars and Saturn that occurred in 1345. Their prescription for cure involved the following: “Eat no poultry or waterfowl. Avoid pork and old beef. Much exercise is dangerous. Cook nothing in rainwater. Olive oil with food is deadly, and bathing is extremely dangerous.”

Today most scholars conclude the agent was a bacteria, and the vector of infection was rat fleas. So we avoid the plague by pest control. Once again we can enjoy olive oil. And though some young boys may disagree, bathing is no longer dangerous. ☺

The plague killed millions in part because of misdiagnosis. Misunderstanding the enemy opened them to further death and illness.

The same is true in our Christian lives. Many believers are rendered powerless. Others are plagued with negative thoughts, self-destructive behavior, relational chaos, or apathy. The spiritual plague rolls on because we have misdiagnosed the problem.

As a Christian you must realize that you are at war. We struggle in a battle to the death with a powerful Adversary, and an army of evil spirits who are determined to stop God and to cripple us from being useful servants for God’s glory. Ignorance will not help just as carrying a pocket full of posies did little to stop the plague.

The devil is real. His power is great. (SLOWLY) You may know people who deny the reality of evil spirits and mock the existence of a real Satan. The scholars of Paris denied that fleas could be the vector, but while they gazed at Saturn and Jupiter thousands died daily. The Bible is clear. We are at war with powerful forces of darkness.

Today we continue studying “Truths that Transform” and wrap up a two sermon mini-series on the reality of the spiritual battle. Last week Sandy shared on two elements of our threefold conflict. We are in conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil. Today we consider the reality of Satan in our spiritual conflict.

So this morning we will consider three aspects of Satan and his evil army. We shall see first: Satan is a definite foe, a deceitful foe, and a defeated foe. Satan is a definite foe, a deceitful foe, and a defeated foe.

God tell us in Ephesians 6:11-12 *Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

Shall we pray?

Consider first that we have a **definite foe**. Though many of our friends laugh at the mention of literal evil spirits, and think of demons as a figment of primitive religions, we have seen evil in this town that points to the contrary. Psychological struggles from a distressed childhood don’t explain the sort of violence seen here in the past years. More is operative, and we would be foolish to deny that.

But from the earliest books of the Bible, God declares that mankind has an enemy. In the book of Job, written around the time of Moses, we see an evil spirit, Satan coming before God to tempt Him in order to destroy Job. Satan is neither a force nor an idea. He is a real spirit being. Let’s look at some background. (slide).

Satán is actually the Hebrew name of this evil foe. (Hebrew) Satán means “the Adversary”, one who opposes God and His kingdom. In the New Testament “Satanas” is used interchangeably with “the devil.” He is also called:

- a. the dragon, "the serpent of old" Rev. 12:9 20:2
- b. "the prince of this world" John 12:31 14:30
- c. "the prince of the power of the air" Eph. 2:2
- d. "the god of this world" 2 Cor. 4:4 and
- e. "the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience" Eph. 2:2.

(Easton' Bible Dictionary)

Satan did not begin as a dark foe, but one of God's mighty angels created for good. We have an inference of his origin in Isaiah 14:12-14. Let's look there (slide). **Isaiah 14:12-14** *"How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! "But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'*

God made Satan as a beautiful, glorious angel, like a morning star, designed to serve and glorify God, but he rebelled in pride. Rather than submitting to God's glorious plan in humble obedience, he decided to set himself up above God, and to be a god unto himself. Curiously this is the very temptation the serpent used to entice Adam and Eve into disobedience. Do you notice a key word repeated over and over? Yes, I. I will ascend. I will raise, I will sit. I will ascend. I will make myself.” We see the sin of pride as the chief sin and one that Satan continues to use in his plan to trip us up.

In the New Testament (slide) we see other details regarding Satan's activity:

- a. He tempted our Lord in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11)
 - b. He is "Beelzebub, the prince of the devils" (Matt 12:24)
 - c. He entered into Judas, enticing him to betray Christ (John 13:27)
- (slide)

Ephesians 6:12 (read) tells us that the devil has organized a demonic hierarchy of principalities and powers to rule over the nations. The lesser demons are organized under their control to promote evil, foment idolatry, and thwart the work of God. As a Christian, you have an enemy. If you are not a Christian you live under his rule of darkness. This helps explain our painful struggle for holy living and the difficulty to live full of joy and power as children of God. But the only way we can stand and fight victoriously is by recognizing we are at war and by using the armor God has given us.

Satan and the demons are created angelic beings. They are fallen angels who are localized, finite beings. They are not all powerful or all knowing. They cannot read our minds, but are careful observers, and have been around since God created them so they have observed many generations. They do not die, nor can they multiply.

Let's continue in 1 Peter 5:8-9 *Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.*

Precious one, God compares Satan with a lion, not simply because of the roar, but because he can maim and destroy. We saw last week that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one, and only the gospel of Christ can truly set us free. Since our enemy

is real, and murderously dangerous, God commands us to be sober, to watch and to pray. We will see more in a minute how we can stand against him.

One verse that has helped me to recognize the power of the evil one is Jude 6. (slide) *But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"*

Not even Michael the archangel railed against Satan. Michael understood his place and Satan's superior power, so he called on the Lord to rebuke the adversary. We should take note and follow his example. The only strength we have to confront the spirits of darkness is in the name of the Lord Jesus. There is power in Jesus' name, and we are in Him. We are not to confront Satan in our own strength, but in the strength of the Lord.

Our adversary is a powerful murderer. He holds the power of death and stalks about like a roaring lion, seeking those whom he may devour. He controls an army of other fallen angels whom he militates against us.

So we see we have a definite foe. Secondly let's consider that we have a deceptive foe. You may ask: exactly how does the Adversary operate? His primary tool is the lie. He twists the truth for he has no truth in him.

Listen again to God's Word: (SLIDE)

John 8:44 *"He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

2 Corinthians 11:14 *"Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."*

Satan's operates primarily by deception. He is a liar, indeed the father of lies. The Adversary operates by casting doubt on the goodness and power of God. He wants you to doubt God's love, His goodness, His mercy and His perfect plan. He wants you to think that God doesn't care, or that He doesn't know what's best for you, or that He is no longer in control.

Satan entices by half truths. His falsehoods are slippery and sly. He uses subtle innuendoes, and entices us to move away from God by small, slow steps. A tiny lie believed here, an unforgiven offense there. We sin and call it little slip up... No one will know, he whispers. Going to sleep with anger in your heart, speaking malice, or harboring lust, and the demons make their foothold in the soul.

Notice the devil doesn't go about in a red cape with a pitch fork. He disguises himself as an angel of light, as beautiful, pure and good. Demons draw men from God while looking good. They lure us with the pull of the world and the enticements of the flesh. Like a poison concoction in a refreshing drink, they entice men to swallow their lies totally unnoticed.

When we believe Satan's subtle lies and disobey God, we choose to submit to the evil one. And by repeated sin, un-forsaken sin, evil one gains a foothold. By cunning and guile the demons of darkness take control of people's minds one thought at a time. There they breed hatred and murder. There they entice to vengeance, and wrath. There they destroy families with selfishness, and promote unbelief and complacency. But for the Christian the battle against the evil one is primarily fought in our minds.

Dear ones, Jesus is the truth. He sets us free from the evil one by the truth of the gospel, and one truth at a time. That's why we need to preach the gospel to ourselves

every day. We are to contemplate the truth of who God is in his holiness and love and power, and apply God's resources to release us from the snares set by our evil foes.

Demons operate by seeding thoughts in our minds, directly or from other people. Consider Jesus' interaction with Peter when Christ declared that He had come to die for our sin. Let's look together in (slide) Matt 16: 21-23 *From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."*

Unknowingly to Peter, Satan introduced this thought into his mind. Peter simply voiced Satan's suggestion: that Jesus not submit to God's will. But notice Jesus' reaction. "Get behind me Satan. You are a stumbling block to me!" Jesus sternly rebuked Peter, and identified the source of that evil thought.

Now, let me clarify. Satan can control the lives of unbelievers, but when a person is saved they are freed from Satan's power. When you became a true Christian, you were delivered from the kingdom of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of God's beloved Son. But the Adversary doesn't stop struggling against us simply because we have been saved. You see, Ephesians 6:12 is written for us. Christians need to wear the full armor of God. The devil knows he has lost your eternal soul, but he still wants to render you useless to God, crippled and pitiful, so that no one would want to follow the path of Christ that you have chosen to live. But as a child of God you are a threat to Satan's army. You have the resources necessary to advance the kingdom of God through the Word and prayer. That is why so much of the devil's energy is focused in the war on the saints.

You see, dear ones, when we don't fill our minds with the truth, when we don't take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, we give place to the lies of Satan and his demons. We are to battle to fill our minds with whatever is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, we are to dwell on these things. We are to strap on the belt of truth and take up the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, the truth of God's Word.

But sadly, though God has given us the equipment we need to stand firm, some will fall away. Listen again to the Holy Spirit.

(slide) I Timothy 4:1-2 *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.*

Some who see themselves as believers will not walk in humble obedience. Some sadly will abandon the faith, and leave Christ. Perhaps some here have believed the lies of deceiving spirits. Sadly this has happened in many organizations and churches. Harvard and Princeton University were established to prepare Gospel preachers for the expanding American colonies. Now institutionally they are far from Christ. Christian denominations have left the teaching of Holy Scriptures, and now proclaim empty words to tickle the ears of their hearers. Some preach law rather than grace, and exalt their

leader rather than God. Others teach that all religions lead to the supreme being, however you wish to define Him or her.

Numerous organizations and denominations that call themselves Christian are none other than teachers of the doctrines of demons. They advance false doctrine. They deny that Jesus is the only way to peace with God.

One thing we need to watch for. These groups want you to read their literature rather than the Bible. They want to filter things before they get to you, so you are obliged to see things through their glasses. O they'll talk to you about the Bible, but filtered through their grid, and thus they slip in their deceptions.

Because our enemy is a deceiver we must be on guard. We need to know this book. Not what people say about what's in the Bible, but read it yourself. Study it. Memorize and meditate on this Holy Word, then you will make your way profitable and then you will have success.

Examine what you hear and holding it up to the line of the gospel. When even Peter acted out of line with the gospel, Paul confronted him publicly to his face. May we have the same wisdom and strength!

Satan is called the accuser of the brethren. He wants to make you feel like trash and deny who you are in Christ. He wants you to focus on your sin, rather than on the cross of Christ. He tells us to see or sin rather than Jesus' righteousness. He curses and condemns you so that you feel useless, unloved and powerless in the hands of God. These are his deceitful schemes.

So we have seen that Satan is a **definite foe, and a deceitful foe**. Lastly consider how Satan is a defeated foe. Satan is a defeated foe. Let's look at what God declares about Satan's defeat. (slide)

Luke 10:18 *And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.*

Romans 16:20 *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.*

Hebrews 2:14 (Jesus) *Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,*

1John 3:8 *The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.*
(slide)

Isaiah 42:13 *The LORD will go forth like a warrior, He will arouse His zeal like a man of war. He will utter a shout, Yes, He will raise a war cry. He will prevail against His enemies.*

Matthew 16:18 *on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*

Revelation 20:10 *And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

Beloved Christian, Jesus is the victor. He has defeated Satan and burst open the gates of death. He is a mighty warrior able to save. The armies of darkness, though they are still unchained today, will all be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone! Satan's defeat is sure.

Jesus cried out on the cross, IT IS FINISHED, and won the conflict against our mortal foe. By His death and resurrection He has canceled our sin debt, set us free and given us eternal life. We no longer live under the power of death or sin, and cannot be controlled any longer by God's enemy. Today Satan still rules this world, but soon his doom is sure. The day comes when all things will be put beneath the feet of the victorious Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel is the power of God for salvation. There is power in Jesus name.

"The Voice of the Martyrs" organization recently published an article about a man named Kishan, who is a Pakistani from Hindu background. Kishan shared his testimony with a group of Muslim men and told them the wonderful changes Christ had brought to his life. "For four years my daughter Aster was demon possessed; everybody knows that many times she was in a critical situation," he told them. "I met with the Christian Mahir for three months, from June to August 2009. She prayed for my daughter Aster, and she received healing. This healing led my family to Jesus Christ. Aster received water baptism as well. We were in the dark, but now we are in the light because Jesus Christ is our savior who healed my daughter."

The men did not harm Kishan, but Muslim extremists later attacked and beat Kishan's son "Hassan." The Muslims threatened Hassan, saying, "Islam is the only option you have to convert. Why did you choose to accept Christianity? Get lost from here; otherwise we will burn you and your house." Following the attack, Hassan responded, "We found a new life in Jesus Christ, we cannot deny him, and we are ready to sacrifice anything."

Kishan's testimony touched the heart of one of his persecutors. Now that man "Bashir" and his family have accepted Jesus Christ and have secretly been praying for their faith to grow strong," VOM contacts said."

Because Satan's tactics may be different in different parts of the world, we may not see the same sorts of activity in all places, but Christ is victorious over all the earth. The kingdom of God is coming. That's why we pray: THY KINGDOM COME. But

But the question we need to answer is: how we may walk in Jesus' victory? How can we use our spiritual armor to stand firm in this evil day? Let me make some suggestions: (SLIDE)

1. Submission to God: James 4:7-8 *Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* We gain power over the enemy by abiding closer to Christ. He is our shield and defender, our stronghold in whom we trust. So your first step is to seek continually to submit to God and abide close to Him. Like a little lamb that stays very near to the side of his good shepherd, so you must follow Christ very closely.

2. Abiding in the Word 1 John 2:14 *I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

Your experience of Jesus' power over sin and evil grows as you become increasingly skilled with this Word. The Bible is the sword of the Spirit, and you will not be effective in the fight until you learn to use this tool skillfully. But as you let God's

Word abide in you, the devil will be rendered powerless to deceive you, and you will find strength to help free others from the lies of the Adversary.

3. Intercession: Ezekiel 22:30 *"I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.* God is looking for men who are willing to join with Christ, who constantly lives to make intercession for us. We will not experience mighty victory in the fight until we learn to praise God and pray for others. Mark 9:28-29 Jesus tells us some people only be freed from spirits by prayer.

Men, I want to challenge you to pray every day for your wife and children. How many struggling marriages would turn around if only we men spent more time on our knees? How many more of our children would be spared from sin and unbelief? How many more of our colleagues would find Christ?

4. Single hearted devotion: Revelation 12:11 *And they overcame him (Satan) because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.*

Let's rejoice in Jesus our Champion. There is no power in us, but Jesus has power to spare! And there is power in our testimony of what He has done in us, so let's tell others the great things He is doing in our lives. There is power in our testimonies of God's grace and His forgiveness in our lives. Tell people about how Christ has freed you from sin and guilt. What healing has Jesus worked in your soul? What deliverance do you enjoy as God's beloved child?

We need not fear death, for what can man do to us? To live is Christ and to die is gain. God wants us to wake up to His love and power and to believe anew that Christ is a mighty warrior, who has come to undo the works of the evil one. He wants us to wake from slumber and to put on the full armor of God, to submit to Him and stand strong, doing exploits for the glory of the Lamb.

O dear ones, Satan and our struggle are real. We have a definite foe, a deceitful foe, and a defeated foe, but Jesus has conquered him and delivered us to live in his light and love and joy. He has called us to join Him in the fight to see the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. In Him we are more than conquerors, so let's live that way.

Let us pray.

If we are holding onto this life as more precious than Christ, we will not know His power. If we are holding onto our sin as more precious than Christ, we will not know His power. If we are holding onto our reputation or our comfort, or our wealth, more than we treasure Christ, we will not see victory as He wishes. He wants you to overcome, but He must first have the preeminence in your life.

And otherwise it is far better to die and be with Christ. O shall we not pray that God give us such a passion for His glory and for the advance of His kingdom that we be willing to spend and be spent for His glory. That we overcome because our hearts are fixed on Jesus who shed His blood to cleanse us from all sin, and who broke the power of death by His death in our place. O that we love Him better than life, to be able to look death in the face and laugh because death has been defeated by the resurrected Christ, and we shall live with Him forever.

They are present and seek to battle against the servants of God. They control the forces of the world. The whole world lies in the power of the evil one. (I Jn 5:19)

5. They are organized into a hierarchy, like a political or military structure whereby they seek to control the affairs of men. Like the faithful angels, some demons are stronger than others, and thus are able to fight in accord with their abilities.

Manifestation of Satan and demons:

Idolatry is the worship of demons (I Cor 10:20, Psalm 106:35-37)

Activity of demons today:

Some churches sadly attributes all evil, and all sorts of evil to demonic activity. This is false, for some evil is simply the outworking of our sinful nature, in accordance to the ways of the world.

However, there is evil directly spurred by the evil one. We see in Judas Can a believer be demon possessed? (misnomer) DAIMONIZOMAI.

A believer cannot be controlled by Satan for we have been set free. Sin shall not have dominion over us.

But we can indeed be affected, tempted, enticed, deceived, and ensnared to do his will.

The reality of the battle

The strategy for the battle

The victory in the battle

MORE DETAILS:

Overcoming Satan... by the blood of the Lamb and the word of His testimony...

Fighting His lies: truth shall set you free

Stand firm:

1John 2:14 *I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

1John 5:4 *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*

Delivered from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son. (

Whoever is born of God overcomes the world (I Jn 5:4). And this is the victory that overcomes the world: our faith (I Jn 5:

Psalm 149:5-6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand.

HOOK:

The Christian life is a war. Evil is not merely an idea or the absence of God. We battle against spirit beings.