

ARMOR OF GOD

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS WITH PASTOR JACK

Knowing Our Adversary and the Armor of God (Eph.6:10-13) Knowing Our Adversary (Part 2)

September 30th, 2015

Review And Introduction

- A. A review of last week's study "Knowing Our Adversary Part 1," where we looked at the angel Lucifer - his fall, his desire, his accomplices, his limitations, and his ultimate future.
- B. Tonight in part 2 we want to focus on "Knowing Our Adversary" in terms of Satan's work in keeping those in the world under his control and away from the things of God. There are only two kingdoms in the world: God's kingdom of light and life and the kingdom of Satan, the god of this world, filled with darkness and death (Acts 26:18)(1Jn.3:10).
- C. We will discover the arsenal Satan uses to keep men in darkness, under his control, and in his kingdom.

Blinding Their Minds - 2 Corinthians 4

- A. **(1-2)** Unlike those looking for hidden meanings and using questionable tactics, Paul assures the Corinthians that his ministry is honest and open, dependent solely upon the clear, simple teaching of God's word.
- B. **(3-4)** If there is a lack of response, it is not due to Paul's honest presentation and life in Christ but rather, a consequence of the work of the enemy who wars for the souls of men. Paul knew he was in a spiritual battle and expected to see this battle unfold as Jesus was preached.
- C. Those who are perishing and refusing the Gospel do so under influence of the wicked one, who works to keep men's eyes from beholding God's grace. Satan seeks to have men forego the cross, even as Peter tried to convince Jesus to do (Mt.16:22-23).
- D. Jesus has overcome the enemy and one day, we will see it as the title deed to earth is handed to the Lamb that was slain (Rev.5). Yet for now blindness due to sin and the activity of the enemy leave men in darkness and needing the reason and hope of God's love (Isa.1:18-19).
- E. Salvation requires more than simple rationale which is lost by spiritual blindness, where myth and superstition, self and faulty reasoning are the order of the day (2Ti.2:24-26). Satan's place of business is to keep man from Jesus, relying upon himself.
- F. Satan will use lies to bind, blind, control, and deflect the seeker. He will encourage self-confidence that makes no allowances for repentance, self-examination, or honesty.
- G. In the life of the lost, Satan uses these outlooks as footholds to keep the truth hidden, even as Paul declared that the Cross was foolishness (a cruel hoax, a joke) to them that were perishing (1Co.1:18). The plan of the enemy is to keep the lost laughing at God and His word (Isa.59:10).
- H. Yet Jesus has come to open the eyes of the blind (Isa.42:7). He does this by the work of the Holy Spirit, the teaching of God's Word, and the testimony of the lives of the saints.
- I. Since it is a spiritual battle, it is vital we go on the offensive in prayer to ask God to open the eyes of those sitting in darkness and under the power of the devil. If they could see God clearly, surely many more would turn to Him (Col.4:3).
- J. How vital it is that we are aware of the work of the enemy as we set out to share our faith. Don't lose heart for God still commands His light to shine out of darkness (Gen.1:3).

Jesus' Illustration Of The Blinding Influence Of The Enemy - Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

- A. The parable of the sower teaches us that it is the condition of the heart that determines receptivity to the seed, the Word of God. Here is where the enemy works, keeping the soil unfit for receiving, planting, and growth.
- B. **(19) Wayside** soil: It speaks of a hard heart; unreceptive, unyielding, and untouchable (Hos.10:12).
- C. **(20-21) Stony** soil: It speaks of an emotional, impulsive hearer; a quick response that doesn't last for it never touches the heart to produce sorrow over sin and repentance unto life. Any cost or difficulty in associating with Jesus and the Gospel brings a swift response of retreat.
- D. **(22) Thorny** soil: It speaks of a heart that is pre-occupied, double vision that leaves one dizzy and off balance. Competing cares keep this soil from producing any fruit and since there is no heart change, there is also no life in this divided soil (Hos.10:1-2)(1Ki.18:21)(Mt.6:24)(Jam.1:8).
- E. **(23) Good** soil: It speaks of a receptive heart; hearing and doing, saved, and lost to the enemy.

False Teaching - 1 Timothy 4:1-3

- A. Seducing spirits and doctrines of demons focus not on the soil but on the seed: religion without truth that appeals to a man's sense of accomplishment and self-love.
- B. These false teachings can be characterized by commonly held threads of evil:
 1. Denying the truth of the Scriptures: Through misinterpretation or simple outright denial, many cults write their own version of the Bible to teach what no one would conclude by simply reading the Word. The consequences of adding to or removing from God's word are irreversible (Mt.15:2-3)(Pro.30:6) (Rev.22:18-19)(2Ti.3:16-17); yet men embrace teachings they agree with (2Ti.4:3-4).
 2. Denying the deity of Jesus Christ: If Jesus is not God then His death is of no benefit (2Pe.2:1) (1Jn.2:22). The devil has a list of approved messiahs and Jesus is not on it.
 3. Denying the grace of God: Most false religions offer a works/performance approach to God. God's word teaches otherwise (Eph.2:8-9)(Rom.11:6). But Satan has a faith plus "something" offer to deceive you.
 4. Denying or altering the 2nd coming to remove immanency and judgment: (2Pe.3:4) Many doctrines remove the coming of our Lord entirely to judge. Satan is working with them in close conjunction as they sing his tune.
 5. Providing other gods to worship: (Ps.96:5)(Ps.106:36-38) Satan wants every man worshipping him through a variety of offered idols. We will see this truth played out during the tribulation (Rev.13:15).
 6. Controlling world governments: The mandate of many politically is to control the spiritual beliefs of its people. In so doing, billions are left without a witness and overwhelmed by darkness, much to Satan's delight.

Ephesians 6:10-13

"Knowing Our Adversary - Part 2"

All right. Let's open our Bibles this evening to 2 Corinthians 4. I'll read to you out of Ephesians 6. But why don't you go there. I think, for these first three weeks, as we look at our adversary, we're going to be moving around a little bit - having you flip a little bit to and fro. When we get to weeks four through ten, and we get into Ephesians - those passages - we'll stay kind of "put." But we'd like to continue tonight talking about knowing our adversary before we look at the armor of God.

Review and Introduction

A. Review of last week's study - "Knowing Our Adversary - Part 1"

Last week, we looked at the person of Lucifer or Satan. We looked at his creation as an angel. We saw his fall from glory, as he chose to rebel against the authority of God. In fact, he sought to sit where God sat, His throne, and receive His worship. We read that he was cast out of heaven though he still has access there. One-third of all of the created angels seemed to join him in the rebellion. There were millions upon millions of angels created, from what we read. And we saw that Satan's desire to be as God, and his ongoing defiance to the Lord's work in your life and mine, will eventually bring him home to the eternal place of judgment - the lake of fire. We studied (last week) his limitations - who he is, what he can do, what he can't, and then we looked at the chief activities of the devil in line with his titles that God gave him. Because, so often, we find that the titles the Lord gives to us - the names that are assigned - have a lot to say. If you missed last week, the study and its corresponding notes are online; they're in the book store. We don't want you to miss out.

B. Tonight - "Knowing Our Adversary - Part 2" - Satan's work in the world

Tonight we want to look specifically at three or four of the major ways in which Satan keeps the world lost; and then next week look specifically at how he goes after the people of God. What is his MO? What is his operation strategy against the saints? And then we'll go through one piece of armor a night and see what God has given us so that we might stand and, like he says, withstand, having done all to stand. But our text is in Ephesians 6:10 where it says, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand."

I think that we will learn tonight as we watch the way Satan attacks those in the world, and you should know how he works because that's where you're sent to be a witness. But tonight we

much. They don't change very often. They are an old dog without any new tricks because the old ones are working quite well, thank you. And in that regard, he is both predictable, but he is cunning and sly. And the Lord has given us many insights about our enemy so that we can stand.

Invariably, if you look out the door tonight, of the church, there are only two categories of people in the world. There are those who belong to God - having come to His Son, Jesus Christ, and who are under His Kingship and in His kingdom. And then there are the others - those who have believed that Jesus is not God. They find themselves still under the control of the evil one, the god of this world. But there's no third category. There's no indifferent observer. "Unless a man is born again," Jesus said, "he can't enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). So this two-kingdom dichotomy is spoken of throughout the Scriptures. In fact, you might remember last week we talked about how Paul said to King Agrippa that the Lord had called him "to open the eyes of those who are in darkness and turn them to the light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they might receive forgiveness of their sins and an inheritance among all those who are being sanctified by faith in Him" (Acts 26:18). John wrote, in that little epistle towards the back of your Bible, "In this are the children of God made known and the children of the devil," (1 John 3:10) and then he spends about eight verses defining those two sides, if you will, those two categories. There are observable differences.

C. Satan's arsenal to keep men in darkness and under his control

So tonight, in our second week of "Knowing Our Adversary" and then the "Armor of God," we want to focus on how Satan keeps those in his kingdom blind. What does he do to keep them away from Jesus? You would think he'd be satisfied with just a bunch of indifferent people. But that's not the devil. The devil isn't done until he's destroyed you. His wickedness knows no bounds. If you don't believe that, go read in Revelation when the Lord takes the restraints away and the devil is allowed to run free; what he would like to do if given the chance. So, we're not going to cover everything, but I think the top three or four things are things that will be important for us because we are sent into the world to reach those that are being blinded by the enemy.

Blinking Their Minds - 2 Corinthians 4

A. Verses 1-2: Paul's ministry is honest, open and dependent upon God's Word

We'll start here in chapter 4 of 2 Corinthians where it says this, "Therefore, since we have this ministry," Paul says, "as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of" (or by revealing) "the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

One thing that Paul saw as absolutely necessary in reaching the world was to be transparent in the teaching of God's Word. There are a lot of ministries that thrive on looking for "hidden" things. They'll have these, "Oooh, if you get into it, you'll really see stuff. If you hold this up to

years that the simple truths of God - there're plenty of those to learn. You'll never need to go looking for the "hidden" stuff, you know? So notice that Paul, as he begins to write to the Corinthians here about this topic of the enemy, renounces the way that the world goes about presenting what God would like to say. He said, "I don't want anything to do with hidden, crafty, deceitful teaching. No ulterior motives." You've heard people say, "If you give, it'll be given to you," and so they'll say, "So give to me! And then God will give to you." Paul had no secret game plan, no need for craftiness. He wasn't an underhanded guy. He simply taught the Bible, clearly, in the sight of God, making, notice, the truth known. He lived the message. He preached to the best of his ability. He believed what he was teaching. He sought to be an example of the things that he was talking about. And he believed that God would bring the increase, as Paul would simply do that. So, Paul starts off by saying to these folks, when it comes to the battle for the hearts of the lost, "You can start by just being transparent." If you're saying to somebody, "Hey, pray," you'd better be praying. "Hey, you'd better go to church." Are you going to church? "Hey, you should be worshipping the Lord." Well, are you worshipping the Lord? Or are you hanging around the foyer, visiting? I mean, are you practicing what you preach? That was Paul's interest. Are you witnessing? Are you sharing your faith?

B. Verses 3-4: A lack of response is because of the enemy

And then he says, in verse 3, this, "But even if our gospel is veiled," (or hidden) "it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." Paul says, "Look, if there's any darkness of understanding when it comes to preaching or sharing the gospel, it is not our presentation which we seek to be honest and truthful. It is, rather, the enemy of our souls who works to blind the minds of men that are lost, lest somehow the light of the glory of Jesus, the gospel, the image of God, would shine upon them and be saved."

C. Those who perish and refuse the gospel do so under the devil's influence

So, Satan doesn't want the world to consider Jesus; not for who He truly is. We can help out by being transparent, by being truthful in our presentation. We can remove all of those doubts. But Paul said there are still going to be those who are struggling, who are perishing, because they've been subject of, and the result of, the enemy's work. And the god of this world blinds the minds of the people who are lost so that the gospel has no effect. When God created the world, He handed it to Adam and Eve to oversee - replenish the earth, fill the earth, multiply. And yet man turned around at some point, and, obeying the lying devil, they handed, if you will, the authority over the earth to the devil. Paul said in Romans 6:16, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" So Adam and Eve did this - they listened to God, they received from God, and they handed over, if you will, all that this world was to a fallen angel who had come to deceive.

Jesus twice called Satan the prince of this world. And we are told in 1 John especially, but in other places, that one of the purposes of Jesus' coming into the world was to redeem the world

temptations was he showed Him all of the kingdoms of the world in a moment's time. And he said to Him, "I will give You all of these if You will just bow down and worship me" (Luke 4). That was his desire; still is. "I want to be worshipped as God." And Satan said these kingdoms belonged to him, he could give them to whomever he chose; and you won't read Jesus going, "Nah ah. They're Mine." What He will do is refuse to bow His knee to this false god, and Jesus would turn and talk about the redemption that He would come and buy us back with His blood. So He turns to the Father. But He doesn't deny the fact that Satan is the god of this world. When Jesus first told the disciples of the path of salvation that He would take, there in Matthew 16:22-23, it was Peter who said, "Far be it from You, Lord. That's really not Your plan!" And Peter was told by Jesus, "Get behind Me, Satan!" Not, "Get behind Me, Peter." But now Peter was embodying and enveloping and espousing the very heart of the devil; that being that the death of Jesus and His resurrection would be the way of life for man. "You're savoring not the things of God but the things of man." That's what Peter was told by the Lord. So, even at that very beginning, as Jesus began to lay it out, the enemy was there to oppose His redemption of the world. So when Paul writes here that "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, the image of God, should shine on them," that's the message that saves. It's the message that saved you and me. One day soon, He will come to take full possession of what He has purchased. For now, Satan is a trespasser. He's been defeated, hasn't he? We read in Hebrews 2:8, "The Lord put everything under Jesus' feet," and then it says, "but we don't yet see everything under His feet." But we will. The end is sure, isn't it? We're going to rule and reign with Jesus one day, and the enemy is going to be put away forevermore. But for now, as a trespasser, he still seeks to blind men's eyes to keep them from only one thing - the love of God displayed at the cross through His Son. That's what he wants to blind men's hearts from.

D. Jesus has overcome the enemy

If you go back and you read Revelation 5, which has only fourteen verses, it would be well to read in this context because it is John going to heaven and watching the lamenting in heaven as they wondered who could take the scroll, the possessions that God had established, the things of earth. Who could open the scroll? Who could be worthy? And John said there was no one until Jesus stepped up, and He took the scroll, and He's worthy to take the scroll, to loose the seals thereof. And the whole of heaven starts to worship Jesus who comes to rightfully claim that which belongs to Him. For now, in the world, blindness due to sin and the work of the devil grips people's hearts. The Lord invited His people, there in Isaiah 1:18 to come and reason together with Him in spiritual things. "Come now, and let us reason together," He said. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Just come, and repent, and refuse to go that way. Come to Me." And the people turned away.

E. Salvation requires more than simple rationale

So, there's a lot of that spiritual battle that continues, but it is often lost - even the battle - in the blindness of man unable to see clearly through his own sin; which is why we're called to go out and share our faith often. You can see, I think, this blinding influence of the devil upon his

wise, that are caring, that are wonderful, insightful folks tend to change dramatically when you start to talk about Jesus like you know Him. And what is normal now becomes this big battleground between you and them, and the rational is set aside; and opinion and fault finding and self-justification and myth come to the forefront. I think Paul, when he wrote to Timothy (right towards the end of chapter 2) said, "A servant of God must not be a striving person. He should rather be gentle to all men, he should be apt to teach and patient, and in meekness, he should instruct those who oppose themselves" (2 Timothy 2:24-25). In other words, their refusal of the gospel doesn't hurt you. It hurts them. They oppose themselves. "If God would, per adventure, give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (verses 25-26). That's where the gospel comes, right? It sets people free from the lies and the blindness of the enemy. But Paul said, "We're living pure lives, open lives. And still we realize that some of the folks that turn away are in that battle with the enemy and haven't decided to listen or to hear."

F. Satan uses lies to bind, blind, control and deflect the seeker

One of Satan's greatest works is to blind people's minds, and he distorts the truth, he seeks to control them. It is vital you and I live godly lives - best we can. Live like open books. Share our faith. Enter the battle. Pray that God opens the eyes of the blind, binding the enemy from his blinding influence because that's where the battle is fought. And Satan wants to keep men in a place where they're unable to hear, where they're unwilling to consider. They're resistant to self-examination.

G. Satan uses these outlooks as footholds to keep the truth hidden from the lost. Those are footholds that the enemy develops in the hearts of people in the world. When Paul said to the Corinthians in chapter 1, "The preaching of the cross is to those who perish" what? "foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:18). "You're just ridiculous. You're preaching Jesus. Somebody died. That's life, man! Well, that's ridiculous." "The preaching of the cross is foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." So there's the battle that has to be fought, and the unbeliever, as far as the gospel, often views it as a cruel hoax. But you and I see it as God's power. That's quite a disparity, isn't it? Someone sees the cross, and they laugh, "Yeah, sure," and then you and I go, "That's our life! That's our hope!" But the plan of the enemy is to keep you laughing at God and yet lost. Isaiah, in describing the person who was lost and decided that God was not the way, wrote in chapter 59:10, "We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes; we stumble at noonday as at twilight; we are as dead men in desolate places." That was his description of someone without the light that God would want to bring to them. So, those in the world who sustain their positions by ego and pride and intellect and self-will and natural wisdom - that whole process keeps people from listening or considering or hearing the truth. And I think that you would be wise to remember that when you go about sharing with folks, and you run into some opposition. I always, before I share with people, pray even quickly, "Lord, bind the blinding work of the devil" because he keeps people by his will.

H. Jesus came to open the eyes of the blind

And yet if God opens their eyes, if they might see the eye-opening power of God..... It changed our lives. It can change theirs. Isaiah said of Jesus, in Isaiah 42:7, He came "to open blind eyes," and I don't think he was just talking physically so. Jesus came to open the eyes of the blind, "to bring prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house." So, God gives man a choice, and He'll respect our choice.

I. It is a spiritual battle

You should know that Satan doesn't give you a choice. He just wants to destroy you. He's not letting go. I am sure, personally, and it's been a driving force in my life for many years, that if people could see Jesus for who He really is and see themselves for who they really are, there'd be a lot more people getting saved. It wouldn't be even an issue. "I see. Oh, is that me?" Yeah, and this is Him. "Well, then, I want what He has." I mean, that's really the battle, isn't it? So we pray clearly that the Lord would let them see their choices. It's hard to pray, "Save Lucy, Lord" when Lucy, in her choice, doesn't want to be saved. "I don't want to be saved. I don't want to walk with God." But if I pray, "Lord, open her eyes that she might see....." It's vital in evangelism that we do a lot of praying, isn't it? Here's what Paul wrote to the Colossians in chapter 4:3, "Pray for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains." Pray that we get open doors. So, don't take it personally when people refuse you or they get angry or they argue crazily like, "What happened here?! You're a normal person. What are you screaming at me for, all of a sudden?" Just pray, and don't lose heart. We're blessed because God's light in Jesus has shone in us, and we see Him.

J. It is vital that we are aware of the enemy's work as we share our faith

Well, then he says this in verse 5, "We're not preaching ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your slaves for Jesus' sake." No matter the response, the gospel can't be altered, it can't be changed. There's no place to turn. I just want to preach Jesus. And he says in verse 6, "It is God who commands light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts. He gives light of the knowledge of the glory of God, and it is found in the face of Jesus Christ." So, look, we share, we're honest, we're open, we're straightforward. There're no hidden and deceptive mannerisms. But we realize that it is still a battle in the spirit between darkness and light. And then we get to verse 6, and we read God turns the light on. God turns the light on. We preach. He turns the light on. Right? You don't save people. You don't even convince them of being saved. He does that. You share His Word faithfully. That's what Paul says in verse 5. We're just preaching Jesus. We're just preaching Jesus, and we just want to be God's servants for Jesus' sake. And we're those people that God has shined the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus. We've met the Lord. So don't lose heart. Don't lose heart. But his blinding influence.....

Jesus' Illustration of the Enemy's Blinding Influence - Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

A. The parable of the sower

Second of all, if you'll flip back a couple of books to Matthew 13, there is that story that Jesus tells about the parable of the sower. It's the first parable that Jesus taught. It is the one from which all of the other allusions in the parables are drawn. He taught it when there was a multitude of people. In fact, He got into a boat and pushed off from shore. He actually taught it in a couple of places, but this is probably the most in-depth. And this is what He said, verse 3, "Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" And the disciples came to Him" (verse 10) "and said, 'We don't get what You're talking about.' " Well, beginning in verse 18, Jesus then explains the parable - very clearly expounds it - so no one misses it. And the interesting thing about this parable, in particular, it is that parable whereby the Lord pulls back any kind of curtain that might stand between you and someone you're sharing with so that you can see what's going on; what He normally sees but you can never see - what happens to the heart as it hears the gospel. Because where Jesus illustrates this blinding work of the devil is in the issue of the willingness of the heart to respond to the Word of God. And so everything has to do with the condition of the soil or of the heart. Like I said, this is one of those insights, the Lord goes, "See what's going on?" and He puts the curtain back down. Now you're left to kind of apply it in your life.

There are, in this parable, soils - four of them in all. We learn from Jesus that, in these spiritual areas that we don't see, hearing and responding to the Word of God has everything to do with how well the soil is prepared for the seed - the Word of God - which is shared. Satan's work is to keep our hearts unready; to not be willing to hear what God has to say, to just be overwhelmed by life and turn away from God. In fact Jesus says (in the parable) that 75% of the places the Word of God is taught, it doesn't take root, and it doesn't produce fruit. But then there are those others, if we take the four equally, where they hear God's Word, and they respond accordingly. So, you and I go out with the Bible in hand or in heart, and we begin to share the gospel with people. We don't know what their heart is like. We may never have met them. Or they're not who they really say that they are. All we know is God's Word doesn't go out void (Isaiah 55:11). And we present it; and yet the Lord gives us an insight here, and He says, "Well, there's always the heart issue, and the enemy's job is to keep the heart not deep, hardened, unwilling to hear." And God's Spirit is at work seeking to get people's hearts to be opened. He opens the eyes of the blind. He turns on the light. Verse 18 says this, "Therefore hear the parable of the sower.' "

B. Verse 19 - Wayside soil

"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the

that path through which the farmer walks in his field to plant his fields. It's not hit by the machines. It's like the walking path. It's hard, it's unyielding, it's not watered. It's unresponsive. And Jesus relates this hardness of heart to a lack of understanding. In other words, the gospel hasn't been explained very well or poorly taught or not taught at all. People kind of hear bits and pieces. They can't really follow it very well. There's no communication of the truth. The heart may hear good news, but it doesn't somehow apply to them, so they don't take it personally, and it never penetrates the surface. You go to church with this person, you're walking away going, "Oh, man, the Lord spoke to me." And the guy goes, "Who?" "The Lord. He spoke to me." "That was a long sermon, man. I am ready for lunch." And that's all he gets. And you're going, "Man, that was the Word of God!" "I don't feel it." Boing. Dink. That's it. You know? Bounced right off. Well, Satan's done his work, hasn't he? He's quickly come along and stolen away the seed, the Word of God, before it can take any root, have any influence, to even begin to grow. And much like birds pick up seeds that have fallen in the hard soil, rather than in the soft, Satan picks off the Word of God before it can penetrate, and the hearer is no better off than before he heard. He turns around and walks away just as he came. He's still lost. Satan still has the victory. Unbelief is deadly. And so you'll read in prophets like Hosea, where Hosea will say in chapter 10:12 to the nation of Israel, so far from God, "Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; beak up the fallow ground" of your heart. Or bust up the hard heart of this man. Open your heart. Hear from God. Let the Lord speak to you. "Seek the LORD until He comes and rains righteousness on you." If tonight God's Word is making sense to you, and the light of His Word is shining upon you, make sure that you respond to Him because that's how you get saved. You hear, you get a break in the darkness, a light shines upon you. The Holy Spirit opens your eyes, and you get a chance to choose. Now you may want to walk away going, "Aw, forget it." You may walk away harder than ever before. Or, you might walk away with eternal life.

C. Verses 20-21 - Stony soil

In verse 20 we read, " 'But he who received the seed' " (the Word of God) " 'on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution" (or, if you will, a price) "arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.' " If the wayside is the hard-hearted hearer, the stony ground is the emotional, impulsive hearer. You talk to someone, they start to cry right away, "Oh, that's exactly what I need." Look, the enemy is all for religion. He loves religion. But he is against the truth. So here's a response from someone to the gospel without any understanding or with any real commitment. The response is immediate and it's emotional, "Oh, man. This is too good for me. This is too good to be true. Sign me up at once. I want to be saved. Put me on the roll. Get me a big Bible. Do you have any bumper stickers? I'd like a witness shirt. Where do I sit? When can I come?" And two weeks later, they're gone. What happened to that excited guy? He realized it was going to take longer than two weeks to walk with God. So the hearer immediately gets rolling. He applies for the job as the assistant pastor within the month. But Jesus tells us that for his heart, there's no salvation because there's no repentance. There's no commitment. There's no conviction. The gospel is a two-edged sword, right? There's conviction and repentance and then good news. Here, the view is, "What can I get out of the gospel?" There's no dying to self, no remorse for sin. Jesus is,

want." But notice the minute there is a cost involved, they conclude Jesus isn't the answer, and they move along as helplessly as when they walked in. And again, the Word of God doesn't penetrate because there's no root, there's no sustenance, there's no real connection with God. One is blinded because his heart is hard. This one is impulsively, emotionally, caught up, but he's not standing in the truth of God that doesn't change, and so he doesn't last.

D. Verse 22 - Thorny soil

Notice in verse 22, " 'Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.' " The thorny ground is the preoccupied, double-vision kind of guy. He's got his eyes in a lot of places. He's got one eye on the Lord, and the other thing his eyes are on is the world. And you know, when you're cross-eyed, that gives headaches. There's no clear kind of vision, whatsoever. So, here's somebody that's preoccupied with worldly gain that leaves very little room in his spiritual life for the Lord. He can't find time for church in his 900-hour a week schedule. "If Jesus can accomplish my worldly needs by me praying, that's fine." He is spiritually caught up, and he is oftentimes spiritually deceived. He supposes that gain is godliness. He doesn't get it. He's got a lot of issues that are choking out the Scriptures. The worries of life, the deceit of, "I want to get wealthy and move ahead, and I only use God to that extent." Again, no real repentance, no move to Jesus, no change of heart, no fruit, no salvation. Just a divided heart. Divided hearts are horrible, aren't they? "The heart is divided" (Hosea 10:2). Elijah said to the people, "How long will you falter between two opinions?" (1 Kings 18:21) Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters." James wrote in chapter 1:8, "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." That's this guy. He's got nothing going on. He's got cares in both directions. He's absolutely cross-eyed. He can't see. He can't see it at all.

E. Verse 23 - Good soil

Only verse 23 is the fellow who bears fruit. " 'But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.' " This is a guy who has a good heart. Now how do you know when you're sharing with people what kind of heart you're dealing with? You don't! You've just got to preach. You've got to share. Right? You've got to let the Word out there. But understand that the enemy is seeking to corrupt the heart - hard-hearted, no depth, preoccupied. It's only the receptive heart. And you got saved the day you went, "All right. I'm going to start listening to God." You might have played around with it for a long time. I used to sit at the back of the Costa Mesa concerts in the early 70's with Jack Daniels in a Coke bottle, and we would just get drunk as could be. Because we liked the music, "It's cool, man." We were just stumbling out to our car.....we didn't get saved, we got wasted. Months on end. But one day, I went, and I got saved. God was very patient. So was the usher in the back row. (Laughing) Praise the Lord for that.

But I want you to notice - here's how the enemy works. Because the enemy comes to steal the seed, the enemy comes to preoccupy the soil, the enemy comes to have you make shallow

at all. And in every instance, it's the condition of the heart that's the determining factor. And that's where the enemy works. He blinds the mind, he blinds the heart. Can you imagine one day, standing in heaven, watching people come in with their stony hearts before God? "I always loved You. I went to church as often as I could, when I didn't have to work. I had to work." All of the excuses. Fooled by the enemy. The defense, obviously, is to have a heart for God, to pray He teach you, to open your eyes, and to have a soft, teachable spirit. But Satan looks to blind the mind. He also looks to blind the heart, the commitment.

False Teaching - 1 Timothy 4:1-3

A. Seducing spirits and doctrines of demons

Well let's look at one more here. 1 Timothy 4 (towards the back of your Bible), verse 1. And here we have kind of the same goal. Satan wants to snatch the seed away, but he's going to do it this way - this time he's going to let you eat the seed; he's just going to change it. Verse 1, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth." So, here's Paul's word to Timothy. In the last days, one of Satan's arsenals will be not that he'll snatch away the seed but that he'll deliver religion without the truth. Or, in other words, he'll change the seed. He'll appeal to man's sense of pride and goodness. Paul calls it, here, seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. Perversion of the Scriptures is the flip side of the blinding work of the devil. He wants to keep you from the truth - hard-hearted to it. But if that doesn't work, he'll harden the heart, and then he'll change the message because that's the way the world is kept under wraps, if you will. Look at the popularity of those aberrant kinds of cults and false religious systems today that don't demand too much of you, they make you feel good about yourself, you don't have to rely on the Scriptures, you don't have to change very much. There's a lot of appeal to your works and to your pride and self-congratulations. I mean, the things that people will believe once God is set aside is amazing.

B. False teachings are characterized by commonly-held threads of evil

But let me give you a thread that runs through all of these false teachings that is the most basic to false teachings that maybe will help to alert you when you run into it.

1. Most false teaching denies the truth of the Bible. At some point or another, they depart between God's Word and God. They at least shade it. They'll qualify it. They'll misinterpret it. They'll try to redefine it. Most cults that are successful have more books than the Bible. They'll print their own stuff. They'll have their own publications to teach you what you could never learn if you simply read the Bible. I remember saying to Mormon missionaries at my door one day, "How in the world did you come up with that from reading this verse? You're amazing as a storyteller, but you're not reading." And they can't answer the question. Jehovah Witnesses have their literature and their own Bible. Mormons have their literature and their

but it comes with a horrible consequence. Everywhere you turn in the Scriptures - Matthew 15, the Lord talks about adding to the Scriptures; Proverbs 30:6 about adding words to the Scriptures, "You'll be found to be a liar;" Revelation 22:18-19, "I'll add to you the words written in this Book." God is pretty vehement about, "Don't mess with My Word. Here's My Word. Stick with that." And so often you'll find that the cults will set aside the truth of the Scriptures. In 2 Timothy 4:3-5, it says this, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things," Timothy, "endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." Satan longs to itch the ears of people with anything but the truth. Christian Scientists - not Christian, not science. Like Grape Nuts - not grape, not nuts. (Laughing) Reincarnation as a toad. Is this what you want? Or a cow. Or a statue that answers prayer. The truth requires repentance and turning in faith to Jesus Christ. Nothing else. But there's a tremendous move in the cults. They will deny the truth of the Scriptures as a whole.

2. Second of all, they will usually, at some place, deny the deity of Jesus Christ. Because if Jesus isn't God, everything falls apart. There's no gospel, there's no good news, the cross means absolutely nothing - for all have sinned. If He's not God, our message is lost. He has to be God. And so they will go after that. 2 Peter 2:1 says, "There were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them....." That's pretty much a definition for the cults. 1 John 2:22, "Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?" that He's the Messiah. So, watch for that. You will hear of Jesus being benevolent, a prophet, a child of God, a good man. But, man, the minute you start saying He's God come in the flesh, now we've got problems. Satan has a long list of approved Messiahs, and Jesus just doesn't make that list. Like I said, you can talk to people about God, the higher power, the man upstairs, the big guy. Everything's fine. You start talking about Jesus like you know Him, and things change. So they tend to deny the deity of Jesus Christ.

3. They deny, oftentimes - these religious ways - the grace of God. Most false religions are based on performance. So that's how you keep people blinded. "Are you religious?" "I'm a very religious person. I'm in church all the time." Translation - "I work my way to heaven, and I'm doing a pretty darn good job of it!" Absolutely blinded. Reward system. As a Catholic (I grew up Catholic), I went to Savio in Bellflower and to John Bosco - twelve years. My goal, as a Catholic, was to make it to purgatory. There was no way in Hades I'm going to get to heaven. I was just hoping to avoid hell, and one step above hell was that sorta-hell place. It was hell with a timer. Right? You got out after a time. Isn't that what you were taught? That was my hope, man. If I could make purgatory.....whooo.....missed hell. I'm gonna get out of here eventually. Well Satan offers salvation by works for it appeals to the pride of man. "I've earned it, I deserve it, God owes me." It is a benchmark of a false religious system that Satan uses to blind the world, and denying God's grace is huge. And yet you go to Ephesians 2:8-9, and it says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Hey, you didn't earn going to heaven. He gave that to

wants to offer something different. Paul said in Romans 11:6, "If by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work." Pretty logical, sensible answer. And truth at that, for sure. So, the works are always the result of your salvation - Jesus enabling you to be pleasing in His sight. But any religion that starts off with "you need Jesus AND something else" or the "Jesus-plus system" (I need Jesus plus a lot of these things) - that's a false religion. And Satan is good at adding luggage to your trip. He's good at adding things for you to carry along because it is that false teaching in which he does so much of his destructive work.

4. Most false religious systems deny the second coming of Jesus. They deny that there's going to be a day of reckoning, when the Lord is going to come back. 2 Peter 3:4, Peter says there're people running around saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." Well, the Lord did step in with the flood, and He's going to step in again. But you see, if you teach that He's not returning, then your life has no consequence. There's not a day of reckoning. There's a big move today (by guys like Rob Bell) to teach that there's no hell. Well, he's wrong! He's a deceiver. There's absolutely a hell. In fact, God speaks more about hell than heaven. And He does that with purpose. He doesn't want you to go there - to save you from it. "God won't demand justice. He's not coming again." So there're all of these aberrant teachings that are running around like - Jesus came in secret or the post-tribulation view that removes any need for you to be ready at any time because you can just figure it out. "Oh, He's coming on a Thursday. I just did the math." No. He said, "Be ready." Denying the second coming, removing the immanence of Jesus - it removes the judgment.

5. Most religions provide man with many different gods to worship. Look, get this straight. Satan wants every man on his knees - just not worshipping the King of kings. But he'd love you bowing down. Psalm 96:5, "For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens." That's what it says. There's only one God to worship, isn't there? We read in Psalm 106:36-38, "They served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood." Sacrificing to idols is demon worship - the power behind the idol. Worship Buddha - worshipping a devil. A cow. The pope. St. Christopher. Mary, herself. A rabbit's foot. The lucky pair of shorts. Doesn't make any difference. The devil sits behind the image, right? And the enemy wants you to worship something else. Someone else. We will see the truth of that clearly played out in Revelation 13 where you read about power being given to the image to breathe and to speak, and people will bow down. Providing man with many gods to worship.

6. And ultimately Satan is behind the control of world governments. We see that, I think, in our culture very much. We watch. There are billions being led astray. If you listen to what the pope has said in the last month - there're a billion Catholics in the world - if they all believe what he said, they're going to be eternally lost. They will never come to Jesus by faith. Not if any religion is okay and any god is okay and any religious system is all right, and there's no standard and there're no absolutes. He may be popular, but he's wrong, and he's deceiving

told we cannot proselytize for Christ. So we don't. We stand on busy street corners and talk loudly to our group, and that's okay. Look at this whole Muslim religion and how it controls so many in the world. And Buddhism. The devil is blinding hearts and minds, providing false religions, and idols to substitute for the real God who loves us. That's his work in the world. That's what you and I are up against. But it's a spiritual battle. It isn't a personality issue. And the work of the Holy Spirit today, through the church, is that you might reach out. In fact, 2 Thessalonians 2 talks about the restraining work of the Holy Spirit. Isn't it great that the Holy Spirit's in the world, slowing things down? Can you imagine if the Lord just, "All right, go ahead," what we would see in a matter of days?

So here's Satan's attack on his own - he blinds the mind through unbelief; he blinds the world through preoccupation and self and pride; he provides lots of false teaching to itching ears that are seduced by doctrines of devils; to deny the Scriptures; to deny the deity of Jesus; to deny the grace of God; to deny His second coming; to manipulate the world; to deny His grace; to deny His return. That's pretty much the way the devil works. Satan fights against the world.

He fights against you much differently. We will discuss that next week. But you should be aware of the enemy that you go to face as you go to work tomorrow to share your faith with someone. That's the kind of stuff you're facing. And you can't really be mad at them. You've got to pray for them - pray that the Lord opens their eyes and binds the enemy. Big deal, isn't it? The strong man goes in, and he controls the house. But when a stronger one than him follows, he takes over. (Luke 11:21-22) And Jesus is the stronger Man, isn't He? So we have great hope in Him. You got saved. Mark got saved. Nancy got saved. You can get saved. You can get saved tonight! If you just run to Jesus. He's more than willing to give you life.

So next week we'll look at one more week of our adversary. This time his attack upon you and me as the church. And then we will begin a really slow and methodical look at all of the different armor. I just love Ephesians 6. Those verses, to me, are just some of the most precious verses because you can apply them immediately, every week.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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