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DESTROYING THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL

Sermon by Scott Lowther

My 9 year old son is getting baptized and I am very excited about that. Last year I got to baptize my other son which was great and a few years before that I baptized my own dad. So I think the Lord can take me in peace now that my baptism days are done. So I am really grateful of the work that the Lord has done in my own family. And I'll share this with you - if you have been discouraged about praying for your children or your brother or sisters.

My mom was the only Christian in our family for most of her life. She was a Christian from the time she was a little girl when Hitler use to bomb England. And she had a terrible upbringing in life and yet she married my dad who didn't treat her very well for the first years that they were married. They had 7 children. My mom believed, my dad didn't. He wouldn't take her to church or anything. All she had was her bible and pray. And through God's faithfulness to her and in answering her prayers, all 7 of her children got saved. All of their families are saved. And her husband got saved. Her grandchildren are saved. 3 of her children are pastors. And God continues to be faithful.

The reason I'm telling you this is that we become very discouraged thinking that "what did this lady have that I don't have the answers". It's nothing. The same Lord that was faithful to her will be faithful to you. The same Lord that was faithful to Moses will be faithful to you. As God was with Moses he was with Joshua, as with David, as with Paul, as with you. And the Lord doesn't change so with that said. I want to encourage you to not give up hope.

And so today we are going to talk about the wiles of the devil. I don't know if anyone has been experiencing those but this week has been very hard on me personally. I felt like a satanic scud missile went off in my life. It's been brutally rough. One thing after another. Even last night my debit card got up and walked away from church. I don't know what

happened to it - it just kind of left. Maybe the Lord had need of it! So, if you find it around, more power to you - you can return it if you are so inclined. You can't spend anything - there's nothing there - so just give it back!

So what we will look at today is the wiles of satan. I told you that we're going to be talking about Jesus came into this world to destroy the works of the devil. It says that in *1 John 3:8: The reason that the son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.* So what we are looking at here is what is it that Jesus came to destroy. We don't think of Him like that, do we? We think of him at Christmas time as the baby. Who came in little swaddling clothes - that everybody loves the baby. At Easter we think of him as the suffering savior on Good Friday then on Sunday morning we think of him as the risen King. As so have these different perspectives and we have a tendency to gravitate towards the one that most significantly ministers to us. And I think Christmas for most people is the easiest because baby Jesus doesn't demand much. Does He? He's cute, he's in a little cradle, he's in his little swaddling clothes, you rock him to sleep and that Jesus is great. Everybody loves that one. The Jesus on Good Friday people don't necessarily understand Him. But He's OK. The Easter Sunday morning risen savior is kind of intimidating because of the power aspect. And the Jesus from Revelation with "eyes like a burning fire" is way over the top.

As so if you look at this passage I think you find interesting is it says Jesus came specifically to destroy something. And I want you to think of this in your own life and I'll preface with this. Last night some people came up to me last night and said "holy cow". They were kind of distraught. I said "what are you upset about". And they said "you know, God dealt with me about a lot of things and I didn't like it". I said "sorry", seriously what do you want me to do? I'm glad that He spoke to you. You should be happy that He spoke to you. What are you going to do about it?" "The heart that is often reprov'd will be cut off without remedies", says scripture. What do you do when God impresses upon you something and calls for a response?

So I am front loading some of this. I expect that Lord will do the same thing. He's going to point out areas in your life that he flat out wants to destroy. He wants to bring to your mind those areas that you have been deceived in and satan has got a foothold upon. And for that very reason

scripture says “He came to destroy that work”.

I’m giving you fair warning. Whenever I come up to speak I’ll always praying about “Lord, what will you have me share”. And He’s been gracious and gives me 2 or 3 weeks in advance. And I knew this would be hard for me because it’s very easy to make it seem like you are throwing a wet blanket over the congregation. You are all excited in the worship and it’s now “uhh” what a downer (with the sermon). That’s not my intent. My intent is to make us aware of things that are true. And to respond to them in a biblical fashion because God does not want you to stay where you are at. And I have been encouraged with the people who are growing. One guy last night said “every week I came now. It’s like I’m being prodded with a cattle prod”. And so I am like “good”. God wants you to move. He calls it a walk. Right? He says this is a walk. Paul calls it a race, so prod a little quicker. So get running. So there is movement involved. There’s a place to go to. There’s an advance to be taken in some senses and then there’s other times there’s a place to stand.

Let me give you why we do scripture in the first place. Humor me in this. If you all close your eyes. I’m not going to search you for my debit card. But close your eyes. Then point north and leave your hand pointing north. Now open your eyes and look around. OK, we’ve got a great majority is going this way, some are going this way, somebody else is pointing straight up, somebody else is pointing over there. Do you see the problem? I’ll give it to you scripturally. *Proverbs 14:12: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but it ends in death”*. And so it doesn’t matter what we all think. It doesn’t matter what we believe, per se. What matters is what is true.

And so if the reality is if we’re infected with a horrible disease and the cure is 1.2 miles due north and you need to be there in 10 minutes or you will die, are you going to base that on your discernment of “I think it’s this way?” Or are you going to say “who has a compass? Who has a map, who has a GPS, who has a tape measurer, who has something that will insure that I get where I need to be because my condition is desperate?”

And that’s what this book is. This book is the compass that points you to where you need to be. It’s the book of reality. “Let God be true in every man a liar”. This book is the only source of truth within this world. This is it. And so why we study it, why we look at it, why we put it out there

is because it is the only thing that is true. It is the only thing that is infallible. It is the only thing that we can build a life upon that will work. And so what I want to challenge you in this morning is not to come in with your preconceived ideas and say “you know what, I’m sure I know which way north is. I’m sure I know what God wants”. Maybe you do but I think God wants to make that more clear. He wants to move back some of the blinders and make us aware. All of us have areas in our life where we believed lies. And those lies satan uses to work things in us. And scripture says “Jesus came to destroy” that.

I’m going to talk about some realities now. These are truths whether we like it or not. *1 John 5:19: “We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one”.* This is something that John is writing and he says this is something that a Christian knows. First of all if you don’t experience that spiritual reality that satan is alive and well. Most people think he’s a figment of antiquities imagination. Or that he is a personification of human depravity. The reality is satan is a living being, created by God. He is powerful and destructive. And John says here’s the first thing you must know of him. So we are going to review some of things that are true about him because we need to know who the enemy is. And then we need to see specifically what Jesus is destroying and see if there are any areas in our life that Jesus came to destroy.

And so this is the first fact. The world lies in the power of the evil one. And that means every human being that is unregenerate is captive by satan. That’s the truth. I know our hearts start to well “what about dear old granny? She makes cookies for the neighborhood and her heads not spinning around. So what’s up with that?” I’m giving you truth. She needs to be delivered from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. She needs Jesus Christ. Otherwise she’ll perish. And the fact that it’s message of the cross may be foolishness to her, only confirms what God’s word says is true. And God says specifically that people who are unregenerate don’t have hope in the fight against satan at all. They are captive by him. They’re deceived by him. They need to be set free from him.

And so who is this satanic being that scripture speaks of? Here’s some of things it says about him.

Revelation 12:9 “He is the deceiver. He disguises himself as an angel of light.

2 Corinthians 11:14 “He’s a murderer, he’s the father of lies, he comes to steal, to kill and to devour. He is the accuser of the brethren”.

According to 2 Timothy 2:26: He takes unbelievers captive to do his will. Satan blinds the minds of the unbelievers

2 Corinthians 4:4: “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God”.

So he not only speaks what is false and lies but he hides what is true. He masquerades as an angel of light and righteousness *2 Corinthians 11:13-15:*

“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness”. So people say “how do I know if what I am hearing is true?”. Well, you take this book and you Berean (is that the Christian bookstore down on Clairemont?) No. Berean is scripturally someone who takes what is said then searches the scripture to see if it is right. That’s your responsibility as a Christian. To subject yourself to biblical teaching and to discern by studying the scripture to see if it is true. And so the essence of how do you know whether it is an angel of light or how do you know whether it’s somebody who’s intent is to give you scripture food who be predicated upon who gets the glory from what is said. Any message that comes out that glorifies God faithfully and accurately from the word of God is from God. Any message that glorifies man is earthly and not from the Lord at all. God wants to glorify himself. He doesn’t want to glorify men. And he won’t share His glory with anyone.

So that’s how you discern.

If you leave anywhere and go “man, I learned a lot about this story, or this illustration and that dog thing really touched me. I learned everything about the guy who spoke”. Then you probably didn’t hear anything from the Lord at all. We are to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, not human beings. And so what I am going to bring to you is what

God's word has to say on a topic that's very, very serious. But it is full of great hope.

The first part is very encouraging. The second part seems very harsh. So I put the first part in there every though we are not going to discuss if very much, just so we would go "oh, that's really great". *1 John 3:1 "See what kind of love the father has given us that we should be called children of God".* And that is what we are ... *1 John 3:2 "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been made known, but we know that when he appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure".* We should just cut it off there because it is so encouraging, we should just go home. That's really great, we are in the Lord, we don't know what we're going to be like, we know we'll be like Him, we'll see Him as he is, alleluia, what a great day. But then John goes on to say beginning in verse 4 to tell us some things that are very critical and he says "*everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness because sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning ; no one who continues sinning has either seen him or know him".* Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remain in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God". So as I read this collections of verses all of a sudden it becomes very personal to me.

I begin to think there are lots of things "Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil" and I think to myself there's things in my life that Jesus plans on destroying. And all of a sudden I am very uncomfortable. I don't know about the rest of your guys but the first time I read this years ago, my palms got all sweaty and my heart started beating quickly and I got very nervous. I'm like "what does he want to destroy?". I never thought of Him like this before. What is it that he is after? And so I began to think , well, certainly there's things in my life that I could classify as sin. There's behavior and thoughts and attitudes that I would say "Yeah, I'm with you Lord. There's bad, they got to go". But there are also things that fly under that radar - things that we consider "normal". Because everybody does it or everybody else gravitates towards it. It's seems to

be the acceptable. It not even acceptable - it's even admirable to say that we are prideful. Even though it's a heinously evil sin. But it's an OK sin to share. You could say as a guy "I am very prideful" and people would go "Oh, me too, good, great!". If you got up and said you are a child murderer you would here "uggh". Because we look at sins in how they affect us instead of how they affect God. And the reality is every sin is a stench to God and every sin falls short of His glory and every sin is worthy of eternal punishment - and that's why we need to be saved.

As we look at this we have a tendency to while I see things in my life that I admit that the Lord wants to destroy but there are other things that I think are probably normal or normative in churches. And I don't even see those as an issue. And with God they are actually one of works of the devil that he wants to destroy. And so it's important that we see these things. Jesus is on a search and destroying mission in your life. He's been sent from heaven on a recon. And He's looking at your life and saying "anything that has been built on the sand of the world, anything that is built not on the rock, if it's built on a sand with worldly philosophy or the wisdom of this age or predicated upon indoctrination into a jello mold of this carnal world - is what Jesus wants to destroy.

And it comes up with things that are so funny. This last week we moved offices so if you sent an email and you didn't get a response from us, it's not because we are not responding to you. It's we haven't got everything up and running on our email yet. And we didn't get out a weekly email either even though we intended to but it was not up an running. We've had some problems with the phones, so we haven't called anybody back, because it's not running yet. So we don't want you to think that we are not doing anything. We're just throwing up our hands and going "Oh, Lord, deliver". And that's the crippling of the world system. It has all this stuff in it, all this wonderful technology that's great when it works and it's horrible when it doesn't. And even with that comes such things as the latest gadgets and gizmos. All of a sudden somebody said to me "do you have an Ipad? And I go "what's an Ipad"? I guess I'm kind of illiterate. I discovered what it was and go "Oh, I want one of those". And I don't know why I want one of those . I guess because people that I thought were cool had one of those so I wanted one so I could be like them! And the Lord's like "Sand, wiles of the devil, carnality". I mean if you have one, good for you but God told me I couldn't have one. Then I was very pouty. I thought He was telling me I couldn't have one because I was a PC

guy, not a Mac. I don't know. But He was just telling me "you're not having one of those".

So don't feel like I am condemning you if you do. I guess I'm just more carnal than you. But the Lord is like "no, you are not having one". I'm like, "but Lord, I want one". He's like "no, get over it". So, I go "OK", what else are you going to give me then? A smaller phone version, maybe"? He's like "you don't get it, you don't get it. I'm not going to give you anything that satan is going to use to put a hook in you. Some may have, but you may not. My grace will be sufficient for you, whatever I give you. And you use what I give you for my glory and not your own. And you use what I give you to give me praise not entice it from others. If you want to boast in what you have, boast in me because I'm better than any Ipad". I'm like "Oh, Lord, that's true". Because 3 years from now it'll be old technology. God is the greatest of technologies and everything else. If you have Him, you have everything.

And so the Lord is trying to teach me some of these things about being content. I don't want you to think I'm coming down hard on you. Because I'm not. I'm just saying there are areas that the Lord wants to point out to you that satan has weaseled his way in and he wants you to see it. And God wants to destroy it.

And so Jesus didn't come to break the grip of the devil, He came to destroy the works of the devil. If you break something it can be put back together but Jesus came to destroy it, innilliate it, make it incapable of functioning any longer.

And so this is what John said in *John 8:32*: "*You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free*: It's freedom that the Lord wants for His people. And I just want to encourage you again to let the Lord speak to you because I believe He'll say way more to you than I do.

Pastor Jim as we were getting ready to come up here said "did you hear that song? It's said let my words be few - take it to heart!" I go, "oh, I get it. I'm with you. Are you in a hurry? I understand". But I am trusting that God will take something from a talking donkey and apply it to you in such a way that you'll know it's from Him.

Verse 1 John 3:8: "He came to destroy the works of the devil". What are

these works? What is it that he came to destroy? Again, is it pointing north and we'll all come up with our own ideas or is there something specific. I think the best way to do it is when you have an earthquake, you have the epicenter and you have rings of co centric circles that come out from it. Right? So if you look at text we should be able to go out backwards from it and we should be able to discern exactly what John wants us to see. So he says in the beginning of *verse 8*: "*He who commits sin is of the devil for the devil has sinned from the beginning*". Then comes our text "*The Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil*". Then in *verse 9*: "*No one born of God makes a practice of sinning for God's seed abides in him and he cannot keep sinning because he has been born of God*". As I went over these verses last night it was like a wet blanket thrown over the congregation. You talk about that and people go "ugggh". Nobody keeps on sinning. If you keep on sinning you've neither seen God nor known him. "Ugggh". Right? And that's how you feel. So I look around the room as a person in the congregation and think "good, everybody looks the same as me so I feel better. And I wonder if everybody else has reached some kind of sinless perfection and I'm just the one struggling. And I feel worse about my walk, and I wish I never came".

And that's not where we are going. And that is specifically why John is not teaching that. Put that on hold but follow that line of thought. People instantly gravitate towards what they find the most convicting. And it's not God who is convicting you of that. It's the lie that's convicting you that somehow you are sinless in your behavior. That's not true. You struggle with this carcass intent and until we are delivered from our flesh and from our sin nature we will always fall short. But that is why you need a savior. And that savior will deliver you from the consequences of that and one day he'll deliver you from the presence of that sin and everything else having to do with it. So don't go there now - track with me.

John says "the devil sins and those who sin are his". Then he said "Christ came to destroy the devil's work". Then he says "no one born of God commits sin". So would you agree that the work's of the devil is what the Son of God came to destroy are sins? That's pretty basic from the text. You've got "He came to destroy the works of the devil". Well, what are the works" Well, he says right in the beginning of the verse - sin. He came to destroy sin. So we could technically in the beginning of *verse 9* put a

“therefore” in so you would hear the thought of what John is writing. “The Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil THEREFORE no one born of God commits sin”.

So what the Son of God came to destroy is not just the guilt of our sin because we can carry the guilt of our sin and still keep on sinning. Right? We can feel bad but we can wallow in our place of misery not knowing that God has something better for us. And this is the thing I am finding so much more in our daily lives. We have Christians by and large in our lives who have settled down. They’re marching to a heavenly Canaan - so to speak. God has called us out from Ur or the Chaldeans or Babylon or Egypt or wherever you want to use - he’s calling us out of the world to go on a march along to glory. And he wants us to be distinct and separate from the world. And he has called us to come out and follow Him. And He has called us saying “I’ll be with you, don’t worry about it. I am going to guide you. I’m not going to leave you or forsake you. Be of good cheer, I’ve overcome the world. You will have tribulation but trust in me”.

And so the Lord is encouraging us on the way. And He is moving us, and carrying us and He’s shepherding us along. But by and large a lot of us have just kind of settled down. We are like Abraham’s father who left Ur and the Chaldeans and got to Terra which means delay. And he set up camp there and he died there. It’s like I guess this is the best God has for me. That’s a lie.

And we like the place where we are at because we are comfortable in it. As if to get any more insight from the Lord, I would have to be more accountable and I would have to start doing something with it. And so we are afraid. But that’s not God’s heart for you either. He says “His yoke is easy and his burden is light”. But it’s the lie of the enemy that he twist to make it sound like as if you really start walking with the Lord, and you really start trusting in the Lord and you really starting standing on His promises - something bad would happen to you. That’s a lie. So let’s continue to see what John is after here.

The Son of God just didn’t come to destroy the consequences of sin. He didn’t just come to destroy of the guilt of sin, which he does. He came to destroy sinning. He came to set us free from being in bondage to sinning. So we don’t have to be constantly sinning. The wages of sin is death and there’s a way that seem right to man and it ends in death. Sin always has a

promise but never fulfills and it leaves you destitute and unhappy . Like you are baptized in lemon juice and mud at the same time and just miserable. And you don't have to stay there. You don't have to be there. And if I could say "you know what, there's just a little bit more joy than you are currently experiencing, maybe there's just a little bit more hope than you are currently experiencing, maybe there's just a lot more peace than you are currently experiencing, maybe there's a lot more love shed abroad in your heart, flowing like a river of living water - would you be interested"? It's the wiles of the devil that are stopping you from receiving it.

We talked last week about God's promises. And I had so many people talk about one message in my whole life. They said "So it is as simple as taking God's promises and standing on it?" And I go "yes". They said "well, there's got to be more". And I go "no, that's it. And they said "well, I have faith". And I go "what's your faith in?" And they couldn't tell me what their faith was in. They said their faith was in God. And I go "which one?" And they're like "well, you know, the big one". And I go "which one? There's many gods, ask a Hindu. The Mormon's god use to be a man like you, is that the one you are talking about?" "No, I mean the bible God", they said. I said "oh, then you are talking about doctrine". You see doctrine is descriptive. Every time you make a statement about Jesus, he was born of a virgin - that's doctrine. So don't say doctrine says he's born doesn't matter. Doctrine defines who you are talking about. So when they said "I trust in God", I said "great, tell me about him". Then it was more "like he's my grandpa". And I go "no, that's not like God. God's like this and that's what scripture is about". And I said "how do you know that you are trusting in him?" And they said "because I just do". And I said "no, you've got to take God's promises because that's what's true and if you are trusting Him you are standing on Him. When the lies comes you don't believe it because you are standing on the truth". And so many people think it's very easy to take God's promise and say you believe it and stand on it, then when the lie comes you say "I'm not believing it". That's what Christians do.

So that's why I want to continue that same thought. God's promises are what define God's relationship to us. God is only as good to us as the character of the one who made that promise. So if God makes promises and doesn't keep them, then he's not reliable and trustworthy, so why follow him. But if He is reliable and trustworthy and He gives us promises and He says "not one of them will fail", then that is something we can bank on.

Right?

So let's continue. The Son of God came to destroy sinning. This is how we know he's not talking about sinless perfection - I could give you a Greek word study which basically says the tense of the verb is in the continuous tense which would go something like this: No one born of God is content to keep on sinning for God's seeds abide in him and he cannot be content to keep on sinning because he is born of God. That's what the text basically says. I put it to you more easily for you to understand. The most obvious reason, even if you don't know Greek, because you don't have to - we know that John is not teaching sinless perfection as in *1 John 1:8 and 1 John 1:10*. "*If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us*". So John basically says this: John goes so far as to tell Christians that it is a sin to say you don't sin. Think about it. "I don't sin". Well, you are sinning. "I've never sin". You're sinning. "I'm not ever going to sin". You're still sinning. "I can reach sinless perfection". Now, you are sinning twice. Because there is nobody perfect but God and you are sinning by saying you can do something which apart from Him you can do nothing. So there's 2 sins. Do you want me to keep listing them for you?

John isn't telling you that you should be beating on yourself because you are not perfect. John isn't telling you that at all. John is telling you that sin has something to do with the wiles of the enemy. Sin has something to do with what God wants to destroy.

And so think of Jesus now, beginning to come into your life. He's in the trenches of your life. He's on his little search and destroy mission and he's beginning to look and see what's built on the rock and truth, and what's built on sand. What's built on sand he comes to come at before we are done today and He's going to say "we're going to deal with that". He's going to put His finger right on it.

If we try to define the works of the devil more precisely besides just sin, we can get that from our text as well. Verse 4: "Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness because sin is lawlessness". Now, lawlessness here is very simply put: it's living as though your own ideas are superior to God's. Lawlessness basically means this: God may promise me something but I don't want it. Right? And that's where most of us are a

lot of the time. He gives us promise and hope but we don't want it. We want to stay where we are because we are comfortable and we fit in with a crowd that we associated ourselves with. And God's saying "I want more for you than that. And bad company corrupts good character and they are influencing you and I want you to be distinct".

And so that lawlessness is simply saying I think I know better than what God says. We still call our lives ours, instead of his. We still want to run our life and even though people say they are not natural leaders, everybody is a leader because you lead your own life. Right? So lead your life in an integrity fashion and follow the leader if you are following the Lord. So you do have places in your life where you are in charge and nobody influences you more than you do! Right? So you'll need to be good preacher to yourself. You'll need to take the word, open it up and preach to yourself. "Why do you downcast my soul, why do you just disquiet within me. Trust in the Lord. Believe on Him". Walk around like that, they'll think you're crazy but give yourself a good message that's encouraging because you have huge influence in your own life. Take ownership of it. You are not a creature of circumstance. You are called to rise above it and walk in the grace and power and knowledge of Jesus Christ. That's what God wants for you.

So let's look at some of Satan's strategies. Ephesians 6: 11 tells us we should "put on the full armor of God to withstand the wiles of the devil". So the first step for any soldier in training is to be indoctrinated into the enemies tactics and weapons that he will use against him. The only person in all of history who is successfully in life and in death conquered Satan and defeated him every time is, who? That's the basic answer in every Christian Sunday school - it's Jesus. When you don't know what to say, you say Jesus. Who built Noah's ark? "Jesus"! That's what the kids say. The teacher goes "that's not right" and a smarty pants student says "Jesus says apart from Him you can do nothing. So it must have been Jesus. Because Noah didn't have the strength to do it. It must have been Jesus". How are you going to argue that? So, Jesus is always the answer.

I want you to hear Jesus' assessment of our enemy. He puts his finger right on the heart of the issue. He says this of Satan: *John 8:44* : "The devil is a liar and a murderer from the beginning". The strategy of the devil is simply this: To murder. How does he do that? By lying. When he lies

he speaks his native language, Jesus said. There is no truth in him. So when he comes to you with a lie, even though it sounds good, it's still not true. It's 100 per cent false. And so the bible makes it clear that the devil's tactics are to murder. We have to begin to really think this through. The enemy of our soul is not trying to woo us into his camp or believe his lies because he cares about us. He doesn't care about us. He wants to kill us. He would kill us if God let him. But God restrains him. He goes about like a "roaring lion seeking whom he may devour".

So how does he do this. He does it by deceiving, by lying, by distorting, by counterfeiting, by playacting, by masquerading, by illusion, by fantasy. This is what Paul calls "the wiles of the devil". He says there is a way that you can stand against that.

So there's two major categories that the devil works in. He attacks the human race both directly and indirectly. If you go to a lot of foreign countries you'll see the direct attack of evil on human beings and demon possession. We don't see that a lot in our country because our country, we think, is too sophisticated for it. No we bought the bigger lie. We are more deceived. Because we don't believe in spiritual things. So he doesn't have to do much here. He just keeps us deceived in chasing manna and working for iPad and all this other nonsense. And going on Facebook and having an alternative reality instead of having 5 good friends we have 586 friends who think we are a 2 dimensional picture. And we don't interact with anybody. And we are away from people and we don't get together. And we are like "today I did such and such". Well good for you but how does that say we are not forsaking something of ourselves together to pray all the more as we see that day approaching.

See, it's the wile of the enemy to keep us separate. To keep us busy in fantasy. Seriously - I don't have 500 friends. I don't think I have 5. Do you see what I am saying. You have people on your friends list that you don't even know. It's like "who is this person". They are like your friend. "I don't even know them. I don't have any interaction with them. They give me a poke once in awhile" What is that? So I poke them back - I don't know what we are doing. So the point is - if that is taking me away from spending time with my dad, it's a wile of the enemy. It's to distract me. It's a fantasy, it's an illusion. It's how do I want people to perceive me. Instead of what's really going on with me. And nothing works better than face to face conversation with people that you love and trust.

And so if you live your life like that. Let me first encourage you. You say “I go to church and people aren’t friendly”. If you want friends, show yourself friendly. Be the kind of person you would want to be your friend. Don’t come in all bitter and stand like this staring at people because it makes them really uncomfortable. Don’t do that. Just come in and say “hey, you know what, are you my brother or sister in Christ, would you pray with me. I want to know you, I want to see the other people that God has redeemed. I want to get to know my family”. This is your family. This is the place where you should be most free to be who you really are. Not come in and be the most fake. The most free to be who you are.

So Satan goes by direct and indirect. Direct demonic possession. We don’t have it much here, but it does occur on occasion. I’ve seen it myself. I’ve seen it personally. It’s not pretty. It’s ugly. And one day I’ll probably tell you the story, but it doesn’t fit here for time sake. But it was bad. And praying didn’t fix the issue. You know what did - worship did. Singing praise to God brought light and peace. It wasn’t just like “in Jesus name go away”. It was a battle and it was scary and it was terrifying but it was one of the greatest experiences I have ever had when the peace of God came in. And the room that had all the lights on and it was pitch black and it all of a sudden became light. And it was mind boggling. It doesn’t happen like that everyday. But the reality is still there. And so you need to be discerning.

Satan goes by direct and indirect. There are 2 channels. He works media. He works the world. It’s called the prince of the power of the air. The media that he uses, the 2 ways that he does it, is the world and the flesh. He uses flaming darts. He’s the liar, he uses deception, he uses destruction, he uses accusations, he is after us all the time in every kind of a way. And he shoots flaming darts at us that are meant to discourage and depress and give your doubts and to frighten and to hurt you. Right? I mean you guys experiencing those lately? Like I said earlier we had like a scud missile came in and blew up and everybody in our cluster of people said “what the heck is that?” Everything is coming unraveled, everything is happening bad. What are we doing. You know what - you stand and you pray. You don’t run around like a chicken with no head. You say “Lord, these things are bazaar and crazy but we are coming to your throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in our time of need. And we are not going to react. We are going to respond to you. What is it that

you are working Lord. What is it that you are going to turn in us to our good. How would you have us respond to it.

And that is what a person of faith does. Here's how you know if the wiles of the devil with those flaming darts have hit you. Do you complain a lot? This is how you know if you have been struck. It's like one of those giraffes on Discovery Channel that gets hit in the back check as it's running and all of a sudden it goes in slow motion. And then it goes down. You know what I am talking about. Right? That's what Satan does. He hits you with these darts. You become a person who is very bitter, and a person who complains. And you say "well, where do you get that from"? From the bible. This is what the bible says "The word of God points out that a Christian who has learned to be a mature Christian is marked by not complaining, not fault-finding, not being bitter but this instead: Is marked by rejoicing in everything. *Philippians 4 "Giving thanks in all things for this is the will of God in Christ for you". 1 Thessalonians 5:18: "Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus". Hebrews 13:5 "And learning to be content with what you have".*

God wants us to be that. But we are not that if we have been hit by the flaming darts of the evil one and all we are doing is being bitter and angry and complaining about everyone. "Well, I don't like this and I don't like that and when are you going to bring this back and how come I don't have the crème filled donuts anymore, and you don't have the flavored stuff out on the coffee table and who put up the box that says put 50 cents in for a donut"! You see this bitterness that springs up. Right? That's for sure you have been hit by the flaming dart of the evil one.

Here's my encouragement to you - pull it out. Pull it out. Don't let it sit there and keep pumping poison in your system for scripture said "see that no root of bitterness springs up and defiles many". Because it won't just affect you, it'll affect the rest of the body like cancer.

How did Jesus destroy the works of the devil. It says simply this in our text. 1 John 3:8 "He destroyed them by his appearing". So again we have the gospel. Right? I want to tell you Satan's probably biggest deception of people who go to church. Listen closely. It's the gospel without power. It's the gospel that gives us an outward feeling of feeling good about us but not enough truth to change. So it keeps us the same in essence while on occasion it changes the outward form a little bit. You go, "well that sounds

very technical”. So I’ll give you an example.

Water can be liquid. It can be steam, vapors. It can be frozen solid. And it can go back from frozen solid back to liquid. Right? What’s true about that. Well it’s the same in kind. It’s still H₂O. It only changes a little bit in form. Right? What God is after is the word which says “if any man be in Christ is a new creation. The old is past away behold all things become new”. God is talking about new in kind. Not just outward manifestation of doing certain things that make you feel good which don’t last long because there is no inner transformation. And Satan’s lie is the lie that comes and says “no you can be a Christian and just have some eternal combustion protection prayer that you pray once in awhile but you don’t care about God’s people, you don’t care about His word, you don’t love the Lord, you don’t want to be in pray, you don’t want to be in fellowship, God forbid, because it interferes with all the other things that you love. And it’s OK that you are like that because you will still make it one day.”

That’s a huge lie. Jesus didn’t come through walking through Palestine and say “oh, I’ll see you on another day. Pick up your cross, deny yourself and follow me”. He said if you don’t do those things you are not worthy of me. He wasn’t trying to be dominating. He’s trying to tell you to set you free from the things that are dominating you. He wants you to be free of those things. So when I am telling you this, I’m not trying to be hard on you. I’m trying to make you understand that Matthew 7 says “many will say to him on that day, Lord, Lord,”. And the people that are saying, Lord, Lord are the people who populate churches. Because they are the guys who say “didn’t I do this in your name?” I don’t see anyone going out in the world and doing it in Jesus’ name. I see churches that do that. And they cover up the lack of heart and transformation with activity because it comforts them. They know when they get right and real with God they know that there is something wrong. And instead of dealing with the wrong, they believe the lie and they cover it up with activity, or giving or attending or serving - instead of being. If any man “be in Christ, is a new creation”.

The Lord wants you to be something different in kind, not just the same thing with a polished outer surface. And the lie of the enemy says “no, it’s OK. You don’t have to. You don’t have to be anything. I’m glad that you go to church just don’t get too excited about it. As a matter of fact, let

me whisper lies to you and convince you that there are things in your life that are really blessings that I am putting there which are intentionally given by me to destroy you.” And you say “how does that look?”.

I was up at a big church up the road and this guy comes in and I said “man, I haven’t seen you for at least 6 months”. And he said “well, the Lord has been blessing me”. And I looked at him and said “you don’t look blessed, you look haggard, you’ve got bags under your eyes, you look beat down. How has the Lord been blessing you”. And he said “well, the Lord gave me 30 acres” . . . then he started talking about this “thing” that the Lord gave him. And I said “I haven’t seen you around and we missed you at the prayer meeting and I haven’t seen you in church for at least 4 months”. And he said, “well, I’ve been too busy to come. But the Lord has been blessing me”. And I go, “I know you are going to get angry with me, but the Lord hasn’t blessed you with that. Because God would never bless you with something that takes you away from Him or His people. God would never give you something that is going to distract your heart and pull you from what is important and eternal to what is trivial and going to burn. I said this didn’t come from the Lord”. And he got all offended. Started yelling at me. I see the love of Christ just welling up within you, I’m feeling the love. I said “have I now become your enemy because I told you the truth”. He was like “uggh”. And he doesn’t go into the church and hops back in his car and drives away. A couple of months later he comes back and goes “you know what, you were right. I got rid of it. And I realized that it wasn’t a blessing, it was a curse. And God didn’t bring it to me and if he brought it to me it was only to be a test to see if Jesus was really my treasure or if I would reject Him and push Him aside for something else I really wanted and use Him as my sugar daddy”.

You know what, me and that guy are very close now. And that’s what I am talking about so before you jump on my case maybe you should let God search out your heart and say “that thing, that relationship, that other item over there, I’ve been dealing with you for a long time on. And you refuse to let it go. And it’s not just that you are keeping it because you think I am going to withhold it from you, which again is an accusation against the most high. No good thing will he withhold for them who walk uprightly. But you are believing the lie and you know darn well that this thing is destroying your relationship with me. Your relationship with others, your relationship with the church and your witness, and your joy, and your life. And the one you are believing didn’t love you and give himself up for you. The one

you are believing wants to destroy you. He is not your friend. He is a deceiver and his goal is to kill you”

Know your enemy. I think what the Lord is so much after is having us take what he says and letting us search it out with us. This passage we all know very well. You think I am making it sound so simple to let things go. No it's not easy to let things go if you love it. It's easy to let something go if you don't. And the only place your affections are safe are on the Lord Himself. So Ephesians 6:11-14: “Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil” God want us to stand. Therefore take up the whole armor of God so that you can withstand the evil of the day and having done - stand - stand firm therefore. So we have this overriding posture that God wants from his people. So the armor of God which is the most practical one I've ever heard and found: The armor of God is nothing short of the basic elements of an obedient Christian's life. That's how you put the armor of God on. You don't just physiologically go “I'm swinging this thing around my head, I've got my helmet on and I've got a shield here”. That's kind of like playing fantasy. It's like the old saying “you need to put feet on your prayers”. Don't just pray and do nothing, pray and then do something. You do something before you pray then you go and do. Or you pray and stand until God tells you to do something. But you just don't say “I prayed” and that's all I am suppose to do. So I just don't pray for my unsaved friends, I tell them about the Lord. Right? So it's a two edged sword. I pray for them and I throw out the word of the Lord when I am given an opportunity.

So this is kind of how God would tell us to do in this evil day. He wants us to stand. And He uses the term “constantly”. And why doesn't He say “fight”? I've got 3 reasons I think that word “stand” is used.

Stand Therefore: Brad Pitt from Troy, an action pose. A visual so you can understand what the Lord is talking about. Why does Paul say “stand”? (1) it reveals the intensity of the struggle with which we are involved. We are told to stand because sometimes that is all we can do. Have you ever been in a spiritual situation where it is so dark you don't even know what is going on? And you are like “Lord, it is so dark, I can't see what's happening. I don't get it. But you know what, I'm not moving. You told me to stand and here I stand. And I am standing on the truth of what you said. And I don't see how everything is going to work out.” You hear that lot, well faith is the assurance of things hoped for the evidence

of things not seen - you don't need to see everything. You need to know that you have a Father who sees all. Who knows the end from the beginning. Who knows what He has promised you and knows what He has purposed for you. He has the plans "to prosper you and not to harm you to give you a future and a hope" and He will take you along the path that He has for you. And you plan your ways and God directs your steps and you don't need to see. You have a guide, the Holy Spirit. He goes with you. He won't leave you or forsake you. So you don't have to see everything but you can stand. So here you stand.

Number (2). It indicates the character of the battle we are facing. Standing implies defense. Why doesn't God say "go out on the offense?" Because the offense has been performed by Jesus Christ and there are no more things to win. Scripture puts it like this: *Colossians 2:15: He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame triumphing over them by his cross*". There is no more offense you've got to do. You've got to stand. This is how you look at it. A good offense is the best defense. The only reason we say that is because we like the offense of the team instead of the defense in football. We like offense because they score, it's exciting, they are the fast guys, the guys who really are in shape. The defensive guys are the really big monster men and they just sit there and block the enemy. Right? So when our defense is on there we go "get 'em, get 'em, we want the offense back out there". When the defense is on we run to the refrig. But when the offense is there we cheer on. Isn't that true? It's because everybody loves the people who score. Listen - in the spiritual battle the only winner is Jesus. And Jesus has won the victory and He is the one who has disarmed the principalities and powers and He triumphed over them by His cross and there is no new ground for you to take. The ground has been taken. And it has been given. *Jude 3: "Beloved I have been very eager to write to you about the salvation we share. I felt it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints"* We are told to hold onto what God has given us and not let any of it be taken from us. And not let any of it be lost. That's what it means to contend. The one who learns to stand, the one who learns to pray, the one who learns to be immovable is the only person that will unpack their world and their sphere of influence - is Christ.

Let me say this as poignantly as I can. God calls you to stand even when everyone around you falls. The battle you are in is to show you who and

what you are and thus refuse to believe all the lies that the enemy throws your way. That keep you weak and make you act like an animal instead of a saint. That's why God calls you to stand.

Lastly #3. Stand speaks of the certainty of victory. If putting on the armor and praying makes us stand then nothing more is required to win. We rest in the promises of God and Satan will flee. You resist him. How? In the power of the word. And the promises that God has given. "You are always going to be that way" - that's not what my father says. "There's no hope for you". That's not what my Father says, as a matter of fact one of my Father's names is "The God of All Hope". "God doesn't love you". God demonstrated his love to me and while I was yet a sinner and his enemy, Christ died for me.

I stand on truth. I defeat the enemy with the truth of what God said. And I stand there and he will flee. Because Satan can not take the ground of truth. The ground of truth belongs to God. And you say "well, give me an example of that". I'll give you one thing: here's a letter written by an invalid, who was bedridden, who can't use his arms or legs, he can't do anything. He is dependent 100 percent on people to do things for him. But he is a believer. This guy can't stand up but he knows what it means to stand. His letter said "Loneliness is not a thing of itself. It's not an evil sent to rob me of the joys of life. Loneliness, loss, pain and sorrow - these are disciplines, God's gift to drive me to his very heart. To increase my capacity for him. To sharpen my sensitivities and understanding. To temper my spiritual life so that it may become a channel of his mercies to others. And so bear fruit for His kingdom. But these disciplines must be ceased upon and used and not thwarted. It must not be seen as an excuse for living in the shadow of a half life. But as a messenger however painful to bring my soul into vital contact with the living God that my life may be filled, to overflowing with Himself in ways that may perhaps be impossible to those who know less of life's darkness."

There's a guy who gets it. There's a guy who can do nothing but his light shines and he stands on God's truth. And he stands on God's promises and he doesn't complain about how God made him. He said "I understand that my God is so powerful that he can obtain glory from every life". He can glorify Himself in every life. And He can use even me. And I think the question I would ask you is this: Have you become a spiritual invalid? Have you listened to the lies and they so twisted and manipulated you that

you are pursuing something other than what God would have for you. You've believed the lie and are running after it with both feet raging. And you are abandoning the simple beauty and pleasure of a daily walk and communion with God. That's my question to you. And the reality is Jesus Christ came to destroy that. And I believe that is what He wants to do even now as we pray. Let Him search you and try you and see if there be some way in you that is preventing you and pulling you from the way that is everlasting.