

*Does Anybody Believe In The Devil Anymore?*

If you went across the street to the shopping center this afternoon and polled people coming out of the Safeway on their beliefs concerning spiritual things you'd find something like this.

Of those polled very few would claim to be atheists. A few might say there's no God but the vast majority would say just the opposite. The majority of Americans believe that there's a god of some sort.

But now if you questioned them on the reality of a literal being called Satan or the Devil the response would be much different. You'd have a few answer "yes" but the majority would chuckle and say, "Of course not. Does anybody really believe in the Devil anymore?"

I'd like you to watch a short clip of some people on the street being asked their opinion on Satan. This isn't scripted. These people didn't know the question was coming. Some of them may say some strange things from your perspective.

Let me challenge you, this isn't funny. These are people's beliefs. These are examples of what your neighbors, or maybe even some here in the congregation, are thinking. Let's hear from them.

**Video: "The Devil" Visual Reality 3:30**

I believe that's a good cross section of where people are. To the average person Satan is the stuff of horror movies and comedy routines.

But you know what? I believe that that's just the way Satan wants it. Think about it, if there was such a being as the Devil what greater strategy than to convince people he doesn't exist? If people don't believe you're real then you have a free pass to wreak havoc and destruction and nobody even knows it's you.

Now obviously we don't determine spiritual truth by taking surveys. Spiritual truth isn't determined by consensus. It's determined by revelation.

Here at Faith we believe that the Bible is God's revelation of spiritual truth to us.

It has all the earmarks of a book that was divinely given, from specific fulfilled prophecy to scientific and historical accuracy, the Bible is a unique book among all other books. It's the resource we go to to understand spiritual things.

Now according to the Bible, our objective source of authority, Satan is real.

We're in a study of the New Testament Bible book of Ephesians. **I'd like you to turn to Ephesians 6, page 1041**

What we call the book of Ephesians is actually a letter written by an Apostle of Jesus Christ named Paul.

Paul, or Saul as he was known before his conversion to Christianity, was a Jewish scholar who at first opposed Christianity.

He didn't believe that Jesus of Nazareth was Israel's Messiah. In fact Saul actually led a contingent of men who would travel the countryside arresting followers of Jesus. He even officiated at the stoning of the first Christian martyr, Stephen.

But God was at work on Saul. Saul saw Stephen die with a confidence that he was right with God. Saul was troubled over what he saw as hypocrisy in his own life. And finally God knocked him off his feet when he was traveling to Damascus with letters from the authorities giving him jurisdiction to arrest even more Christians.

That was the point where he stopped fighting Christianity and became a believer himself. Now 24 years after that God uses him to write to the people of a congregation in the city of Ephesus in Asia Minor.

As we saw, the first half of the letter was all about what believers have in Christ. The first 3 chapters lay out our spiritual riches which we have through Christ. There was a lot of doctrine in the first three chapters.

The doctrinal part came first because it's only by knowing and understanding who God is and what He's done for us that we are able to live in a way that honors Him.

Whether it's living in the family, functioning as part of a church congregation, honoring God on the job, or in school it's not our strength but God's strength that's going to enable and empower us to do the job.

But, if we earnestly begin to live as children of God and strive to make our Christianity practical in our day to day life, we're going to run into opposition.

Living God's way is a spiritual battle and there's an enemy that's committed to doing all that he can to bring us down and make us ineffective.

And so here, at the close of this letter to the Ephesians God tells us how to fight the spiritual battle.

Obviously, you are not going to be successful in battle if you don't know who you're fighting against.

*I. Satan Is Not Only Real, He's The Enemy Of God And All Of Us*

### **Read verses 10 & 11**

Even a casual acquaintance with the Bible reveals that Satan is much more than a force or an influence. He's a person. He speaks, he plans, he deceives, he hates, he fights. In other words, he carries out the functions of a person.

He's described with personal pronouns in the Bible. He's not called an "it" or a "thing" as if there was anything impersonal about him, but rather he's the "evil one."

Matthew 25 says that God has prepared hell for the devil and his angels. That alone shows us that Satan is a moral creature, responsible to God for his actions.

Satan has the 3 aspects of personality - emotions, intellect and will, and therefore He's actually a person.

Jesus believed that Satan was a reality because He spoke with him directly. Three times in Matthew 4 Satan came to Jesus to tempt him and they met face to face.

The New Testament writers, James, Peter, and Paul all spoke of Satan as a very real individual.

From what we can tell in the Bible, apparently the devil was once an angel. Colossians 1:16 says that all things were created by God, therefore Satan, as all other angels, was a creation of God.

According to Ezekiel 28, and Isaiah 14 Satan's original name was Lucifer, which means "light bearer." He was called the "Son of the Morning" and appears to have been the highest in rank of the angelic beings.

But Lucifer wasn't satisfied with being subordinate to his Creator. He wanted to sit in God's throne. He wanted to be the center of power throughout the universe. And so he said "I will" ascend into heaven, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God," "I will" sit upon the mount of the congregation." I will, I will, I will, culminating in the most defiant of all "I will be like the most high!"

God, of course, put down this rebellion. But not until 1/3 of the angels had joined Lucifer. They were cast out of heaven and as a result of their fall are "reserved unto judgment" (II Peter 2:4)

Because of God's judgment upon him Lucifer "the light bearer" became the devil, Satan, the serpent. Each of those names highlights a particular aspect of his character.

The Greek word translated "devil", *diabolos*, means "an accuser" or a "slanderer." It comes from the verb *diaballo* which means to "throw through or at." And so he hurls accusations and slanders at God's people. Revelation calls him "the accuser of the brethren."

The name "Satan" comes from the Hebrew noun *satan* which means "an adversary. One who opposes."

"Serpent" in the Scriptures is always used with the concepts of wisdom and craftiness. And so Satan is called by the Apostle John, "that old serpent, the devil."

Here's other names that are also ascribed to this fallen angel that give us insight into his identity.

In Ephesians 2:2 Paul calls him "the prince of the power of the air." Even though Satan was cast out of the 3rd heaven, or paradise, he still exercises power in the atmosphere and the stellar heavens.

He's also called "the prince of the world" (John 12:31) which reveals that Satan claims the throne of this world.

And then Satan's power over the world is revealed in I John 5:19. *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*

He's even referred to as "the god of this world" in II Co. 4:4, which reveals that he claims and accepts the worship of this world.

Now listen to these implications. All worship of people through humanism and

materialistic evolution and false religion is ultimately satanic. There is one called the anti-Christ who is to come will set himself up as God and demand worship.

Paul calls him the “man of sin.” John tells us his number is 666. Six is the number of man in the Bible. He’s a man, he’s a man, he’s a man.

Let me make a bold statement here. If the Bible is true, then the people of our culture worship man, and in their supposed enlightenment don’t even believe that Satan exists, when all the while they are worshipping at the altar of the god of this world.

Satan is a personal, angelic being who is very real and very active in our world.

From everything we see in the Bible it’s apparent that Satan’s program for this age is to destroy all that is God’s.

As one man put it, basically Satan’s said to God “OK, if I can’t have all then You can’t either. If I can’t have worship and a throne and all that I want then I’m going to do everything in my power to make sure You don’t either.”

And so Satan, the adversary, has committed himself to using all of his resources to destroy and bring confusion into God’s program.

Now at the beginning of our study in Ephesians we saw that God’s great overall purpose was to bring all things together in unity in Christ. He’s established a new society, the church, the body of Christ as a demonstration of his unifying power.

If you have put your trust in Jesus Christ as Savior you are at the center of God’s program for the world. That means that you’re also at the center of Satan’s hatred. If we’re the people of God who belong to God then the same animosity that Satan has for God is directed towards us.

If you belong to God by faith then Satan hates you with the very same degree of hatred that he has for God himself.

In fact, even if you haven’t trusted Christ, Satan still hates you because you’re part of God’s creation, made in the image of God.

But if you belong to God it’s like a double whammy! Then Satan wants to destroy your Christian walk and your testimony for Christ. He’s a roaring lion, as Peter describes him, walking about seeking whom he may devour.

We have an enemy. Paul, Peter, James, Jesus took that enemy very seriously. And we

need to make sure that we do too.

Actually, as Christians we face 3 enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil.

The world isn't the creation, it's that system around us that is opposed to God and caters to the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

The flesh is that old nature which we inherited from Adam that desires those things the world system has to offer.

And then the devil is kind of the mastermind behind it all who works behind the scenes to make sin just as convenient as possible for us all.

So our enemy is the devil, but there's something very important that we need to remember about Satan.

Since he's a created being then he doesn't have the attributes of God. He's not all knowing, he's not all powerful and he's not able to be everywhere at once.

But if that's true then how does he accomplish so much in so many different parts of the world? How is he able to have such an impact on so many of our lives? Why do we need these warnings in the scriptures if he can't be everywhere at once?

*I. Satan Is Not Only Real, He's The Enemy Of God*

*II. Satan Is The Commander & Chief Of A Very Well Organized Army*

### **Read verse 12**

Satan has lots of help. The Message paraphrases this, "This is no afternoon athletic contest that we'll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels."

There is definite array of demonic beings that assist Satan. Revelation 12:4 implies that 1/3 of the angels rebelled against God and fell with Satan. These fallen angels make up the "principalities and rulers." The messengers of Satan are a well organized army divided into ranks and divisions.

The words "rulers of the darkness of this age" is literally "the world rulers of this darkness." Now remember, these aren't flesh and blood rulers and authorities, these are spirit creatures.

The point of the passage is to show us how we can stand against personal demonic attacks but it touches on something much broader.

Satan and his demons are concerned about individuals but they are also concerned about the nature of the world. One of the most detailed glimpses into the working of Satan's hierarchy of demons is given in Daniel Chapter 10 and I'd like you to turn there with me this morning.

### **Daniel 10 page 792 Read Verse 10-12**

In the chapter before this the Jewish prophet Daniel has a vision from God that he doesn't understand.

He's concerned about the meaning so he prays to God and he asks God to clear things up for him.

And as soon as He begins to pray God begins to send an answer by means of an angel. The thing is it's 21 days later when the angel finally gets there.

That definitely wasn't overnight express mail. What happened that delayed this angelic messenger for 3 weeks?

### **Read verse 13**

He was on his way but someone stopped him. It was the prince of the kingdom of Persia and it wasn't until Michael one of the chief princes came to help him out that this messenger got through.

Jude 9 tells us that Michael is the arch angel. He's the angel for Israel in God's forces and it took Michael to assist this other angel so that he might get through to Daniel.

The Prince of Persia, the Ruler of Persia here isn't the flesh and blood king. He wouldn't have been able to stop the angel, he wouldn't have even known he was there. This is one of the "rulers of the darkness of this world," one of the principalities and powers of Ephesians 6:12.

He was the archangel of the Kingdom of Persia.

### **Read verse 20**

Not only is there a ruler of Persia but there's a ruler of Greece and I make a deduction from this.

In Satan's hierarchy there is a ruler of Persia and a ruler of Greece. There is also a ruler of Rome, Spain, France and USA.

Satan has demonic forces under his command and they are active in this world system. They're active in your life and my life and they are active in the governments of our world.

Satan has his lobbyist in Washington and Moscow and Beirut and every capitol of the world.

Now this gives us a clearer picture of why there is so much confusion in our world. Not only are people sinners but they have a coach. Not only are the governments of our world made up of fallen human beings whose vision is often distorted by sin, but Satan's forces are there to promote confusion and every evil work.

Now this certainly gives us an idea of the power and the extent of Satan's influence. But then we ask, what about us as individuals? What about his working in our own personal lives. That's certainly the main focus is in Ephesians. God's telling us to stand as individual believers.

Well just as the forces of Satan work in governments and nations, those we might classify as more rank and file demons work on us.

In all likelihood none of us have ever been confronted by Satan himself. I doubt if you and I rate his personal attention.

This Bible has a lot of say about what we would call demons. Fallen angels specifically involved with people.

In Deuteronomy 18 as the children of Israel are about to move into the promised land God warns his people to have nothing to do with witches, wizards, witchcraft, spiritism any of the things that were characteristic of the Canaanite religions.

In Isaiah 8 we find the same type of warning. When we come to the NT it appears that as Jesus starts his ministry there is a tremendous outbreak of demonic activity and possession and one of the main features of Jesus work was the casting out of demons. It was almost as if they sensed that He was a threat to them.

Ephesus, where this letter was being read, was a city that was familiar with demonic powers.

*Acts 19:18-20 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.*

These were people who were heavily involved in the occult. They were very aware of satanic power.

But as interesting as demon possession is, I don't know that that possession is Satan's chief way of working. There is such a thing as demonic possession. It's real. It's spoken of in the scriptures. It happens.

But, when it comes to you and me and our relationship to Satanic powers, our concern isn't with possession but with influence.

Demon possession is a situation in which someone is actually indwelt by demons. The demons one or more, actually speak through the person and control him.

Some of the NT manifestations are: erratic and violent behavior, extreme strength, and fear of the name and power of Jesus.

A person who has trusted Christ for the forgiveness of their sins can't be possessed by a demon. A true believer is already possessed by the Holy Spirit and his body is the temple of God. He's sealed till the day of redemption.

I think that the reason that we don't find any mystical formulas for casting out demons in the NT is because demons are cast out through the preaching of the gospel. When a person hears the gospel and responds he or she is cleansed by the Holy Spirit and no demon can dwell side by side with the Holy Spirit.

You don't need incantations and a bunch of hocus pocus like the movies.

There are no warnings about demon possession for Christians in the Bible, but there are warnings about Satanic attacks.

*I. Satan Is Not Only Real, He's The Enemy Of God*

*II. Satan Is The Commander & Chief Of A Very Well Organized Army*

*III. Satan Is A Formidable Adversary*

Go back to Ephesians 6 and notice the kind of language Paul uses here to warn believers. **Read 6:10 again**

Satan's nobody to fool around with. His demons aren't to be taken lightly. They are powerful enemies that hate you and everything you stand for because they hate your Creator.

The only way you are going to be able to stand up to them is if you yielded to God. If the might of His strength is empowering you day by day.

Listen, all the power of heaven is at your disposal. The power is available because of our position in Christ. It's only from our position in Christ that the battle's going to be successfully waged. It's a position of faith - taking God at his word and trusting him to do what He said he will do.

Now follow this. We're not to take our strength from God, as if we could sort of draw it out of Him.

We're to be strong in the Lord. We're to recognize our position in Christ and then live that way. As we do, we're going to be empowered by God for any conflict.

We don't just get beside God, but our place of strength is in God. When we receive Christ as Savior we are in him and He's our strength.

It's obvious that if we need God's strength to withstand Satan that we can't do it alone. We'd fall every time if it were just about us.

But if we're in Christ, we're in the one who has already won the battle.

Speaking of the cross, Colossians 2:15 says, *Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.*

The writer of Hebrews tells us, that Jesus took on a human body, *that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.*

Satan couldn't keep Jesus Christ in the grave and he couldn't prevent him from making our salvation possible and when we're standing in God's power there's nothing that Satan or any of his demons can do because we're standing in Christ's victory. We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

That's why God tells us, *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

In Matthew 4 when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness he withstood Satan through using the Scriptures. The 3rd time when the devil said bow down and worship me Jesus said, "*get behind me Satan.*" He didn't make an offensive move against Satan he withstood him to the face and Satan left.

The Bible tells us to do the very same thing. It doesn't say, "Go out and find the devil and take a swing at him."

Don't worry he and his henchmen will find you. Instead the Bible says, *Resist the devil and he will flee from you!*

Satan will tuck his tail between his legs and run because he knows he's been defeated and he can't stand the truth.

Now, we're going to examine this armor of God in more detail after Easter. But before we close today we need to be aware of something very very important about Satan.

Notice what we're to stand against in verse 11. We're to *stand against the wiles of the devil.*

The word "wiles" is *methodeia*. You don't have to be a Greek scholar to figure out that *methodeia* is the basis for our English word "method."

The word actually means "deceit, craft, trickery."

Most of us here today are not going to have our biggest problems with Satan's most obvious enticements. It's his subtleties that have the greatest chance of bringing us down.

II Corinthians chapter 11 says that Satan is transformed into an angel of light and his ministers are too.

He doesn't have a tail, two horns, a red suit and a pitch fork. He doesn't come showing you sin in all its horror and ugliness.

He works to pull us down inch by inch so slowly and so carefully and so precisely that we don't even know what's happening.

He appeals to our intellect with false doctrine that undermines our confidence in God.

He appeals to our flesh with the pleasures of sin, just a little bit at a time until he's finally got us hooked. Then we see the true end of rebellion against God.

He appeals to our pride by causing division among Christians. Satan tries to rip us apart and bring friction and factions into the church all the while making us think that we're justified in what we do.

He hinders our service to God by pointing us to so many other things that the days go by and we don't have time for God.

He causes us to trust in ourselves by appealing to our ego and we gradually slip downward because we fail to rest totally in God's provision of strength.

He appeals to the lust of the eyes by pushing us into a materialistic, affluent, self-indulgent, self-satisfied world in which we become so overcome with "things" that aren't sin in and of themselves but that dilute and water down our spiritual commitment.

Satan is no fool. He's had thousands of years of practice with people and he knows exactly what works best. He and his demonic assistants are formidable enemies because they know you and me. They know what makes us tick. And they are masters at coming totally unnoticed and hitting you and me at our weakest spots.

Could it be that even though we give mental assent to the fact that Satan exists - that too often we live as if he really wasn't there?

Peter's warning is: *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*