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#1380

Why Is It So Hard To Live For God?

In 1949 George Orwell published 1984. That book quickly became a classic and is responsible for terms like “Big Brother” that we use today to describe government control.

1984 was all about a totalitarian society and how the government dominated it’s citizens.

One of the chief ways was through what was called Newspeak. Newspeak was a new vocabulary that would redefine words and give the government even more authority.

The Nazis were ahead of their time. They were smasters at Newspeak. This poster is from the 1930's from the party's racial office. The text reads: "This genetically ill person will cost our people's community 60,000 marks over his lifetime. Citizens, that is your money."

That’s Newspeak for, “Let’s not see this man’s life as having value. Let’s redefine it as a liability to be gotten rid of.”

Here’s another from 1944. The caption: "The Jew: The inciter of war, the prolonger of war."

Jews aren’t people of value, they’re just the source of all our troubles.

How about this. This is from a Nazi book called “New Meanings for Inherited Customs.” talking about holidays like Christmas.

The significance of holidays and rituals — from the political standpoint — lies in the spiritual or emotional deepening of the experience of community. If we are to attempt to make inherited customs politically useful, we must be clear that that is possible only if we give them a fundamentally new content. Even if religious fanatics object, this is justified because it deepens the sense of belonging to the people's community. Obviously, this is not done for religious reasons.

Redefine everything. Come up with new words and definitions and you can gain control of a whole nation.

We have lots of examples of Newspeak in our country today. Instead of perverted it’s sexually dysfunctional, pro-abortion=prochoice, terrorism=man made disaster, fornication = indiscretion.

The problem with Newspeak is, it gradually moves us away from truth into a delusional kind of reality.

I believe no one is better at Newspeak than the one the Bible calls Satan or the Devil.

Nothing could please Satan more than to have people say he doesn't exist. Keith Green had a song about Satan and the chorus says,

*I'm gaining power by the hour
They're falling by the score
You know it's getting very simple now
'Cause no one believes in me anymore!*

The devil doesn't mind us calling this a "Christian nation," so long as we ultimately walk according to his leadership.

Satan had no problem with Milton writing "Paradise Lost." Now most people have the idea that if Satan exists at all he's in hell. That's great because now he can roam the earth using his strategies against people undetected.

Satan is overjoyed to be considered a delusion, as long as he's left with a free hand to do what he wants.

A very real danger for us is that while we tend to put points in our doctrinal statement declaring how we believe that Satan is a personal being, we often live like everybody else, like he isn't.

We admit the fact of a personal devil but in reality we're clueless as to how he works and what his strategies are.

If we have a real enemy out there, then we need to know both the power and the methods of our foe.

The Bible tells us that before the creation of the world Lucifer led 1/3 of the angels in a coup against God. That obviously wasn't successful. God always wins. But the Bible also tells us that since then there's been an angelic conflict going on. Satan and the fallen angels have waged a cosmic war against God and the heavenly hosts.

With the creation of human beings that conflict spilled over into a new arena. Now people are the focus of Satan's attention as he does all that's in his power to destroy that which was made in God's own image.

And if Satan is the enemy of mankind in general, he is the arch enemy of a believer. Satan hates God. That is why he hates those made in God's image. But remember, he hates those who are children of God by faith in Jesus Christ even more.

See Satan stands judged and condemned by God. He's facing eternal judgment in the lake of fire.

But, even though he's been judged, the sentence won't be carried out until the end of the age. It's during this time that God's wisdom and grace is being shown through His people.

God is calling out a people for Himself and making them His own through the cross.

Satan came to Adam and Eve in the garden to tempt them to sin. And they did. They willfully rebelled against God's clear command. With sin came spiritual death and ultimately physical death.

Satan was ecstatic. He thought he had dealt the death blow to God's creation. But God had a plan of redemption worked out long before the creation of Adam and Eve.

God is holy and He must punish sin. That is why Satan is condemned. But just to demonstrate once and for all that He is love, as well as perfect holiness, God created people and then provided the way of salvation for sinners.

One day God Himself would come to earth as *the seed of the woman*. The virgin born Christ.

And God in the flesh would accomplish what no human being alone could ever accomplish. He would die for the sins of the world.

Satan and the angelic hosts would be shown forever the nature of God. And the truth of God's love as well as His holiness would be demonstrated through out all eternity.

Satan was furious. All down through the ages from the garden to the cross he did what he could to try to prevent the promised seed from coming.

But, the purposes of God can't be stopped. The Bible says, *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.* (Galatians 4:4)

At the cross Jesus Christ paid the divine price for sin, which is death. Then He rose from the grave three days later to demonstrate the completion of the victory.

Forgiveness of sins comes by simple faith and trust in the finished work of Christ. Acts

16:31 *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.*

The Bible says by faith we become children of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. That means by faith we end up with a target on our back.

That very same hatred which Satan has for God is the same hatred he has for the children of God.

Fortunately we know the end of the story. *The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.* (Revelation 20:10)

That's what hell was created for in the first place. *Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.* (Matthew 25:41)

Satan's end is certain, but that doesn't stop him from giving it everything he's got to try and bring the people of God down and to keep us infective.

In I Peter 5, the Apostle gives us a very stern and crucial warning. Right after the beautiful promise of Christ calling us to cast all of our care upon Him He writes:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (I Peter 5:8)

The question we need to ask is just what are Satan's strategies as he moves against Christians? How is it that this "roaring lion" can attack so fiercely and yet at the same time, seem go unnoticed?

We're going to look at 6 of Satan's strategies this morning. In II Corinthians 2:11 Paul said, *We are not ignorant of his devices.*

The best defense against Satan is a knowledge of how he works, and then a realization of the power of Jesus Christ.

What is Satan's strategy when it comes to opposing us? What is Satan attempting to do to you and to me this morning?

I. Satan Resists Our Cleansing

Turn to Zechariah 3 Page 834

Zechariah wrote around 520 BC. The people of Israel had returned from captivity in Babylon and were in the process of rebuilding Jerusalem.

For a dozen years or more the task of rebuilding the temple has been half completed. So God commissions Zechariah to encourage the people to get the job done.

The crucial question at this point is: “How can an infinitely holy God accomplish His plans with a sinful, unclean people?”

So God gives Zechariah this vision. **Read verses 1-4**

Joshua the high priest stands representative of the people in filthy clothes. These were God's people who needed to be cleansed.

The *malak Yahweh* (the angel of the Lord) is the preincarnate Christ and Satan is the great adversary. The word Satan in Hebrew, *satan*, means “the adversary.” Literally verse 1 says, “Satan was standing at his right hand to satanize him.” It uses the verb form of the noun *satan*.

All of this was picturing a truth. Because of the sins of the people of Israel Satan had the advantage. And Satan was there to oppose their cleansing from their filthy garments. Satan didn't want them back on the right track with God.

God has called us to a life of holy living. Here we are, an unholy people living in an unholy world. The only way we'll be effective for God is if our lives are clean and pure.

And yet, we battle within our selves because of our old nature and our rebellious spirit. We need a constant cleansing from God, but Satan is there to oppose us each step of the way.

He's there beckoning us to yield our bodies as instruments of unrighteousness. He's calling us to just go with that old man and his ways. To take the easy way out and to let our deceitful heart rule.

Satan says, “Come on, you don't need to be a fanatic about this Christian stuff. You go to church. You're as good as the next guy. Indulge yourself a little.”

You know what? The closer you actually get to God the more you're aware of how sinful you really are.

Listen to the prayers of some the truly righteous individuals in the Bible.

King David prayed to God, *Against You and You only I have sinned.* (Psalm 51:4)

The Prophet Daniel prayed *We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments.* (Daniel 9:5)

It was Isaiah who said *I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.* (Isaiah 6:5)

The Apostle Paul who did great things for God said, *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.* (I Timothy 1:15)

John, who was called “the disciple whom Jesus loved” wrote, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* (I John 1:8)

Satan knows that if our life is on track with God then God will touch other people’s lives through us so he resists our cleansing.

I. Satan Resists Our Cleansing

II. Satan Resists Our Full Obedience

Turn to Matthew 4 Page 851

Before Jesus officially started His teaching ministry He faced three temptations from Satan in the wilderness.

As the last Adam it was imperative that He face temptation and triumph over it. The first Adam brought death through disobedience. The last Adam brought life through obedience.

What I want you to see here is Satan unmasked. This is Jesus Christ, the last Adam, standing in the place of all mankind and Satan comes in an all out, frontal assault. This is his ultimate agenda. You can’t fool Jesus so Satan doesn’t even try.

Read verses 8-10

From the day that Lucifer's heart was caught up in pride he wanted to supersede God. He wants all worship, all praise, and all honor.

But when it comes to us, Satan isn’t so obvious. He can deceive us pretty easily. Satan

wants to sabotage our totally devoted following of God so instead he tries to generate worship and homage for himself. But he does it very subtly.

The Bible clearly commands us to pay homage to God. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.* (Romans 12:1)

In Ephesians 5:18 the Bible says, *Be filled with the Spirit.* That's another way of teaching dedication. The Holy Spirit can't control (or fill) someone who's not yielded to Him.

Eight separate times the Bible says that God is a jealous God. He's jealous for His name and He's jealous for His people. He's God. He deserves and He wants the supreme place in our lives.

The worship of self, the worship of things, the worship of false religions, all ultimately goes back to the "god of this age," "the father of lies," that old serpent and deceiver, the devil.

I. Satan Resists Our Cleansing

II. Satan Resists Our Full Obedience

III. Satan Promotes Our Pride

Turn to I Timothy 3 Page 1053

I Timothy 3 God gives us the qualifications for an Elder in a local congregation. The qualifications aren't a seminary degree, or years of training. Rather they have to do with his character. And in this list we are told, it's especially important that a man not be chosen whose a novice.

Read verse 6

Satan's agenda is to entangle us in the net of pride. He fell because he was proud and lifted up. He said, *I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.* (Isaiah 14:13-14)

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon fell into the same sin.

He was all proud of himself then God knocked him down and for 7 years he was stricken with insanity until he ate grass like an ox and learned the lesson that God rules.

Pride so often keeps us from serving in Jesus' name. We worry, "What will people think of me?" And we hold back because of the satanic hindrance of pride.

Turn with me now to Acts chapter 14 Page 981

The New Testament book of Acts is a history of the early church. God was confirming the message of the apostles through miracles. In chapter 14 there's the account of Paul healing a lame man at Lystra. When the people saw what had happened they cried out, "the God's have come down to us in the likeness of men!" They called Barnabas as Zeus and Paul Hermes.

When Paul realized what was happening he said to Barnabas, "These people think we're gods! Dude, this is awesome. Let's milk this for all it's worth!"

Not! Look what he really says, **Read 15**

God wants us to see pride for what it is and understand that we are what we are by the grace of God.

I. Satan Resists Our Cleansing

II. Satan Resists Our Full Obedience

III. Satan Promotes Our Pride

IV. Satan Offers Us The Easy Way

Turn to Matthew 16 Page 865

Read 21-22

Jesus predicts his crucifixion, Peter says not you Lord, that can't happen, and so Jesus says, "Well thank you Peter. I know you're looking out for me. Thanks for caring."

No, **Read verse 23-24**

Here Peter thought he expressing his loyalty and Jesus says "Satan's speaking through you."

The devil is forever urging us to take the easy path, the popular path, the path of least resistance.

But see, God's way is the way of the cross. God's way of gaining real meaning and purpose in life is to give up our schedule, program, timetable, itinerary for Christ.

But Satan doesn't want Christians going all out for Jesus Christ. That's why he's forever urging, "Save yourself. Pamper yourself. You deserve it."

When Jesus said, "Take up your cross" to that band of disciples on that dusty road in Caesarea Philippi 2000 years ago the cross wasn't a decoration - it was a cruel instrument of torture and death.

Reach out and try to grab all this life has to offer and you'll find you were reaching for an illusion.

Die to your own petty problems and pride and desires and you'll be a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Salvation is by faith. Discipleship is by commitment. You can be assured that Satan is going to fight against both with all this is in him.

I. Satan Resists Our Cleansing

II. Satan Resists Our Full Obedience

III. Satan Promotes Our Pride

IV. Satan Offers Us The Easy Way

V. Satan Gets In The Way When We Serve God

I Thessalonians 2 Page 1048 Read verse 18

The Apostle Paul was hindered at every turn. He was scourged, beaten with rods, shipwrecked, the subject of stoning. Paul was mobbed in Jerusalem; 40 Jews covenanted together to not eat or drink until they had killed him. (We call them the 40 skinniest guys in the Bible).

Paul was in jail in Philippi; Caesarea and Rome. He was a high value target.

How about today? Does Satan still try to hinder believers? Does Satan place every possible obstacle in front of those who are actively living for God?

Absolutely. His goal hasn't changed in thousands of years.

Sometimes you'll hear people say, "I tried to do this or that for the Lord but God kept shutting the door."

That might be, but before you go down that road listen to I Corinthians 16:9 *For a great and*

effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

“I have a real opportunity to serve God but there’s no shortage of obstacles in my way.”

Living for God isn't easy. It wasn't easy for Jesus Christ and it won't be easy for us.

We are not fighting against humans. We are fighting against forces and authorities and against rulers of darkness and powers in the spiritual world. (Ephesians 6:12 CEV)

I. Satan Resists Our Cleansing

II. Satan Resists Our Full Obedience

III. Satan Promotes Our Pride

IV. Satan Offers Us The Easy Way

V. Satan Gets In The Way When We Serve God

VI. Satan Wants To Put Us Through The Mill

Turn To Luke 22 Page 933

This is right after the Last Supper. Jesus has referred to His body that would be broken and His blood that would be poured out and so His disciples get into an argument about which one of them was the greatest. Pretty amazing, the hardness of our human hearts!

Read 31-34

Peter needed sifting. And he was sifted. But the sifting that Peter ended up getting wasn't the one Satan planned on. Simon Peter was the disciple who always seemed full of human energy and self-trust. He said, “He said, I don't care what these others do, I'll be with you to the end.” Peter needed sifting.

I believe Satan knew the potential of Peter. I believe Satan considered him the one man among the 12 that he had the most reason to fear. So Satan tried to run Peter through the mill. The laser beam of his cunning and deceit was focused on Peter with pin-point accuracy. Satan's goal was to make a train wreck of Peter's faith.

Jesus knew Peter's weak spots, just like He knows yours and mine. So He ends up allowing Satan to sift Peter for Peter's good.

After Jesus' arrest, Peter denied his Lord. He cowered in fear at a little servant girl who pointed her finger at him and said “You are one of this man's followers, aren't you?” Satan was trying to grind Peter to dust.

But in the sovereignty of God Satan became a chisel in the hand of God to knock off the rough edges from Peter's character.

Before Satan's sifting process Peter could use swords, catch fish, and curse and swear. After the sifting was done, Peter could use the sword of the Spirit, fish for men and preach the gospel of Christ with boldness. He could even die a martyr's death.

Satan will always try to wear us down. He'll try his best to overturn our faith, to weaken our prayer life, and to destroy our testimony.

But, listen. God will use Satan for our good. Even his testings and temptations can be used to build character in our lives as we keep our hearts focused on Jesus Christ.

As Satan sifted Peter and Peter failed God he learned the most important lesson. He learned how miserably we fail when we go it on our own. Peter learned what it meant to lean on God and rest in the power of His Holy Spirit.

Satan wants to sift believers. But if we're following God his sifting will be turned around for our good.

I. Satan Resists Our Cleansing

II. Satan Resists Our Full Obedience

III. Satan Promotes Our Pride

IV. Satan Offers Us The Easy Way

V. Satan Gets In The Way When We Serve God

VI. Satan Wants To Put Us Through The Mill

VII. Satan Has Already Been Defeated

Satan has a battle plan when it comes to harassing us. Every one of us here have lost a battle or two, to him along the way.

But the exciting thing to know is that we might loose a few skirmishes now and then, our Lord Jesus Christ has already won the victory for us.

Turn to one last passage, Ephesians chapter 6 Page 1041

Read verses 10 - 11, & 13

God hasn't only warned us against Satan, he's also armed us against Satan. We're on the winning side. Even if it feels like we're not some times, the truth is, we are.

Along with the armor, God has given us one offensive weapon.

Read verse 17

When Jesus went head to head with Satan in the wilderness, Jesus met the temptation with the Word of God. Each time He said, "It is written."

We have the resources at our disposal. The victory has already been won.

Satan's clever. He's the father of lies and the master deceiver. But he's also a defeated foe. And catching on to that truth will give you more strength against Satan in your Christian life than anything else.

God's given us His Holy Spirit. God's given us strength in Christ. By faith we're in Christ. We're one with Him and He's our life. That means His power is ours. The smallest amount of divine power can overcome the greatest amount of hell's power. And Jesus said, *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* Matthew 28:18

Jesus Christ dealt the death blow to Satan at the cross. We've to enter into that victory. If Christ defeated Satan at the cross and we are in Christ then by faith we defeated Satan at the cross. Think about it, as Satan is now subject to Christ, so he's subject to us. He is a vanquished foe.