

A study of "The Strategy of Satan"

One – The Deceiver

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

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world. Revelation 12:9

But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:3

For many deceivers have gone out into the world. 2 John 7

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'!"

And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden, we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'"

And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. Genesis 3:1-7

SATAN'S TARGET – YOUR MIND

When Satan wanted to lead the first man and woman into sin, he started by attacking the woman's mind. This is made clear in 2 Corinthians 11:3.

But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

Why would Satan want to attack your mind? Because your mind is the part of the image of God where God communicates with you and reveals His will to you. It is unfortunate that some Christians have minimized the significance of the mind, because the Bible emphasizes its importance.

Do not lie to one another, since you have laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him. Colosians 3:9-10

This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Ephesians 4:17-24

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2

God renews our lives by renewing our minds, and he renews our minds through his truth. This truth is the Word of God.

Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth. John 17:17

If Satan can get you to believe a lie, then he can begin to work in your life to lead you into sin. This is why he attacks the minds from the attacks of the wicked one.

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. Philippians 4:8

"If it is not true," Paul writes, "do not let it enter your mind."

In recent years, science has discovered many fascinating things about the human mind. Like a computer, your mind can store facts and impressions—and even emotions—and recall them years later. Your mind can reach into the past through memory, or it can reach into the future through imagination. Your thinking affects your feeling and your willing.

For as he thinks within himself, so he is. Proverbs 23:7

The doctor says, "You are what you eat." The psychologist says, "You are what you think." Satan knows the tremendous power of your mind, and he tries to capture it for himself.

The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in Thee. Isaiah 26:3

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. Romans 8:6

Your mind affects your whole being. While I do not totally agree with the "success psychology" and "healing psychology" of our day, I must admit that attitudes are important to health and success in life. The exciting new field of "holistic medicine" draws upon the influences of the mind to help the patient cure himself.

Sales managers "psych up" their salesmen with thoughts of accomplishment and success, just as coaches do their football teams. While thinking alone does not make it so, it certainly helps!

SATAN'S WEAPON – LIES

Satan came to Eve as the serpent, the subtle deceiver.

... the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world. Revelation 12:9

...there is no truth in him...for he is a liar and the father of lies. John 8:44

It is important that you notice the steps Satan took in getting Eve to believe his lie.

He questioned God's Word. "Indeed, has God said...?" He did not deny that God had spoken; he simply questioned whether God had really said what Eve thought he had said, "Perhaps you misunderstood what God spoke," is Satan's suggestion. "You owe it to yourself to rethink what he said." It is worth noting that in this suggestion Satan is also questioning God's goodness. "If God really loved you, he wouldn't keep something from you." He tried the same approach with our Lord in the wilderness: "If you are God's beloved Son, why are you hungry?"

He denied God's Word. "You surely shall not die!" It is but a short step from questioning God's Word to denying it. Of course, neither Adam nor Eve had ever seen death. All they had to go on was the Word of God, but this was all they needed. If Eve had not listened to Satan questioning God's Word, she would never have questioned God's Word, she would never have fallen into his trap when he denied God's Word.

He substituted his own lie. "You will be like God!" Adam and Eve were already made in the image of God, but Satan tempted them with an even greater privilege: to be like God! This was, of course, Satan's great ambition when he was Lucifer, God's angelic servant.

"How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of the assembly, in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'" Isaiah 14:12-14

Satan is a created being, a creature; but he wanted to be worshiped and served like the Creator. It was this attitude that led him to rebel against God and seek to establish his own kingdom. "You will be like God" is the one gigantic lie that has controlled civilization since the fall of man.

For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie [literally "the lie"], and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. Romans 1:25

Satan desires worship and service, and Jesus Christ would give him neither!

Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory; and he said to Him, "All things will I give You, if You fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your god, and serve Him only.'" Matthew 4:8-10

Satan's lie "You will be like God" motivates and controls much of our civilization today. Man is seeking to pull himself up by his own bootstraps. He is working to build a utopia on earth and possibly take it to other space. Through education, psychiatry, religions of one kind or another (most of which ignore Jesus Christ, sin, and salvation), and better environment, men are defying God and deifying themselves. They are playing right into the hands of Satan.

How did Eve respond to Satan's approach? She responded by making three mistakes that led her into sin.

She took away from God's word. In verse 2, Eve omitted the word "freely." God's original word in Genesis 2:16 was, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely." We get the impression that Eve caught Satan's subtle suggestion, "God is holding out on you!" When you start to question or forget the grace of God and the goodness of God, you will find it much easier to disobey the will of God.

She added to God's Word. We do not find the words "or touch it" in God's original command. They may have been there, but they are not in the record. Not only did Eve make God's original word less gracious by omitting the word "freely," but she also made the commandment more grievous by adding "or touch it." "His commandments are not burdensome" (I John 5:3). Satan wants us to believe they are burdensome, and that he has something better to offer.

She changed God's Word. God did not say, "Lest you die." He said, "For in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17). The penalty for disobedience as presented by the enemy did not seem as harsh; therefore, Eve could consider forsaking God's will and obeying Satan's will.

Once you have treated God's Word in this fashion, you are wide open for the devil's final trick. He merely permitted Eve to consider the tree apart from God's Word. "Get a good look at it! See it as it really is!" It was "good for food...a delight to the eyes...desirable to make one wise" (Genesis 3:6). She had to make a choice: God's Word or Satan's word! She rejected God's Word, believed Satan, and sinned. You and I have been suffering from the consequences of her decision, as has the whole human race.

God accomplishes his will on earth through truth; Satan accomplishes his purposes through lies. When the child of God believes God's truth, then the Spirit of God can work in power; for the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of truth" (John 16:13). But when a person believes a lie, then Satan goes

to work in that life; "for he is a liar, and the father of lies" (John 8:44). Faith in God's truth leads to victory; faith in Satan's lies leads to defeat.

However, Satan never advertises, "This is a lie!" He is the serpent, the deceiver, and he always masquerades his lies as God's truth.

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 2 Corinthians 11:13, 14

Satan did not approach Eve in his true nature; he masqueraded by using the serpent. Satan is a counterfeiter, an imitator.

There are counterfeit Christians.

...dangers among false brethren. 2 Corinthians 11:26

"...the tares are the sons of the evil one." Matthew 13:38

"You are of your father the devil." John 8:44

There is a counterfeit gospel.

But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:8

There are counterfeit ministers of the gospel.

...for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. 2 Corinthians 11:14, 15

There is a counterfeit righteousness.

For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish Their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. Romans 10:3

There is even a counterfeit "church of Satan."

I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and The blasphemy by those who say they are Jews [i.e., God's people] and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Revelation 2:9

And this counterfeit church has counterfeit doctrines.

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. I Timothy 4:1

All of this will end, of course, in the appearance of a counterfeit Christ—the Antichrist—who will accept for Satan the worship and service of the whole world.

And then that lawless one will be revealed. ...the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all powers and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10

And all who dwell on the earth will worship him. Revelation 13:8

Satan's target is your mind, and his weapon is lies. What is his purpose?

SATAN'S PURPOSE— TO MAKE YOU IGNORANT OF GOD'S WILL

Satan attacks God's Word because God's Word reveals God's will.

Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105

I delight to do Thy will, O my God; Thy Law is within my heart. Psalm 40:8

Apart from the Word of God, we have no sure understanding of the will of God. The will of God is the expression of God's love for us.

The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart from generation to generation. Psalm 33:11

God's will comes from God's heart. It is not an impersonal thing, but a very personal matter with the Lord. He has a personal understanding of each of his children—their natures, their names, their needs—and he tailors his plans accordingly.

God wants us to know his will.

"The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will." Acts 22:14

He also wants us to understand his will.

So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Ephesians 5:17

He wants this understanding of his will to fill us and control us.

We have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Colossians 1:9

The result of all this is the believer

Doing the will of God from the heart. Ephesians 6:6

God's will is not a duty; it is a delight. The Christians delights to discover the will of God and then obey from the heart. The will of God is his nourishment.

"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work." John 4:34

You and I must pray (as did Epaphras) that we May stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. Colossians 4:12

If Satan can make you ignorant of God's will, he will rob you of all the glorious blessings God has planned for your life. You will make bad decisions, get involved in sinful activities, and build the wrong kind of life. And, sad to say, you will influence others to go wrong! In my ministry of the Word in many places, I have seen the tragic consequences of lives out of the will of God.

Christians who are ignorant of God's will lose the enjoyment of God's peace and power. They cannot grow into their full potential, nor can they accomplish what God has planned for them. Instead of traveling first-class, they travel second- or third-class, complaining all the way. They live like paupers because they have cut themselves off from God's great wealth. They spend their lives—even worse, they waste their lives—when they could be investing their lives.

But the one who does the will of God abides forever. I John 2:17

YOUR DEFENSE--- THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD

Only the inspired Word of God can reveal and defeat the devil's lies. You cannot reason with Satan, nor (as Eve discovered) can you even safely converse with him. Man's wisdom is no match for Satan's cunning. Our only defense is the inspired Word of God.

It was this weapon that our Lord used when he was tempted by Satan in the wilderness.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took Him into the holy city; and he stood Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give His angels charge concerning You; and on their hands they will bear You up, lest You strike Your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"

Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory; and he said To Him, "All these things will I give You, if You fall down and worship me."

Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'"

Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him. Matthew 4:1-11

Our Lord did not use his divine power to defeat Satan. He used the same weapon that is available to us today: the Word of God. Jesus was led by the Spirit of God and filled with the Word of God. As we shall see in a later chapter, the Word of God is "the sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17); and the Holy Spirit can enable us to wield that sword effectively. If you and I are going to defeat Satan's lies, we must depend on the Word of God. This fact lays several responsibilities upon us.

We must know God's Word. There is no reason why any believer should be ignorant of his Bible. The Word of God is available to us in many translations. We have the Holy Spirit within

us to teach us the truths of the Word (John 16:13-15). There are a multitude of Bible study helps available. We can turn on the radio and listen to excellent preachers and Bible teachers expound God's Word. In local churches, there are ministers and teachers who minister the Word; and in many areas, there are seminars and Bible study groups for further study. If an intelligent believer today does not know his Bible, it is his or her own fault!

This mean, of course, taking time to read and study the Bible. No one will master God's Word in a lifetime of study, but we should learn all we can. We must make time, not "find time," to read and study the Word of God. Just as a machinist studies the shop manual, and the surgeon studies his medical texts, so the Christian must study the Word of God. Bible study is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

We must memorize God's Word. Our Lord did not have a concordance with him in the wilderness! He reached back into the Books of Moses, selected Deuteronomy, and quoted three verses from that book to silence Satan. Most adults think that Bible memorization is for children in Sunday school, when actually it is for every believer. Adult Christians need the Word far more than the children do, although it is good for children to memorize God's Word.

Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee Psalm 119:11

The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip. Psalm 37:31

I delight to do Thy will, O my God; Thy Law is within my heart. Psalm 40:8

If you do not have a systematic Bible memory program, get one started. Your minister can give you counsel and no doubt provide materials for you. Check your local Christian bookstore for Bible memory helps.

We must meditate on God's Word. Meditation is to the inner man what digestion is to the outer man. If you did not digest your food, you would sicken and die.

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. Joshua 1:8

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. Psalm 1:2

Do you sincerely delight in the Word of God, or do you read it only out of duty? Do you rush through your "morning devotions," or take time to feed on God's truth? Measure yourself by these statements by the psalmist:

How sweet are Thy words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Psalm 119:103
I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for Thy words. My eyes Anticipate the night watches, that I may meditate on Thy Word. Psalm 119:147, `48

I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. Psalm 119:114

The law of Thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces. Psalm 119:72

Therefore I love Thy commandments above gold, yes above fine gold Psalm 119:127

Here is a saint who would rather have God's Word than food, sleep, or money! Early in the morning and late at night he meditated on the Word of God and enriched his soul. It is this kind of a Christian who is able to use the Word of God to defeat Satan and his lies.

We must use God's Word. The believer's mind should become like a "spiritual computer." It should be so saturated with Scripture that when he faces a decision or a temptation, he automatically remembers the Scriptures that relate to that particular situation. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to bring God's Word to our minds when we need it.

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." John 14:26

But the Spirit of God cannot remind you of something that you have not learned! You must first let him teach you the Word. You must memorize the Scripture that he opens up to you. Then the Spirit of God will be able to remind you of what you have learned, and you can use that truth to battle Satan. Please keep in mind that Satan knows the Bible far better than we do! And he is able to quote it!

Sunday, May 14 9:30 a.m. Class

A study of "The Strategy of Satan"

Two -- The Destroyer

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat." Luke 22:31

They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon [Destruction], and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon [Destroyer]. Revelation 9:11

Then there was brought to Him a demon-possessed man who was blind and dumb, and He healed him, so that the dumb man spoke and saw. Matthew 12:22

So the Lord said to Sata, "Behold, he [Job] is in your power, only spare his life," Job 2:6

SATAN'S TARGET—YOUR BODY

If Satan cannot defeat you by deceiving your mind, he will then try to destroy your body. As the serpent, he deceives; as the lion, he devours. If we believe his lies, then we will destroy ourselves. As I write this chapter, authorities are investigating the mass suicide of members of the People's Temple in Guyana.

Over 700 people died because they believed Satan's lies.

But if we resist his deceit, then he will attack our bodies. Job is the prime illustration of this kind of attack. He lost the fruit of his body—his children. He lost the means to sustain his body—his flocks and herds and wealth. And he lost the health of his body when he contracted a loathsome disease. His friends sat in silence for a week, for they saw that Job was in great agony. Even Job's wife was so overwhelmed by her husband's trials that she suggested, "Curse God and die!" (Job 2:9). Satan did a thorough job of attacking Job's body and all that related to it.

When you read the Gospel records you discover that Satan, through his demonic helpers, attacked and sought to destroy the bodies of various people. He caused one man to be dumb (Matthew 9:32,33), and a woman to be bent over and disabled (Luke 13:11-17). He even attacked a child and tried to get him to destroy himself in the water or the fire (Matthew 17:14-18). There is no escaping the awesome fact that Satan wants to attack and destroy your body.

Why does he want to do this? For several reasons. To begin with your body is God's temple.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own! For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

. . . according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. Philippians 1:20

God is invisible; the world cannot see him. Jesus Christ has returned to heaven and cannot be seen. But we Christians can be seen, and it is our conduct in the body that glorifies and exalts the Lord.

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:16

God wants to use your body as a vehicle for revealing him to a lost world. Unconverted people are not likely to read the Bible to learn about God, nor books of Christian theology; but they will read our lives.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9

This means that when Satan attacks your body, he is attacking the one means God has a revealing his grace and love to a lost world. Creation reveals the power, wisdom, and glory of God; but Christians reveal the grace and love of God.

Not only is your body God's temple, but it is also God's tool.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its Lusts and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as Instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. Romans 6:12, 13

When God wanted an ark constructed, he used the skill of Noah and his family. When he wanted the tabernacle built, he used the hands and minds of Bezalel and Oholiab and their helpers (Exodus 36:1 ff.). Jesus used the hands of his disciples for the distributing of the bread and fish. He used their lips and tongues for the preaching of the gospel. If God is going to get his work done in this world, he must use the various members of our bodies, empowered by the Spirit of God.

Satan knows that he can hinder God's work by attacking God's workers and putting their "tools" out of commission. The Greek word translated "instruments" in Romans 6:13 can be translated "tool" or even "weapon." Just as God the Son had to take on a body to accomplish his work on earth, so the Holy Spirit needs our bodies. The members of your body are tools in the Spirit's hands to help build the Church here on earth. Never underestimate the importance of your body. Never minimize the care of your body. The Christian who is careless about his health or safety is playing right into the hands of the destroyer.

The third reason Satan attacks your body is because your body is God's treasury.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness Of the power may be of God and not from ourselves. 2 Corinthians 4:7

When God saved you, he put the treasure of eternal life within your body. You have the very life of God within you! God did not give you this great treasure simply to protect it—an earthen vessel is not the safest place for a treasure! He gave you this treasure that he might invest it through you in the lives of others. For example, God deposited this spiritual wealth in the Apostle Paul "*...according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted. 1 Timothy 1:11*

Paul invested this treasure in Timothy. "*O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you.*" 1 Timothy 6:20

Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you. 2 Timothy 1:14

Timothy, in turn, was to invest this treasure in the lives of others.

"And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many Witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. 2 Timothy 2:2

In other words, the safety and success of this spiritual investment is in the hands of weak human beings! The treasure is in an earthen vessel! Satan can rob the world of spiritual wealth by attacking the bodies of believers.

Finally, Satan attacks your body because it is God's testing-ground.

"But I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have Preached to others. I myself should be disqualified. 1 Corinthians 9:27

The image here is that of the Greek games. Each participant had to qualify and keep the rules or he was not allowed to compete. If after he won a prize he was found guilty of breaking the rules, his prize was taken from him. Jim Thorpe, one of our greatest American athletes, had to return his Olympic medals because it was discovered he had earlier played sports for money, which is against Olympic rules.

Satan can rob you of your rewards by your body and getting you to break the rules. It is not a matter of salvation, but of rewards for faithful service. The athlete did not lose his citizenship if he broke the rules; he only forfeited his reward, a shameful experience indeed.

And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may Have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. 1 John 2:28

I cannot emphasize too much that your body is important to God. As God's children, you and I must care for our bodies and use them for God's glory. Anything in our lives that keeps us from

doing our best must be abandoned. Just as the mechanic takes good care of his tools, so the believer takes good care of the "tools" of his body.

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Romans 12:1

2. SATAN'S WEAPON--SUFFERING

Satan wants to control the circumstances around the body so that the believer will suffer. He wants to touch the body and create suffering. All of this is illustrated in the story of Job's body through the circumstances around him, and Job lost his children, his wealth, and the favor of his wife, friends, and neighbors. Then Satan attacked Job's person with a horrible disease. When Job looked around, his situation was painful. When he looked within, it was even more painful. And when he looked up, it seemed that God had forsaken him, although Job maintained his faith in God and was honored at the end.

It is important to note that God was always in control. Satan could not attack Job's possessions until God gave him permission. Satan could not attack Job's person until God allowed it. This reminds us of our Lord's words to Peter.

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission [literally "obtained by asking"] to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail." Luke 22:31, 32

Satan cannot touch the child of God without the heavenly Father's permission. This is a great encouragement to us, for we know that whatever suffering may come to our lives, God has ordained it and is in complete control. The one thing God will not control is how we respond to this suffering, and it is here that Satan can gain his purpose.

Note, too, that there is more than one kind of suffering in the life of the Christian. There is natural suffering that we experience simply because we are human. We cannot prevent the gradual breakdown of the body as we grow old, though we can seek to delay it. We are subject to sickness and injury; we lose loved ones and friends as death claims them; we find ourselves slowing down when we wish we could speed things up. The inconvenience, and even the pain, of being a weak human being in a dangerous world cannot be blamed on the devil. All of creation is groaning because of the bondage of sin, and we Christians are groaning with it (Romans 8:18-23)

God sometimes sends (or permits) his children to suffer that he might discipline them. Our heavenly Father loves us too much to permit us to be rebels, so he chastens us that we might conform to his will

My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when You are reproved by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives. Hebrews 12:5, 6

The word translated "discipline" in Hebrews 12 simply means "child-training." The purpose of discipline is the maturity of the son. God's purpose is not to persecute us, but to perfect us. Chastening is not the work of an angry judge as he punishes a criminal. It is the work of a loving Father as he perfects a child.

This chastening is not always because we have sinned. True, God does "spank" his children if they rebel and refuse to repent. David sinned against God and tried to hide his sin for a year or more. Read Psalm 32 and discover what David suffered physically, emotionally, and spiritually because he would not submit to God. But sometimes God permits suffering in our lives simply to build us up and help us mature.

Two storms in the Bible illustrate this truth. Jonah disobeyed God and refused to go to Nineveh. He found a convenient ship to take him to Tarshish, but God interrupted Jonah's escape by sending a storm. When the mariners threw Jonah into the stormy sea, the prophet was swallowed by a great fish. He describes his "living death" in the stomach of the great fish in Chapter 2 of his book. God had to chasten Jonah and almost take his life before the prophet would confess his sins and surrender to God. This storm came for the purpose of correcting God's servant who had been disobedient.

But there are storms that come because we are obedient! One such storm is recorded in Matthew 14:22-23. Jesus had fed more than 5,000 people and they wanted to make him king. He sent the crowd away, and also sent the disciples across the Sea of Galilee in their boat. He went up to the mountaintop to pray. When the disciples got away from the land, a fierce storm arose and almost sank the ship. Please not: they were not in the storm because they disobeyed the Lord, but because they obeyed him. He was testing and perfecting their faith. Later he came to them and stilled the storm; but the entire experience revealed to the men how weak their faith really was.

So, we sometimes suffer simply because we are human. We suffer, too, because we disobey the Lord and need to be chastened. We also suffer that God might perfect our faith and help us mature. Not all suffering is Satanic in origin. But there is a kind of suffering that is Satan's weapon, and that is what Job experienced. It seemed that all of the calamities in his life had perfectly natural explanations: the Sabeans took the oxen and donkeys; fire from heaven (perhaps lightning) burned the sheep; the Chaldeans took the camels; and a great wind (a tornado?) wrecked his oldest son's house and killed all of Job's children. But Satan was behind all of them! When God gives him permission, Satan can use people and the forces of nature to accomplish his purposes.

As believers, we have this confidence: God is always in complete control. When God permits Satan to light the furnace, he always keeps his own hand on the thermostat! Job did not know what was going on behind the scenes. He had no idea that God was permitting him to suffer so that Satan might be silenced. The real battle was "in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). Job's home and body were only the arena in which the two combatants--God and Satan--were struggling against each other. Satan wanted to use Job's body to defeat God, and God wanted to use Job's body to defeat Satan.

When you find yourself in difficult circumstances, seek to discern through the Word and prayer whether your suffering is from nature, from God, or from Satan. Is God perfecting you? Is he disciplining you? Is Satan seeking to hinder your ministry or even destroy you? You cannot control the origin of your suffering, but you can control the outcome. How? This leads us to our next section.

SATAN'S PURPOSE—TO MAKE YOU IMPATIENT WITH GOD'S WILL

The only place in the New Testament where Job is named is James 5:11: Behold, we count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the Endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, That the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

This verse indicates that Satan's purpose was to try to get Job to be impatient and give up. Job did become impatient with himself and his critical friends, but he never lost his faith in God. Though he did not understand what God was doing, Job knew that he could trust God and that God would vindicate him in the end.

Patience is an important Christian virtue. Unless we have patience, we can never learn many of the truths that God wants us to learn, truths that will lead us into a deeper life and a more fruitful ministry.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2-4

Children are usually impatient; they cannot sit still long enough to get the things done that need to be done. "How long do we have to wait?" is the stock question of a child. Impatience is a mark of immaturity.

But impatience is also a mark of unbelief. "He who believes will not be in a hurry" (Isaiah 28:16, literal translation). When you find yourself restless and nervous, anxious to "do something," you can be sure you are not trusting God to work. You and I need to be

Imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Hebrews 6:12

Faith and patience go together. If we really trust God, then we will wait on him to accomplish what he has promised.

Impatience is not only a mark of immaturity and unbelief, but it is a mark of fleshly living. The flesh (the old nature) is always impatient, but the fruit of the Spirit is

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Galatians 5:22, 23

By nature, we are impatient; but the new nature within can produce patience as we yield to the Holy Spirit. Whenever you find an impulsive, impatient believer, you can be reasonably sure that that person is not walking in the Spirit, but is living by the energy of the flesh.

Impatience always leads to costly mistakes. Abraham became impatient with God and "married" Hagar, his wife's handmaid, in order to bring a son into the world and fulfill God's promise. A son was born, but he caused nothing but trouble! Abraham had to wait another fourteen years for Isaac to be born, and Isaac brought joy and blessing to the home.

King Saul became impatient and would not wait for the prophet Samuel to come. He rushed ahead of God's will and offered the sacrifice, and this was the beginning of the end of his kingdom.

Peter became impatient in the Garden of Gethsemane and tried to kill a man with his sword! Instead of cutting the man's throat, Peter only severed his ear; and Jesus to save Peter's life, healed the wound. Peter's. We cannot learn patience by reading a book or hearing a lecture, impatience almost cost him his life.

Satan knows that if he can make up impatient, he can lead us to do something stupid and get ourselves and others into trouble. I recall a friend, who became impatient in his ministry, hastily resigned from the church, and accepted a church that was supposed to be "heaven on earth." It turned out to be just the opposite, and within a year my friend was moving again. I remember another friend who thought he found a "get rich quick" job, jumped into it, and almost lost everything he had. Fortunately his old boss took him back, but my friend had to start on a lower rung of the ladder. Impatience is costly.

But patient endurance is enriching. Satan tempts us that he might bring out the worst in us, but God permits it that he might bring out the best in us. Job knew this; therefore, he said:

But He knows the way I take; when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. Job 23:10

God will never permit the enemy to put us through the fire without his having a definite purpose in mind. God wants to make you patient. We cannot learn patience by reading a book or hearing a lecture. The only way we can learn patience is by going through the trials that God assigns to us. The trials of life are the tools God uses to mature us, to build our faith, and to get us to trust the Spirit and not the flesh.

When you find yourself impatient, you can be sure that Satan and the flesh are at work, and that you are in danger of making a wrong decision. When the circumstances of life are irritating, that is the time to beware! When family problems, friends, finances, or feelings are making life uncomfortable, then you can be sure Satan is near, waiting for an opportunity to attack.

But God has given you a defense!

YOUR DEFENSE---THE IMPARTED GRACE OF GOD

Job is not the only saint who felt Satan's attack against his body, for the great Apostle Paul had a similar experience.

And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me---to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecution, with difficulties, for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

We do not know what Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was, but whatever it was, it buffeted him enough to make him pray three times for healing. (You will recall that our Lord prayed three times in the Garden that the cup might pass from him. When difficulties come, it is not wrong to pray for deliverance.) God did not answer Paul's prayer, but God did meet Paul's need. "My grace is sufficient for you." It is the imparted grace of God that gives us victory when Satan attacks the body with suffering. Only by the grace of God can we have the patient endurance that we need as we go through the furnace.

And after you have suffered for a little while; the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. 1 Peter 5:10

Our God is "the God of all grace." The Holy Spirit who indwells us is "the Spirit of grace" (Hebrews 10:29). God's throne is a "throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16), and his Word is "the word of His grace" (Acts 20:32). It is grace from start to finish!

God's grace is God's provision for our every need. Grace is not a "mystical substance" that God pours into us when we have a need. Grace is God's bountiful supply of our every need. "Law means that I must do something for God, but "grace" means that God does something for me. Grace cannot be deserved. Grace cannot be earned. Grace can only be given.

To begin with, you were saved by God's grace.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that on one should boast. Ephesians 2:8, 9

This means that "the riches of His grace" are now available to you (Ephesians 2:7). God can give you grace for serving (1 Corinthians 15:9, 10), for sacrificing (2 Corinthians 8:1-9), for singing (Colossians 3:16, margin), and even for speaking (Colossians 4:6). It also means that God can give you grace for suffering, as he did with Job and Paul.

What steps, then, should you take when Satan attacks your body with suffering and tries to make you impatient with God's will.

Immediately submit yourself to God. If you rebel, you will give Satan another foothold in your life. Tell God exactly how you feel, but also tell him that you love him and will trust him, come what may.

Though He slay me, I will hope in him. Job 13:15

Thank God for the trials.

Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ To God, even the Father. Ephesians 5:20

In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

This does not mean you enjoy the suffering, but only that you rejoice because you are suffering in the will of God and you know that he is in control. Satan hates it when believers thank God in

their trials. When Paul and Silas sang and praised God in that Philippian jail, they completely ruined all of Satan's plans! (Read Acts 16:14ff.)

Spend much time in the Word of God. It is the "word of His grace" (Acts 20:32), and the gracious promises of God will strengthen you. Remember: we do not live on explanations; we live on promises. God did not explain to Abraham everything that he was doing, but he did give Abraham all the promises he needed to keep going.

Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep thy word. . . .It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Thy statutes. Psalm 119:67, 71

You will discover in God's Word the promises and encouragements that you need for each day.

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Romans 15:4

Look for ways to glorify Christ. Remember, God wants to use your body to glorify him: Satan wants to use your body to disgrace the Lord.

Patience in suffering always glorifies God. Unconverted people cannot understand how Christians can suffer and not complain or rebel.

For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience! But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. 1 Peter 4:16

In the midst of shame and suffering, Paul and Silas glorified God by singing and praising his name. While he was being stoned to death, Stephen glorified God by praying for his murderers. Many of David's psalms record the fact that he could praise God even when persecuted and rejected. Paul's most joyful letter---Philippians---was written from Roman imprisonment when his life was in the balance.

As you follow these instructions, you will discover the Spirit of grace working in your life and imparting to you the grace of God. You will grow in patient endurance! You will experience God's love and grace within, and this experience will more than compensate for the inconvenience and suffering without. God may not change the circumstances, but he will change you so that the circumstances will work for you and not against you. As I said before, you and I cannot control the origin or the operation of suffering but we can (with God's help) control the outcome.

Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power Of Christ may dwell in me. 2 Corinthians 12:9

If you live to please yourself, then Satan will win. If you live to glorify God, Satan will lose. The imparted grace of God is the only weapon that can defeat him, and that grace can be found only in "the God of all grace."

