

# Don't Underestimate Satan's Influence in Your Life

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A few weeks ago, a lot of you probably heard the sermon that Mark Mickelson gave and one of the points he made was, you make the decision to put God first. To tie off of Glen's sermonette, when you choose following God over peer pressure, that can be like walking off into the abyss, is the way he put it. You can find yourself in a situation where suddenly friends you've known for years don't really want to talk to you anymore and are upset and turn their back on you. Or you can find that at times being in hostile relationships now they're slandering you and maybe stabbing you in the back as a result of choices you've made to try and follow God first. I have to say, over the last couple of years that's certainly been my experience. I totally agree with Mark's characterization because that's what I have experienced. I know that's not uncommon. Having been at the Feast and talking with a number of you out there who are hearing this sermon, I know this is not a terribly unusual experience. Many people I have talked to have similar stories, where you've been through some trauma to get here or in the past in making these decisions or maybe you are currently going through it right now in what you're facing, the decisions you've made to follow God.

It's something we need to be aware of in this type of situation because when you go through something like that, you've had friends turn on you, you've had relationships broken up, maybe you've been ostracized from others or even slandered—at times that can leave scars in us. Although that's something natural we have to try to work our way through, we need to be aware that it creates an opportunity for Satan to take advantage of and to come in after us. It creates a vulnerability that he can exploit to try and destroy us. We always have to keep in mind that we have a spiritual enemy that is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He comes at us through spiritual means and we have to be aware of that so that we can protect ourselves from these things.

What we're going to do today is look at this particular subject. First of all we're going to look at, in general, just being aware of Satan and his devices—the magnitude of the power he has coming after us—just in general to be aware of this. Then we're going to specifically look at how to apply this in circumstances like this where you've been personally hurt and maybe personally offended by this and how to get over that. If you would like a title for this sermon it is:

## Don't Underestimate Satan's Influence in Your Life

We live in a world today that pretty much ignores the existence as any significant factor. There's a quote I've heard for a number of years, I think it might have originally come from a movie, but I think it's very true. It says, the greatest trick that Satan ever pulled was convincing the world that he doesn't exist. Truly, if you're not aware of an enemy or you don't think that's a significant factor, you don't even take it into consideration in day-to-day life. If you look at our world today, a lot of how we look at explaining human

behavior and why people do what they do today, is through the field of psychology. That's a field that studies human behavior and tries to understand why people do what they do and looking for solutions and such. For the most part it completely ignores the spirit world as a relevant subject, even if part of the equation.

Back in the '90's I did a Master's degree in counseling. I was in college for a couple of years studying these types of things and one particular class I was in, we studied on what you would say is counseling theory. Different schools of thought from different famous psychologists and their approach to explaining human behavior and based upon that, what methods they would use to try and address problems with human behavior and one of the things they pretty much all have in common is, most all of the theories come from a perspective that human nature is good; that people are basically generally good. As a part of our work that we were assigned in this class, the capstone project you had to do was writing up your own paper after you had studied all these different schools of thought about human behavior as to what all you synthesize was your own view and put forward, here's what I think makes sense and here's how I see it. In doing the paper, we were given assignments how many books and articles or things you had to quote from, but you had to list your bibliography in order of the sources you used the most. If I'm going to be honest where I'm coming from, the Bible has heavily influenced my view of all of this so if you look to my bibliography, the very first source quoted, the New King James translation of the Bible. Of course, I had numerous others listed but that was number one.

Interestingly enough, the professor of the class when he read my paper, was very complimentary overall about what I did and he gave me a good grade on it but the one thing he took issue with me was, how could I come with the idea that people are not innately good. I didn't try to explain Satan's involvement in it, the way I put it was, human beings are more inclined to negative destructive behavior than we are towards positive good behavior. I wasn't trying to argue the spirit world but I started from that point of view and went forward. He just took issue, how could I possibly come up with that. I chose not to take up an argument with him about it because he gave me a good grade on the paper to begin with but what I wanted to say was, did you miss your world history class when you did your undergraduate? Did you miss that it was the study of war—of one big war after another? That's the world we live in, is how we look at issues. Sometimes as members of the church of God, we of course don't deny the existence of Satan as a factor. But sometimes I think we can let the world affect us where we go about living our day to day lives, not taking into consideration the enemy that we're up against and the powerful force of how that can influence us.

Let's start off looking at this in general. Turn over to Jeremiah 17, a basic human nature scripture which I actually did quote in that paper. Jeremiah 17:9, I'm sure a memory scripture for most of us.

**Jeremiah 17:9** *The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?*

*10) I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings. (NKJV)*

So it tells us our mind is very deceitful. It's similar to what Glen was covering in the sermonette. How we can see what we want to see and not what's really in front of us and not what's really happening, because we have a deceptive mind. The Bible tells us that not only is our mind deceptive but we have a hostility innately in us (and I'll explain in a minute what that's about) that we want to naturally oppose God and His law and the right ways of life and we want to go to the negative. That's why I put it in the paper, that we are inclined to negative destruction behavior because we're drawn like a magnet towards it. Turn over to Romans 8, we'll see another very familiar basic scripture on this. Romans 8:6.

**Romans 8:6** *For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

*7) Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. (NKJV)*

If you're like me, the word enmity is not something that you typically use in conversation but if you look at it, a number of other translations will put the word hostile in there. That is a word that we use typically in our every day speech. Hostile or hostility and it tells us that we naturally, as human beings, have a hostility to God and His way and His law, so we naturally want to push away from that and we want to go towards evil, in that direction. There's a reason why we do that and it's very important to understand this and realize what we're up against because it's not just like it's an inherent weakness of just being physical. It's not just because we're physical human beings that we do this. This comes from a spiritual source. We have to realize that because if you don't take that into consideration, if you try to fight a spiritual battle with physical means, you've brought a knife to a gun fight and should expect to lose; you're completely out gunned. Notice here in Ephesians 6:12.

**Ephesians 6:12** *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (NKJV)*

Notice where this hostility comes from. This natural inclination to want to be hostile towards God, makes it impossible to obey Him—where does that come from? That doesn't just come because we are physical human beings and just being physical we do that, no it say it's not a physical battle, it's not about flesh and blood, it's about this demonic, evil forces that are drawing us in this direction; it's a spiritual battle that we are fighting—that's the source of that. That's why we need a spiritual means to fight it because if you are fighting a spiritual battle with physical means, you brought a knife to a gun fight, you should expect to lose because you don't have a shot in the world of winning that battle. We have to keep that in mind that that's where this comes from, it's not innate to being physical. It's because it's a spiritual battle. Turn over to Ephesians 2 and we'll see this emphasized as well, we'll start in verse 1.

**Ephesians 2:1** *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2) -in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3) among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (NKJV)*

That hostility that makes us children of wrath, where does it come from? From the prince of the power of the air—from Satan and from that broadcasting of spiritual forces that affect our mind, our attitudes and our perception of things and that can very deceptively drawing us down that road without us even being aware of it. We have to rely on God and the Holy Spirit to fight that because it's a spiritual battle, it's not just because we're physical. To fight a spiritual battle, you need spiritual means to do it.

Turn over also to John 8, notice in identifying the source of this hostility of what gives us this hardened hostile attitude and heart, it even refers to following this as being sons of the devil. It tells us he is the originator of it, he is the father of lies, he originated all of this and really ties it to where the source of all of this is.

**John 8:42** *Jesus said to them, If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. 43) Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 44) you are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. 45) But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. 46) Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? 47) He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.” (NKJV)*

He's telling them, the reason you have this hostility and you won't listen to the truth that I'm telling you is because you have been so influenced by Satan, you have drawn into his way of life and you're following that and it's like a magnet, pulling you towards the evil and making you want to reject truth. We have to realize that when we're facing this, we are facing a spiritual enemy that wants to attack us and we have to keep that in mind in our day to day lives. If we don't and we're just facing this like it's a physical problem, that we have these issues simply because we are physical human beings—if it's solely a physical problem, you can solely fight a physical problem with physical means. You cannot fight a spiritual battle with physical means. You brought a knife to a gun fight, you should expect to lose.

Let's ask another question with this. Does that mean that human beings without Satan in the equation would never sin? That we're not capable of sinning without him? No, that's not what that means because once you put free moral agency in to the equation, people can make choices. Let's show this conclusively, turn to Zechariah 14. What we're about to read here is in the context when we know Satan is out of the equation because this is during the millennium and we know for a thousand-year period, he's in prison and not able to infect mankind at all. So we're looking at what does mankind look like without him being in the equation—what does that look like? We're going to see that human beings can still make dumb choices; they can still insist on doing their own thing. Let's start in verse 16.

**Zechariah 14:16** *And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.*

17) *And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain.*

18) *If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.*

19) *This shall be the <sup>o</sup>punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. (NKJV)*

Here we have people in a time frame when we know Satan and his demons are not in the equation; they've been imprisoned, they cannot influence mankind and we still have people being boneheads, making bad choices. This is sin by definition; God commands them all to come up to keep the Feast and they are like, no, we're going to do our own thing, we're not going to do that. Obviously, can mankind sin without him? Yes, they can because that's the nature of free moral agency. You have to understand that with both us and with the angels, God created us with free moral agency, which means we can choose. Just like He said to ancient Israel, I set before you life and death, blessings and cursing, I'm strongly encouraging you to choose life, you're going to like this a whole lot better, it turns out better this way but if you insist on going the other way, I'll let you. I'm going to have to kill you, but I'll let you choose wrong if you want to go down that road. We have to understand that's inherent to us. When you give free moral agency, you have to plan on both outcomes because you're giving people choices. If God didn't want to deal with choice, there's an easy way to deal with that. When you create beings, you just probe them like robots that always do what you tell them to do and they'll never try to do their own thing and everything will always go in this direction but that's not how He made us. That's not how He made the angels either because look back at what happened before mankind. This tells you just how free moral agency works because when God creates the angelic realm, there was no Satan prior to that. There are no evil beings in the equation, but he creates millions, if not billions of angels—we don't have an exact number but we know it's a big number—and he gives them choice. What happens? Two-thirds of them stay faithful and obey Him and one-third doesn't. That's how free moral agency works, they get to make choices. When you put free moral agency in the equation, you've got to plan on both outcomes.

I think sometimes we look at that situation and honestly in our idealistic world, we think when God created the angels, we couldn't have foreseen that one was going to rebel. Think that through for a moment. If you put free moral agency in the equation, you're not only giving them a choice, you're requiring them to choose. Obviously when He did that He knew, if I want them to choose, that means some of them could choose the wrong way and He would have to plan ahead to deal with that just like in the millennium, we can already see He's already planning that some of them are going to choose the wrong way and here's how I'm going to deal with that. He understood this out front, it's just the nature of free moral agency.

There's another interesting thing we can learn in making some comparisons here to realize the magnitude of the force that we're up against. In other words, how big of a factor it plays. I'm going to look at this like a clinical trial. I know for many of you out there, that's a term that doesn't have a lot of meaning when I say clinical trial. What does that mean and what's that about? Let me back up a little and give you some background so this will make sense. I've mentioned a number of times over the years in sermons that I'm a recruiter for a hospital system. It's the biggest hospital system in Texas, we employ about 40,000 people. As a result of that, we have a section of the organization that's called our Research Institute and what they do is focus on researching new drugs, new treatments, new devices—advances in healthcare, because that's how the science advances, is people doing research, finding new treatments and new ways to do things. What I focus on from a staffing perspective is the staffing for the Research Institute. So I have my hand in this from an HR perspective.

Let me explain to you the basics of what you do when you're testing a new treatment. It's called a clinical trial. You'll basically lay out—say you got a new drug for example—you have a new pharmaceutical that you're trying to bring to the market and your premise is, this drug is an effective treatment for this type of illness, say it's cancer or something of that nature and your premise is this will either cure this type of cancer or it significantly helps. If you use this, the results are a whole lot better. What you're going to do is a trial. You're going to recruit a number of patients together, who have this type of ailment and you're going to have your test group that are utilizing this particular drug or treatment or whatever it is and you're going to have a control group. If it's a pharmaceutical, you're going to give a placebo to the control group and you're going to give your test drug to the group you're trying to test. What you're going to try to do at the end is compare the results, with how did it turn out in the end. If you do this and the results turn out about the same, then your drug is not effective. It's not worth investing in. What you want to see is that the results for those who had the test drug, they were significantly better than the those who didn't because that proves that it makes a significant difference in the equation.

If we compare the environment of what it looks like when Satan's in the equation versus when he's not in the equation, we can see how much of an affect this can have. As I've mentioned before, if you look at our world today or if you look at world history as I like to call it, it's the study of war often times—if you've ever taken a Western Civilization or

World History class, what does it tend to be? If it's the U.S. history with the revolutionary war and then you might start off with a number of other wars along the way and you get up to World War I and World War II and Korea and Vietnam, the Gulf wars and you have all these wars that play out because it's such a commonality. Now let's look at the difference if we have 1,000-year period without him in the equation because the Bible foretells that and we can see what a powerful influence this has. Turn over to Isaiah 2:4. This is very much a millennial setting here.

**Isaiah 2:4** *He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore. (NKJV)*

In other words you go from a situation where history is basically the study of war. As Rick mentioned in one of his Feast sermons, if you look back over world history from creation to now, there's just brief periods where you don't have a war somewhere, going on in the world because that's just a constant throughout human history. If you notice, not only does Isaiah, but Micah as well, makes a very similar prediction. Turn over to Micah 4:3.

**Micah 4:3** *He shall judge between many peoples, And rebuke strong nations afar off; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore. (NKJV)*

In other words, we're talking about a time frame where you just don't have war. You don't have nations trying to kill and pillage one another. As we've already seen, that doesn't mean nobody will resist God, that doesn't mean that people don't want to do their own thing and sin, but look at what a dramatic difference this is. You go from thousands of years where it's hard to find these brief periods where there's not a war and they're saying this is a timeframe that they just don't learn war anymore. They don't take up swords against each other, that just doesn't happen. It's not just an issue of, not having one nation attacking another, we also have descriptions of peaceful environments where there's just not a significant crime problem. Turn over to Isaiah 65 and we'll start reading in verse 17.

**Isaiah 65:17** *For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.*

18) *But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, And her people a joy.*

19) *I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying.*

20) *No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.*

21) *They shall build houses and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.*

22) *They shall not build and another inhabit; They shall not plant and another eat; For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.*

23) *They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; For they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the Lord, And their offspring with them.*

24) *It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear.*

25) *The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like the ox, And dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," Says the Lord. (NKJV)*

Notice what a huge difference this is. We're not just talking about nations that don't attack to try and kill each other and take over each other. Within them, you're not dealing with a significant crime problem. This is a peaceful, utopian environment. Notice what a huge change this made, taking him out of the equation. As I've mentioned before, when you do a clinical trial, your test group with your drug or whatever you're trying to prove is an effective treatment and you do it against a control group to show, the drug in the equation here is not in the equation there. If you get to the end of the trial and the results in terms of how it turned out for the patients, is about the same, what you've proven is that your whole premise that this drug was effective—that wasn't true; that didn't turn out to work very well. We all ask when we look at the situation, the premise the Bible puts across, the Bible tells us the reason we have this hostility and why things are so bad in our world today is because it's not about flesh and blood, it's a spiritual battle. When you take that out of the equation, if the results were about the same, what would you prove? You would prove that premise was wrong. It would be like saying, this drug cures this ailment and then you test it against the placebo and the result's not really any different, then that drug didn't treat anything. The same thing would happen here but what we see is this huge difference.

Now let's also make another comparison because if you look at our world today, not only do we have this evil force dominating things, but almost nobody is called. Throughout human history, as far as having access to God through the Holy Spirit, that is almost nobody. It's a very tiny percentage when you look at the world population, so no big surprise that the world is a colossal mess, that's exactly what you would expect to happen. If we want to understand the power of how much influence this can have and what a powerful enemy we're up against, let's look at it now in an environment where he is back in the equation but everybody has access to the Holy Spirit and anybody who is willing to repent and turn to God, can receive His help, can have that spiritual armor to fight back—even in those circumstances, let's see what an influence he can have. Turn over to Revelation 20:7—after the millennium, he is released again. Notice what he is able to accomplish, even in an environment where we know that everyone has access to God, if they are willing to repent, be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit, they have the ability to do that, but notice how it turns out.



**Revelation 20:7** *Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison*

*8) and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. (NKJV)*

Notice he's stirring up a huge number of people to want to do war here. They are like the sand of the sea.

*9) They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. (NKJV)*

We have a war going on and the number of people he stirs up, is like the sand of the sea. We can't quantify that and give it an exact number but obviously being described like that, he's not just saying (as I always love to put it) a few little rebels in the corner. You have this small little band of rebels and you stir them—well that's not what it says. It says the number of people that he stirred up is like the sand—this is a big number of people, that he's able to do that. He's accomplishing this in an environment where everybody has access to conversion. It doesn't mean everybody repented and received the Spirit but they sure had that opportunity available and everyone has access to that and even in those circumstances, he can do this.

To get another picture of the magnitude of this, turn over to Ezekiel 39; here we have another description of this battle. Chapter 38 and 39 go into all of this and we're not going to go into all of those details. All I want you to see here is the magnitude of all of this because often times when we look at this story of Satan being released and he stirs up others to create a war, in our minds we want to think that's just a small number of people—that's just a few rebels over in the corner. That's not the picture the Bible creates. Ezekiel 39:9, we'll just focus on the magnitude of this. This is after the battle has taken place.

**Ezekiel 39:9** *Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and bucklers, the bows and arrows, the javelins and spears; and they will make fires with them for seven years. (NKJV)*

Notice a nation is going to make firewood out of this for seven years and they won't need firewood for seven years, it's going to tell us this.

*10) They will not take wood from the field nor cut down any from the forests, because they will make fires with the weapons; and they will plunder those who plundered them, and pillage those who pillaged them," says the Lord God. (NKJV)*

Notice He's saying that there is enough weapons for them to collect them all up and all nations to use them as firewood for seven years and they don't need wood from any other source because there are so many weapons for them to burn. Let's also notice it talks about the bodies, let's just keep reading.

11) *It will come to pass in that day that I will give Gog a burial place there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea; and it will obstruct travelers, because there they will bury Gog and all his multitude. Therefore they will call it the Valley of Hamon Gog.*

12) *For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land. (NKJV)*

It's going to take at least seven months to try to bury all the people that got killed because God wiped them out attacking Israel. Let's keep noticing, even after that search parties are sent out.

13) *Indeed all the people of the land will be burying, and they will gain renown for it on the day that I am glorified," says the Lord God.*

14) *They will set apart men regularly employed, with the help of <sup>[n]</sup>a search party, to pass through the land and bury those bodies remaining on the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search.*

15) *The search party will pass through the land; and when anyone sees a man's bone, he shall <sup>[n]</sup>set up a marker by it, till the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog.*

16) *The name of the city will also be Hamonah. Thus they shall cleanse the land." (NKJV)*

What I want you to see from this is the magnitude of what's taking place because I think we picture this as it's just the hardest rebels that were involved in this—no it's like the sand of the sea. Satan is able to influence people again at a time when the Holy Spirit and salvation is available to everybody—anyone who is willing to turn to God and utilize that power, has the ability to do so—even in those circumstances he's able to have this big of an effect. This is a powerful enemy. This is something we need to be aware of because this is what's after us every day of our life. We're going to read this scripture later, it says he is like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. All of us have cross hairs on us, a target on us and he's coming after us. It's a spiritual battle and if we don't fight it with spiritual means, again we brought a knife to a gun fight and we should expect to lose, that's just how this works. Turn over to James 4, it gives us some advice as to what we need to do to resist this and be able to fight back. James 4:7.

**James 4:7** *Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

8) *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

9) *Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.*

10) *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. (NKJV)*

In other words, to protect ourselves from this, we need to be humbling ourselves before God, going to Him to ask for that spiritual help to keep us on the straight and narrow so our perceptions don't start seeing what we want to see and not what's really there. Allowing our minds and attitudes to get sucked into this forest because we are up against a very powerful enemy. We should never stop and think, if everyone was converted, we wouldn't have these wars and fights—that's not true. We just read from the Bible that we can be in a setting where everyone's offered salvation and he can still get to people and stir things up. Literally to the point of them wanting to murder one another. That can literally happen in an environment where conversion is available to people and Satan can still have that sway if we allow him to. It's always the issue, if we allow him because God will protect us from this if we are willing to humble ourselves to Him and rely upon His help to do it. It tells us that we need a spiritual suit of armor to deal with this. Turn back over to Ephesians 6, this time we're going to start in verse 10 because we touched on verse 12 but let's read the whole context this time.

**Ephesians 6:10** *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*

11) *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

12) *or we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

13) *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

14) *Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,*

15) *and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

16) *above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*

17) *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;*

18) *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—*

19) *and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,*

20) *for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. (NKJV)*

We have to be aware of how this affects our minds and our attitudes. Things can come on very deceptively where we think we're doing right but sometimes we need to be aware of this and one of the keys in this is just looking at the fruits of our actions; of how we behave and interact with one another. We won't turn to Matthew 7 but I oftentimes like to call this the biblical criteria for assessment. In other words, by their fruits you shall know them. The list of fruits we're talking about is (we won't turn there) in Galatians 5. Where you see, talking about the good list and the bad list. You have your

bad list of outbursts of wrath, jealousies and in your good list is patience, love and faithfulness to one another. I think sometimes we don't stop and look at our own actions in that regard from that point of view.

I was going to share a story from a conversation this morning and pick on my sister. She was telling me this morning about her chiropractor. Her chiropractor is a Protestant, he's not a part of the church of God but he loves to study the Bible as well. He loves to talk about biblical things that he has studied and they get into these kinds of conversations together. Something that was interesting that she pointed out to me today, she wasn't even thinking down this road but happened to mention, in discussing the subject was that with her chiropractor, even though he is from a Protestant background, not church of God at all and obviously they would disagree on lots of things about the Bible and doctrine and such but they can have open discussions with each other and talk about things that they agree on and things they disagree on, but nobody gets mad at anybody. It doesn't turn into, I can't talk to you anymore and you can't be my friend and it doesn't evolve into screaming and hatred with each other but if you look back—I know things I've experienced over the last several years—particularly when I embraced the truth about God the Father, is I watched a number of people go from—I would even describe as—one individual I used to regularly refer to as a big warm fuzzy teddy bear; a loving, jolly person, the kind of person that if you were having a bad day and you felt down, you would call him up because you thought, by the time I get done talking to this individual for thirty minutes, I'll be upbeat and happy and in a good mood because they are just that kind of person. I watched that same person literally devolve into screaming at others and being angry and attacking and I've heard others in recent times as being bitter. This is the kind of power that Satan can have on people and we can be convinced that I'm standing for the truth—I'm doing what's right—but we need to stop and look at the fruits of our actions. If our actions are outbursts of wrath, if they are hostility, that's on the wrong list. That doesn't mean we go along with heresy or with things that are wrong, but people can agree to disagree on a subject and not come to blows with each other. It doesn't mean relationships have to end and reputations have to be slandered and that type of thing. I think a lot of us have experienced that. I think a number of people wound up in Pacific making a stand for what they believe in and faced those types of things.

As I mentioned when I started this sermon, we're going to talk about Satan's attacks in general and then get more specific and how it can affect our current circumstances. One of the things we have to be aware of is, Satan tends to come after our vulnerabilities. About ten years ago, I was having a conversation with a good friend in the church and we were talking about Satan and his attacks and how he can come after us and what we might face in the future and my friend made a very interesting comment. He looked at me and grinned and said, I can even tell you exactly how it's going to come at you. I thought, that was kind of an interesting statement and of course I inquired—tell me more, because I'm intrigued now. He smiled and said, wherever you're most vulnerable. In other words, whatever gives him the opportunity, whatever is your weak spot that's going to punch your buttons and get under your skin, that's how he's going to come at you and what you need to be aware of. In general, strong

emotional experiences tend to create that vulnerability. That could be anger, loneliness, feeling isolated or depressed or down—whatever is going to get under our skin—Satan can manipulate those emotions to get at us. As you're going to see in a moment, the Bible particularly says that about anger. Let me give you a definition of anger that I have really liked for years now. This didn't come directly from the Bible, it came from a psychologist I studied years ago but I think the definition is very accurate. He defined anger as an emotional response to a real or perceived injustice. In other words, when we've been done wrong or when someone we really care about has been done wrong, that tends to be our emotional response to that. We get angry because we feel this is unjust, I've been done wrong or someone I love has been done wrong and we respond that way. I call it a real or perceived injustice because sometimes we get all bent out of shape about something and it's not exactly the way we perceived it in our minds. Maybe we've taken a small thing and turned a mole hill into a mountain or attributed motives to someone that really wasn't what they meant or wasn't really what happened but we still respond the same way. If we perceive it as an injustice that's been to me, we often times will respond that way, whether that's what is intended or not.

As I mentioned a lot of us these days, I think in the decisions we've made over the last several years have faced some injustice. We've had relationships that have been severed, we've had close friends who have turned their backs on us or maybe even slandered and attacked us and it hurts. It's a traumatic thing to go through. Honestly in the last several years, I've lost some of the longest term friends I've ever had in my life and it all happened over the course of a year in just accepting the truth about God the Father and opening my mouth about it and that's how it all happened. Talking to a lot of you at the Feast, that's not an uncommon experience. I think a lot of you out there hearing this have had similar circumstances or you're currently going through similar circumstances. We need to be aware that that anger can create a vulnerability. Your response to a real or perceived injustice can really create a vulnerability for Satan to come and take advantage and to get ahold of you. Let's turn over to Ephesians 4 and notice this.

**Ephesians 4:26** *Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,  
27) nor give place to the devil. (NKJV)*

The way it's worded here in the New King James kind of makes these two independent thoughts but let me read this to you from the Complete Jewish Bible because I think it presents it more clearly.

**Ephesians 4:26** *Be angry, but don't sin — don't let the sun go down before you have dealt with the cause of your anger;  
27) otherwise you leave room for the Adversary. (CJB)*

in other words, it's a cause-and-effect situation; not dealing with your anger, your emotional response to injustice that you feel that you have received, can open the door to sin and for Satan to take advantage of you. Let's notice also in Proverbs 29,

Solomon points out to us that when a person gets consumed with anger, that just naturally tends to lead to all other types of sin. It tends to be infectious and start taking over our lives, kind of like an infection can grow in our body.

**Proverbs 29:22** *An angry man stirs up strife, And a furious man abounds in transgression. (NKJV)*

Someone who allows that anger to really start taking hold of their life, it can spread to all manner of sin throughout their lives in other areas outside of just the sin of being angry. Also notice in Proverbs 22, it also shows that anger can be downright infectious, just being around it. Just being around other individuals who are consumed with that can have an infectious—the analogy of leaven—a little bit of leaven can spread through all of the dough—that can happen from one person to another.

**Proverbs 22:24** *Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go,  
25) Lest you learn his ways And set a snare for your soul. (NKJV)*

What can happen is being constantly exposed to someone who is angry and bitter all the time, starts rubbing off on you and you can start absorbing their attitudes whether you realize it or not. That can also be a factor if you get multiple people together who have been done wrong by the same individual or same group of individuals, there can be a therapeutic aspect of this—in other words sharing your experiences with someone who understand what you've been through and can help you work through that—that can be very beneficial. There can also be a toxic quality because if you get people together that—here's what this person, they did this and this to me and others go, let me tell you what they did to me and this can be just throwing logs on a fire to where it gets worse and worse rather than helping each other get over it and work through it, we can be throwing logs on a fire and building a case and that can become very unhealthy. It can absolutely consume a person's life.

What I would like to do in the rest of the sermon is look at an example of a biblical character who had a very legitimate reason to be upset with another individual because we're going to see that the offenses that they were most likely upset about were very legitimate. Absolutely factually true, we can prove this from the Bible, but because this person could not deal with the injustice in their life, they could not let this go, they wound up destroying their own life. The individual we're going to look at is a guy named Ahithophel. He's only mentioned in a couple of chapters in the Bible but he was a counselor of King David. He was known for the wisdom of his counsel. It even says in the Bible, inquiring of him is as if you had inquired the oracles of God. In other words, this guy gave good advice. As we're going to see, he is only mentioned in a couple of chapters in the Bible; what the Bible tends to focus on, is when he switched sides—because there was a point where David's son Absalom led a rebellion and the nation starts becoming divided and people start taking sides with Absalom against David and there's division in the nation. Ahithophel switches sides from supporting David over to supporting Absalom. We're going to read part of this account in a moment that he goes

on a mission to get David. As we're going to see from the advice he gives, he wants to hurt David, he wants to humiliate him and he wants to kill him. The Bible doesn't specifically tell us exactly why his motivations and why he did this but if we look at a few factors of his life, it is not hard to put together the puzzle of what most likely motivated his actions. To start off noticing his family tree you might say, turn over to 2 Samuel 11:2. This is giving us the beginning of the story of David and Bathsheba but what we're going to focus on is some details this gives us about Ahithophel's lineage.

**2 Samuel 11:2** *Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold.*

3) *So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" (NKJV)*

I think we're probably all familiar with the story of David and Bathsheba, how she's married to Uriah and David winds up committing adultery with her and when she becomes pregnant, David realizes Uriah has been out on the battle field for a while and it's not going to be rocket science to figure out he's not the father so we have to do something to cover this up so he sets up Uriah and has him killed to cover all this up. What I want you to notice in this verse is that Bathsheba is the daughter of Eliam. Now turn over to 2 Samuel 23, we're going to look at the later part of verse 34. The greater context is a long list of David's mighty men and we're not going to go through all these names because it doesn't matter but if we look at the later part of verse 34, it says:

**2 Samuel 23:34** *Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite ... (NKJV)*

Now we can put together a family tree. Ahithophel, his son is Eliam, Eliam's daughter is Bathsheba. That makes Ahithophel Bathsheba's grandfather. So when you put this into context, a lot of Ahithophel's actions start making more sense because David winds up committing adultery with Bathsheba, this breaks up her marriage, he has her husband killed, then the child that was conceived as a result of this affair would die as a part of God's punishment in the whole situation. This Ahithophel's great grandchild, so you can see how this is very personal for him. With that in mind, turn over to 2 Samuel 16:15. We're going to see that the advice that Ahithophel gives when he switches sides and joins Absalom.

**2 Samuel 16:15** *Meanwhile Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem; and Ahithophel was with him.*

16)-*And so it was, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, Long live the king! Long live the king!"*

17) *So Absalom said to Hushai, Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?" (NKJV)*

In other words, why don't you choose me over David, is basically what he's getting at.

18) *And Hushai said to Absalom, No, but whom the Lord and this people and all the men of Israel choose, his I will be, and with him I will remain. (NKJV)*  
19) *Furthermore, whom should I serve? Should I not serve in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father's presence, so will I be in your presence."*  
20) *Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, Give advice as to what we should do."*  
(NKJV)

Notice Ahithophel's advice in what he wants carried out.

21) *And Ahithophel said to Absalom, Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house; and all Israel will hear that you are abhorred by your father. Then the hands of all who are with you will be strong."*  
22) *So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the top of the house, and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. (NKJV)*

Notice the advice he's giving him. David took another man's wife—he's guilty of—and he's saying, go do to him exactly what he dished out. Go take his wives—so he wants to hurt David and humiliate him publicly. What David did he did in private, under cover—he's saying put up a tent here and make sure everyone sees what's going on so we can thoroughly humiliate this guy—is what he's getting at.

23) *Now the advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. So was all the advice of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom. (NKJV)*

**2 Samuel 17:1** *Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, Now let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight.  
2) I will come upon him while he is weary and weak, and make him afraid. And all the people who are with him will flee, and I will strike only the king.  
3) Then I will bring back all the people to you. When all return except the man whom you seek, all the people will be at peace."  
4) And the saying pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel. (NKJV)*

Notice he doesn't just want to humiliate and hurt David, he wants to kill him with his own hands. He's obviously got a beef with him. He didn't just go join Absalom because he thought Absalom was a better leader and could lead the country better—no he's got a personal issue with David. The Bible doesn't tell us exactly his motivation, but put together his family tree and it's not hard to figure out what his beef was probably about. What happens here—we'll skip over the details of this—is his plan doesn't work out. He has Absalom go and take David's concubines but the plan to kill David doesn't pan out. Because Hushai, his friend, goes and warns him and David escapes and he doesn't get killed. Now let's notice Ahithophel's reaction. If you skip down to verse 23 of chapter 17.

23) *Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, he saddled a donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his*



*household in order, and hanged himself, and died; and he was buried in his father's tomb. (NKJV)*

He kills himself—he's so angry at David that when the plan doesn't work, he goes and kills himself because he is so consumed with his anger and his hatred with David, he does this to himself. I think one of the powerful things of this story is when you look at what happen here—we're speculating a little because we don't know all of Ahithophel's motivation, but I think it's not a difficult leap at all to say how David's actions affected his family, is very likely what took place here. Notice if Ahithophel says that this is the injustice—that my family has suffered from this man—it's all true. It's not a matter of, he made up a lot of things and accused David of things he didn't do—no, he can accuse David of being an adulterer and a murderer and it's an absolute fact. He can accuse David that this man plotted to kill my granddaughter's husband, busted up her marriage, my great grandchild died because of this man's actions—every bit of that is 100 percent true. It's not an issue of, he made all this up in his head and it's not true—no, it's all true, it's all fact. What's interesting is that even after, at the time, when Ahithophel was going to this great effort to kill David—David's already repented. Nathan and the prophets already come to him, confronted him on his actions and when David responds, this guy ought to die—by the way David, that guy is you—you are the one that did this, then David repents. He's already gone before God and asked for forgiveness—this has already taken place and Ahithophel is on a mission to kill the guy.

Let's also consider a different scenario—not what the Bible says, but just for argument's sake, let's consider a different scenario. Let's consider a scenario where David hasn't repented, he's not sorry for what he's done—he's proud of it and Ahithophel is pursuing it. How does this change the end of the movie for Ahithophel? It doesn't. He is so consumed with his own hatred and his own desire to get even with David, he still destroys his own life, regardless. Ahithophel could not see the lion coming. Let me explain where I'm coming from with that one. We're going to see in a minute in 1 Peter where Peter says Satan is like a lion coming after us. Let's just use an analogy of a literal lion. In the last few weeks, a friend of mine posted a video on Facebook and I think it really makes a nice illustration for this story. It's a scene that takes place somewhere in Africa. You could obviously see in the video it's a plain out in Africa. It's a number of gazelles that you see in this picture. There's two of the gazelles wrapped up in a battle with each other—heads are down, horns are locked, they are fighting for dominance with one another and you can look behind them in the scene and you see this wide open field area and you can see for a long way after that. You see on the other side of these two gazelles that are duking it out with each other, there is a lion way off in the distance. It's a big male lion with a big mane and the lion sees them fighting and he starts charging forward for them. He's probably several hundred yards away because it takes him about thirty seconds to a minute running at full speed, coming at them, to get up to these two gazelles. But these two gazelles are so engrossed in a battle with each other, they are oblivious to anything else that's going on around them. There are a number of other gazelles you can see in the shot and they see the lion coming and they are out of there. They see danger and they run for cover to get out of there. But these two other gazelles that have their heads so locked with each other and

they are so focused on being dominant of the other one, they are oblivious to what's going on around them. Literally, if you watch the video—it takes like thirty seconds to a minute with this lion charging full force and he's not coming under cover—he's not sneaking around through the jungle under cover and inching up on them—he's running full force through an open field and anyone that would just glance in his direction can see this big lion roaring, charging towards them. These gazelles don't look up until the lion is right on top of them. The only reason that one of them gets away because the lion couldn't grab both of them at the same time. He pounces on one of them, bites him in the neck like a lion would do, kills him and one of the gazelles becomes his dinner. He was so focused on fighting with the other gazelle and being the dominant one in the pack, he didn't see the lion was about to have him for dinner and this fight was irrelevant. He wasn't going to live, doing this fight and what he really needed to defend himself, wasn't the other gazelle, it was the lion coming after him. He destroys his own life as a result of that. This is exactly what happened to Ahithophel. He's so focused on how David hurt him and his family and getting even with him, he doesn't see the lion charging across an open field, coming right after him and it winds up destroying his own life.

That's what we need to be aware of as well—that we have a lion after us as well and if we get wrapped up—our hearts with other people and other distractions—so much that we don't pay attention to the lion, it can do the same thing to us. Charge right up, in wide open—not even under cover—grab you by the neck, and it's over. Turn over to 1 Peter 5:8.

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

9) *Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.* (NKJV)

In other words, we need to be aware of him coming after us and relying upon God's help to deal with this. As I mentioned starting off this sermon, a lot of us hearing this message, have in the last couple of years faced a lot of injustice. We've faced hurtful situations and relationships may have been busted up, we may have been seriously wronged and even slandered. I know I certainly have and when I say all over the world, I know people in multiple countries that my name is mud now, whom I've had very good relationships with prior to all of this. That type of thing is hurtful, so I can certainly understand what a lot of you out there are dealing with. There's an important principle to remember when you look at this type of subject. Forgiveness and reconciliation are two separate subjects. Often times when you look at a subject like this—when someone has been seriously hurt—when you talk about forgiveness, here's the response you'll often receive. That dirty dog doesn't deserve to be forgiven; let me tell you what they did to me—they did this and this and they will tell you all about it. What their focus is, that person doesn't deserve to be forgiven and they totally forget and not realize what they are doing to themselves. There are two things you have to realize. One, first of all, is that forgiveness and reconciliation—two separate subjects. One is a biblical requirement, the other is not always possible. One person can unilaterally

forgive and let something go, regardless of the actions of the other and the Bible requires us to do that. Reconciliation is always the ideal outcome—for the two parties to work it out and get along with each other but as Matthew 18 makes very clear (we're not going to go through that whole set of scriptures) but it lays out the different instructions of trying this step and this step and at the end of it, it says if they still won't hear you, let them be to you as a heathen and tax collector, why is that? Because it takes the actions of two people to reconcile. If the other party is not willing to reconcile, there's not a whole lot you can do about that, but you can let go and forgive and let something go. Forgiveness is not a gift you give to the person that hurt you, it's a gift you give to yourself. Here's why I say this. Think of it in terms as a financial death. In fact, let's notice that the Bible even uses that terminology. Turn over to Matthew 6:12, we're just going to read one line out of the model prayer.

**Matthew 6:12** *And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.* (NKJV)

I love how it's worded like that because it creates a very visual picture for our role today. The reason I say that is because if you think of it in terms as a financial debt—I'm sure most of you out there hearing this message, if you own a home you have a mortgage, if you've owned a car, you've made a car payment or you have a credit card you have a balance on—one way or another, you had somebody that you've owed money to at some point. You know how that normally works; you make a monthly payment and you're constantly paying month after month on that. When you think of this in terms of a debt as someone who has hurt you and it's really affected your life, ask yourself a question: Who is making the payments on the debt? It's not the person who hurt you. If you let that consume your life, if you're letting it affect your mood, your health at times or maybe you're awake at night because you can't sleep because you're thinking about all the hurt and wrong this person did to you and then your mind goes down the reasons why I'm right and this person is wrong and how I would like to get even with that person and your mind gets consumed with all of this. Who is making the payments? It's not the person who hurt you, it's you.

It's just like with Ahithophel. Again, he winds up killing himself. David doesn't die, Ahithophel kills himself because he was so consumed with the injustice that he had received. Truly, he had received a lot of injustice; all of the allegations he could make against David, they are true. They are documented fact; they were not debatable. But he still destroyed his own life. If he had forgiven him and just let it go and moved on, who would have benefited? He would have. It wouldn't have changed David's life; it would have changed his own. That's how we have to look at it when we've suffered injustice and the trauma that comes with that. We have to look at it in terms of, who is making the payments on the debt. The person who hurt you or offended you, maybe stabbed you in the back, there may never be a point where they acknowledge that. Where they ever apologize and say sorry, will you please forgive me—that day may or may not ever come. Regardless of that, we have to be aware that there is a lion looking for opportunities to kill us. If we allow ourselves to be so consumed with those types of feelings or other issues in our life, to where we come to the point where we are not aware of what else is going around—the lion could be charging through an open field,

full speed, where anyone else could just look up and glance and see it coming and we would be totally blind to it because we are totally consumed with those feelings at that time. We have to stop and realize, when we look at these situations, forgiveness is a Christian requirement—the ideal outcome is reconciliation but that may not be possible and it's irrelevant whether it's possible or not. Who is making the payments on the debt? We are—it's not the other person. That's what we have to realize when we deal with situations like this—of letting that baggage go.

I'll customize this again to what I think a lot of people are dealing with these days, the principles apply in lots of areas in our life. We have to always be aware that Satan is an opportunist. He's going to come after whatever is your vulnerable spot. Strong emotion in general is often times one of those vulnerable spots. That can be feelings of discouragement, depression, anger of an injustice of someone else, that can be loneliness—that can be a variety of different areas where our buttons can be pushed. We have to be aware of those and realize you are not fighting a physical enemy, you are fighting a spiritual enemy. The reason you have that hostility and that vulnerability, it's not just because you're physical, it's because you have a spiritual lion after you. To fight a spiritual enemy, you need spiritual armor, you need spiritual help. If you try to fight that on your own, you've brought a knife to a gun fight, you should expect to lose.

As we go forward from this Sabbath, let's keep these principles in mind. Realize we have a very powerful enemy who is on a mission to kill us—that's not overstated. We literally have a powerful army of Satan and his demons on a mission to kill us. We need to be aware of that. They will take every opportunity to do so. If we are willing to humble ourselves before God, relying upon His help, be aware and not let ourselves get consumed with distractions so that we get taken on by the lion, we can win this battle and inherit the Kingdom of God.