

The Reality of Satan

Rick Railston

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It's no secret that since the beginning of this year our world has changed dramatically because of this COVID pandemic. Schools and businesses are shut down, seemingly at random—sometimes the government regulations don't make a lot of sense.

Transportation has been limited and Governments all over the world are spending trillions of dollars in order to aid those that have been affected, who have lost their jobs. Looking down that road, the financial ramifications of just printing trillions and trillions of dollars have yet to be seen. We will suffer that consequence long after the COVID pandemic is in our rear-view mirror. As I said in the announcements, this is not something remote or distanced happening in some other part of the world, it is directly affecting each and every one of us. The fact is, it's scary in one sense, that it happened so clearly. We knew things like this were going to happen and we are getting a whiff of it since the first of the year. As a result, there is great unease and there is great uncertainty in the world. It seems to be that God Almighty has loosed the restraint, the bands, that he has put around Satan to influence the world, to attempt to influence all of us in God's church.

Look at the polarization in our country; I have never seen it so bad. It's just amazing. Washington—both the legislative branch and the executive branch are so polarized as to be dysfunctional. The fact is, that in both branches there is selfish thinking and there are selfish actions of doing what is best for the individual rather than what is best for the country. You better believe in this election year that the purpose of most of them—their first purpose—is to get re-elected, not to do what is in the best interest of the country.

Then we've also seen here in the past months, the fact that open hatred of other people is taking on a dramatic rise. Police murdering the very ones they are supposed to protect, citizens murdering policemen, simmering racial hatred all over the country and something you don't hear a lot about—antisemitism—is at an all-time high in this country. You put all these things together and ask the question, what is the common denominator in all of this? It is one word—Satan. He is the common denominator.

With that in mind go to 1 John 3:8 and let's understand who is behind everything that is happening. We also know, our Father, being the Most-High God, the Almighty is in complete control. But as I said earlier, He by all appearances, has released some restraint from Satan.

1 John 3:8 *He that committeth sin [when we commit sin] is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. [That tells us something very important] For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (KJV)*

It's interesting that the root word in the Greek for the word *devil* here, is *diabolos* and we get the English word *diabolic* from that. It means figuratively "to defame, to slander" or "to accuse". As we're going to see, that describes Satan the devil—the *diabolos*. In Galatians 5:19, we read the section of scripture that talks about the works of the flesh. But think about these in terms of who is behind them. I'm going to read it in the NIV because I think it gets more to the point of who is behind it.

Galatians 5:19 *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious, [Who's nature is that? It's Satan's nature, he has sinned from the beginning] sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20) idolatry and witchcraft; [notice the following] hatred [we see that as never before], discord [the polarization of the world and our nation, we see that as never before], jealousy, fits of rage [it's just amazing that those who are mandated to protect us and those who are supposed to be obedient to law—hatred], selfish ambition [that frankly describes the vast majority of the politicians in this country], dissensions and factions. (NIV)*

What we're seeing here is Satan's nature on raw display in the world today and particularly in the United States. Satan's nature on raw display. In Revelation 12:9 we see some more about this being. Here he is called a dragon and a serpent.

Revelation 12:9 *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil [diabolos], and Satan ... (KJV)*

The Greek word here for *Satan* is an Aramaic word *satanas* and it means the same thing as *diabolos*; "to defame, to slander, to accuse".

9 continued) *... which deceiveth the whole world [not part of it, the whole world]: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (KJV)*

People ask, has he been cast down yet? Nobody knows but I think we all have to agree that things have changed dramatically here recently. Someday we will find out.

10) *And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren [remember diabolos means to defame, slander or accuse] is cast down, which accused them [the brethren] before our God day and night. (KJV)*

This is something I think we lose sight of. It is the fact that we have an adversary, the accuser, who is in God's presence—God allows that—and he is accusing each one of us day and night and is saying to the Father, did you see him think that, or did you hear them say this, or did you watch them do this thing—and trying to show God how evil and bad we are. Maybe we are worthy of destruction. This is what we are faced with every day and it's in the spiritual realm and we are not aware of it. Even within the

greater church, I think we all too often underestimate the power and the influence of Satan, our adversary.

In the church of God in the 1960's—I came in, in the middle of the 1960's—at that time Satan and his demons were blamed for just about everything. That was just the culture of the day. I know a man who attended Big Sandy in those days and as a freshman, he began having anxiety attacks. Those attacks were kind of the normal, what we all go through at some point in our lives—I don't measure up or I can't do this, I can't get where I want to get—so he had just started having some anxiety attacks. So, he went to the minister to counsel about it and the minister listened very briefly and looked at him and said you have a demon. So, here's a freshman in college who is having some difficulty, goes to this minister looking for a mentor, somebody to maybe help him through this and say "this is normal, people go through these things, let's take a deep breath and we'll talk about it. Why don't you come back and see me next week and we'll talk some more and see how you're doing?" But instead, the minister dismissed him by telling him, and shocking him by telling him, that he had demon. He then began to doubt himself all the more and the anxiety attacks increased. Not a good plan. The fact is, that was then. But from about the late '80's into the '90's, Satan has, I think, largely been ignored by the church. The Church has addressed other issues, other situations that have arisen and the fact that Satan is our adversary and is there wanting to blow this ship up, has been ignored. The problem today is, if we ignore Satan and his influence, we do so to our own peril.

In these last days we deeply need to realize that Satan and his demons do exist and we also need to understand their strategy for attempting to get to us and drive us away from our heavenly Father. So, the title of the sermon is:

The Reality of Satan

We are going to have four points. The first one is a question.

1. What does the Bible say about the reality of Satan and demons?

The greater church believes that God exists. But I think that too many times we rarely consider the existence of Satan and his demons and their influence and their strategies for getting at us. I think, on a day-to-day basis, for most in the greater church, Satan and his demons are not relevant. They are just not thought of or addressed—just not relevant. But that was not the case when the Bible was written. God's word is filled with references to Satan and demons. At the time of Christ, the general populous knew of Satan and the demons' world and they were very attuned to that. Satan was real to Christ; after all, Satan tempted Him face to face, as we know. In John 8:44 we see a section of scripture where Christ is speaking to the Jews and Christ mentioned Satan often. He did not just ignore the threat of Satan. Christ is speaking to the Jews and notice what He says to them.

John 8:44 *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do [pretty strong]. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (KJV)*

So, Christ calls Satan a murderer and a liar. He also called him the prince of this world. Go to John 14:30; this is Christ talking to the disciples the night He was betrayed and He was trying to get across some last minute, very critical information to his disciples.

John 14:30 *Hereafter I will not talk much with you [and He tells them why]: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. (KJV)*

The Greek word for *prince* means “first in rank” or “first in power” or “chief ruler”. So that tells us, Satan at this point in time is the chief ruler of this world. He is the power that God allows—it’s part of His plan—to rule this world. Christ also understood Satan’s goal and mission. We find that in the parable of the sheepfold in John 10. We won’t have time to go through this in detail but if you want a good Bible study, study John 10—there is a lot of information there. Christ is speaking in John 10:1.

John 10:1 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. (KJV)*

We know that He is referring to Satan if you read the whole chapter in context. But jump to verse 10.

10) *The thief cometh not, but for to steal [to take us away from God and the body of Christ], and to kill [to kill us physically if he is allowed to do that], and to destroy [to see us destroyed permanently, forever]: (KJV)*

Here we see that Satan’s mission is to steal, kill and destroy; now look at the diametric opposite of that, when Christ says:

10 continued) *... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (KJV)*

The Greek word for *abundantly* means “beyond measure”. Look at the contrast. There is one being who wants to kill and steal and destroy and then there is Christ who came expressly that we might have life beyond measure. Satan was very real to Jesus Christ. Satan was also real to Paul. The disciples referenced Satan and the demons often and the narratives of the four gospels and the book of Acts talk often about the presence of Satan and the demons.

2 Corinthians 4:4 *In whom the god of this world [referring to Satan; our Father has allowed it, part of His plan] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not ... (KJV)*

The Father allows this, it's not that Satan is getting away with something—the Father allows this, it's part of His plan.

4 continued) ... *lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* (KJV)

The message here is that Satan wants to blind people. Do you think he might want to blind us; blind us who have God's Holy Spirit? Of course, he does. So, we need to be aware of the fact that our adversary wants to blind us spiritually and we had better be on guard for that. We cannot think that because we have God's Holy Spirit, we are impervious to Satan blinding us—that is not the case.

Paul is talking about Satan and his tactics in 2 Timothy 2:24

2 Timothy 2:24 *And the servant of the Lord must not strive [boy, is that true]; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, [patient with those He is teaching] 25) In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;* (KJV)

Notice a key in verse 26.

26) *And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil ...* (KJV)

A snare is like a trap; you would set a snare for a small animal and catch it—trap it.

26 continued) ... *who are taken captive by him [the New International then says, "to do his will"—that is Satan's will] at his will.* (KJV)

We who have God's Holy Spirit, our prime objective is to do our Father's will, to have our Father's face shine upon us, to have our Father pleased with us. What Satan wants to do is set a snare so that we think we are following God and pleasing him but we are actually doing the will of Satan. In fact, the New Testament tells us that there will be people who kill us thinking they do God a service.

So, we see that Satan was real to Paul and Satan was also real to Peter. Look at 1 Peter 5:8. I hope as you go through the New Testament, that you cannot come away without having the impression that Satan and his demons were at the forefront of the minds of the apostles as they were dealing with the people God was calling.

1 Peter 5:8 *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil [diabolos, the accuser], as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 9) Whom resist steadfast in the faith ...* (KJV)

We have to resist. The Greek word for *devour* means "to drink down completely" or "to gulp entirely". It would be like a shark just gulping down a seal with one bite—that's

what Satan wants to do. The word Satan or the word devil occurs over ninety times in the New Testament. The fact is, as we study more and more of God's word, Satan should be real to all of us.

I want to show you how frequently it occurs in the New Testament. In today's world, a physician concentrates on the physical obviously. Luke is called the beloved physician in Colossians 4:14; he was loved by the brethren and he was a physician. In his gospel, notice the New Testament physician's emphasis; it was not on the physical. You would think a physician would be focused on the physical, but not this one—not the beloved physician. With that in mind go to Luke 4:31 from the New King James.

Luke 4:31 *Then He [referring to Christ] went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths.*

32) *And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority.*

33) *Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. (NKJV)*

The Greek for *demon* is daimonion and it means "evil spirits" or "ministers of the devil".

33 continued) ... *And he [referring to the demon] cried out with a loud voice,*

34) *saying, Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? [this indicates there was more than one demon in this individual] I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" (NKJV)*

Demons know who God the Father is and who Christ is.

35) *But Jesus rebuked him, saying, Be quiet, and come out of him!" [So, we see that Christ has authority over the demons] And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him.*

36) *Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out."*

37) *And the report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region. (NKJV)*

Now let's go to chapter 8:1, again out of the New King James.

Luke 8:1 *Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him,*

2) *and certain women [so there were several] who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons,*
3) *and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others [were healed of evil spirits and whatever affliction they might have had] who provided for Him from their substance. (NKJV)*

So, this is the context of this chapter, now go to verse 27.

27) And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. (NKJV)

Remember in John 10:10, the fact that demons and Satan are absorbed with killing and destroying. So, it is not surprising that that is where a demon would reside when being in a human being.

28) When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most-High God? [knowing exactly who Jesus Christ was and who His Father was] I beg You, do not torment me!"

29) For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness.

30) Jesus asked him, saying, What is your name?" And he said, Legion," because many demons had entered him. (NKJV)

The Greek word for *Legion* is actually from the Latin and Strong's says it refers to "a regiment of somewhere between 1000 and 2000". Other scholars say "no, it refers to a Roman legion which is between 4000 and 6000". So, either way, this poor man was a dormitory for demons; we have no idea how many he had.

30 continued) ... And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. (NKJV)

The word *deep* is abussou from which we get the English word *abyss* and it is the same word that is translated *bottomless pit* in Revelation 20:3 where Satan is cast. So, they did not want to be commanded to go into the bottomless pit or the abyss.

32) Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So, they begged Him [the demons besought Christ] that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. (NKJV)

Notice again His power over demons.

33) Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned. (NKJV)

Again, John 10:10, to kill and to destroy. Now in the next chapter, Luke 9:37.

Luke 9:37 *And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him.*

38) *And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child.*

39) *And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again [foams at the mouth], and bruising him hardly departeth from him. (KJV)*

Can you imagine?

40) *And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.*

41) *And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.*

42) *And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father. (KJV)*

This is one of many instances that Luke records of the reality of Satan and demons. The other gospels do likewise. Luke, being a physician has his mind focused not on the physical world but on the spiritual world. It is obvious from these scriptures in Christ's day that the people understood the reality of the spirit world. Luke, as a physician, acknowledged the influence of Satan and his demons. Today, more physicians that you go to would think you are absolutely nuts to believe in a spirit world. Most scientists, most educators—the ones that educate our kids—acknowledge only the physical. If you can't measure it, smell it, touch it or taste it, it's not real but that's not what God's word says to us. All we have to do is look around the world we live in and realize the increasing influence of that evil spirit world. Movies, video games, novels, television programs, are increasingly involved with demons and the occult.

If you have ever been in a mental institution, you would understand. When I was in graduate school in the mid '60's at Bailer University, part of our curriculum was going to mental institutions and we would experience that. God was calling me at the time but I really didn't understand it. But in hindsight, looking back at it, there were many people there who had demons. They couldn't speak, they just whimpered and moaned and were contorted and distorted. There were those—this is before the modern age of drugs—in padded rooms and in straightjackets because they were so violent, they could not be controlled. They even allowed us to put on a straightjacket and you do not want to go there. They had to do it to control these violent people. In large part, a demon was involved. There were those who were drooling and foaming at the mouth, which we just read in Luke 9:39. They try to control it with drugs today but the fact is, you can't control something of the spirit with a physical drug; it won't happen.

So, all we need to do is look around and see evil spiritual influences all around us. It's plain to see that it is increasing in influence and is present in our lives. Satan is taking more and more control of this world. This reality is revealed in our Father's Word. Let us understand, as we conclude point 1, that the Bible has a lot to say about the reality of Satan and this spiritual, evil world.

That leads to the second point which is also a question.

2. What are Satan's prime schemes for getting to God's people?

What is his strategy? There are two.

2A. Satan deludes us into believing that he is not there.

One of his greatest ploys is to deceive the general populous that he does not exist. And frankly, it's very rare for a demon to appear because that would give away the fact that there is a spirit world and that Satan is the head of that spirit world. Satan wants to convince people that he does not exist, therefore he can have more influence.

Charles Baudelaire is a French poet who lived in the mid 1800's; he was the best known and the most widely translated French poet. He said this:

My dear brothers, never forget when you hear the progress of the enlightenment praised, that the devil's cleverest ploy is to persuade you that he does not exist.

Satan has done a masterful job of that.

Today the world doubts God's existence and it absolutely believes that Satan doesn't exist at all. In fact, in April 2009 there was a California group of researchers called the Barnett Research Group and they surveyed a couple thousand self-proclaimed Christians to see what they believed. One of the questions involved their belief in Satan. Forty percent of those surveyed said:

Strongly agreed that Satan is not a living being but is a symbol of evil.

That is what modern Christianity is teaching and that's what a great number of "Christians" believe. With that in mind go to 2 Corinthians 11:3 because Paul is trying to convince the Corinthian church and us today that we need to be really, really careful of this spirit world.

2 Corinthians 11:3 *But I fear [he is worried about the Corinthian church and the brethren in it], lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, [in part today, his subtlety is to get us, as God's people, to ignore his presence] so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. (KJV)*

Jumping to verse 13.

13) For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. (KJV)

Under the influence of Satan.

14) *And no marvel;* (KJV)

The rest is out of the NIV.

14 continued) ... *Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.* (NIV)

He deceptively masquerades as an angel of God or an angel of light.

15) *It is not surprising then if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserves.* (NIV)

In point A, the bottom line is, Satan deceives the world into thinking that he does not exist and deceives the church into ignoring his day-to-day reality in our lives. Most of us are not as aware of Satan and his influence daily as we should be. That is part of his deception.

The second scheme that he has—the second plan that he has.

2B. Satan attacks our weak points.

That's a basic strategy of military action; you don't attack an enemy where he is strongest, you attack an enemy where he is weakest. Satan will attack where we are weakest, not where we are strongest.

2 Corinthians 2:10 *Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake,
11) in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.* (NIV)

His plans, his strategy. Satan identifies the weak point of his enemy—us—and he attacks where he is most likely to succeed. Could it be the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, the lusts of the eyes—as 1 John 2:16 tells us—is that where he attacks? It depends on our individual weaknesses. We have a prime example in the New Testament in Acts 5, and that example is of Ananias and Sapphira. The New Testament church was just getting started in Acts 4 and there was tremendous zeal and enthusiasm among the new converts, just like we had zeal and enthusiasm when we were first converted. The new converts sold their possessions—many of them—and gave the money to the apostles to continue the work of God. We are also told in Acts 4 that Barnabas—a Levite from Cyprus—sold land and laid it at the apostles' feet. We pick up that story in Acts 5:1.

Acts 5:1 *But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,*

2) [here's what they did] *And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it [she was part of the conspiracy], and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. [As though it was the entire amount of the land that was sold.]*
3) *But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, [he didn't say why have you come up with this idea, he said why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit] and to keep back part of the price of the land? (KJV)*

Ananias' weakness was, he wanted the praise of men. He wanted to be well thought of among this new religious movement so he was deceptive in order to curry favor.

4) *Whilst it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? [Satan planted the thought and Ananias ran with the thought] thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.*

5) *And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. (KJV)*

Satan attacks our weak points and sin starts very small—just with a thought. Ananias had the opportunity to reject the thought but he didn't; he embraced it, he ran with it, he began to cultivate it and it filled his heart. If we allow that to happen, then Satan is in control of our thoughts. If he is in control of our thoughts, he is in control of our actions. We cannot—dare not—allow that to happen. Why does Satan want us to sin? Isaiah 59:1-2 tells us that our sin separates us from our Father. So, if Satan can get us to sin by planting thoughts, attacking our weak points, then he can put a divide between us and our Father through sin. So, let us be aware of the second point of the strategy, the devices and the schemes of Satan.

The third point we need to make.

3. Satan and his demons can cause wrong thoughts, wrong emotions and wrong feelings inside of us.

Those can be planted inside of us. What Ephesians 2:2 has to say, we all too often ignore on a day-to-day basis. I have been guilty of it. I know all of us are guilty of it. This is out of the King James Version and Paul is talking to the church at Ephesus but by extension to us today.

Ephesians 2:2 *Wherein in time past [before conversion] ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince [the same word Christ used in John 14:30] of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (KJV)*

We are given an analogy—a hint—of how Satan can communicate in an attempt to deceive or provoke God's people. He can project thoughts and attitudes and emotions into our minds. A good analogy would be like a cell phone. Some people are

speculating in years future, that we are going to have an implant behind our ear that is basically a cell phone and it will be a cell phone without having to hold anything; Satan already has that. He can project thoughts, emotions, feelings, into our minds. With those thoughts and feelings and emotions, he can inject into us feelings of depression, feelings of a flash of anger. Have you ever had a flash of anger just come out of nowhere? Somebody says or does something and you just explode? Where does that come from? He can implant judgmental or condemning thoughts or feelings, he can put in our minds pride or selfishness or he can put into our psyche feelings of being hurt, being bitter, feelings of being resentful. They can just pop into our head. We need to ask when we perceive those feelings, where are these thoughts coming from, where are these feelings coming from? What has changed from thirty seconds ago or a minute ago. Satan knows that sin begins in the mind. Go to James 1:13. The path to get us to sin, starts in our own minds.

James 1:13 *Let no man say when he is tempted ... (KJV)*

The Greek word *tempted* can mean “enticed” and when we’re enticed, it starts in the mind doesn’t it?

13 continued) ... *I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:*

14) *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. (KJV)*

That means when we have a weakness, no matter what it is, and we allow that weakness to entice us, Satan is right there. He is stirring that pot to increase the lust or to increase the enticement in order to trap us. One of the meanings of the Greek word *enticed*, is “to trap”.

15) *Then when lust hath conceived [and Satan can plant that desire in our minds], it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. (KJV)*

John 10:10, steal, kill and destroy. Satan puts thoughts, emotions and feelings in our minds and sometimes powerfully, and over and over to get us to act on those feelings thereby sinning, either in our minds or with our actions. That leads to separation from the Father and ultimately, as Paul just said, brings forth death. Obviously, we cannot allow that to happen.

The fact is, we have records in God’s scripture, that Satan planted thoughts in the minds of the disciples. It’s a record of scripture. Mark 8:31 shows Satan got through to the disciples, trying to get them off track.

Mark 8:31 *And he [referring to Christ] began to teach them [His disciples], that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. (KJV)*

All of a sudden Christ is telling them, look this is what is going to happen. They just wouldn't believe it.

32) *And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, [the implication is Peter grabbed him, probably by the shoulders and maybe to shake him or something] and began to rebuke him.*

33) *But when he [Christ] had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter ... (KJV)*

Notice what He says. He didn't say, Peter you have a bad attitude, or Peter you are wrong—He didn't say that.

33 continued) ... *saying, Get thee behind me, Satan:*

Christ knew where the thought came from, knew where the emotions that grabbed Peter came from, because apparently Peter was impetuous and emotional—that was one of his weak points. So Satan put in the thought to rebuke Jesus Christ, to get off track, to divide between Peter and the Son of God.

33 continued) ... *for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. (KJV)*

Here is a prime example of Satan provoking Peter's attitude, his thoughts and his actions in opposing the will of Jesus Christ. That is something all of us need to be so, so careful about.

Go to John 13 now and begin in verse 1 out of the New King James. This is approaching Christ's last Passover. We see what happened with Judas; Terry in his last sermon read this scripture. So, think of it in the context of Satan injecting things into the minds of the disciples.

John 13:1 *Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.*

2) *And supper being ended, [notice this] the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him ... (NKJV)*

At some point previously—we don't know if it was weeks or months or a year or two, we just don't know—Satan injected a thought into Judas' mind that would ultimately lead to the betrayal of Jesus Christ. At some point a thought came. Judas could have rejected that thought but he did not. He embraced the thought and worked on the thought and chewed on the thought and therefore the thought developed. Until, at the end of the day, of course with Satan's aid and assistance, he acted and betrayed the Son of the Most-High God. This type of influence is far greater than what we think is the scary stuff of the demons. Hopefully you don't watch movies like this, but occasionally you'll see

various advertisements for various movies on television and things are moving around the room and there's voices and things shaking all of that—that kind of scares us—but what we just read about Peter and about Judas, is far more dangerous than something moving around a room or something like that.

A few years ago, I had a personal example of that. I was asleep, my wife right next to me in our home—just a few years ago—I was on my back, I don't normally sleep on my back but for whatever reason I was, and I felt a presence come through the wall right behind me and just come right over the top of me. All of a sudden, I was awake and every instinct I had—the hair on the back of my neck—was that I was in the presence of something horribly evil. It wasn't a cloud but it was kind of like a cloud in the sense that you couldn't see anything but you knew this vapor or cloud was there and it started to descend to come over me. You talk about an incentive to act, I flipped over and down on my knees with my head on the mattress and I started praying mightily for God and Christ to rebuke this and as it got closer, just like that it disappeared—just went away. That gets the adrenaline going, that gets your mind racing and all of that but the fact is, what we just read about that happened to Judas and happened to Peter—that is far more dangerous than the situation I just described. Other people in God's church have had similar experiences—I've had a few more—but the fact is that gets us to our knees; it drives us to God and so it doesn't work.

But the planting of thoughts, the planting of emotions, the planting of feelings does work much better than what I just described. The point is, when we are bopping along and everything is fine, everything is well and life isn't too bad and our mood suddenly changes—for example I've been doing things and all of a sudden, I wake up and I'm just ticked and don't know why, I'm just ticked. Nothing happened, nothing changed but I'm just ticked. I've learned over the years that you stop and ask, where did this come from, how did this arrive? There's no reason for it so you have a pretty good idea where it came from. If we're not careful and not aware, Satan can get in control of our thoughts, emotions and feelings and then as the man says, "We're off to the races". Satan is on our back with a whip and just prodding us along so we need to be constantly on guard.

That leads to the fourth and final point.

4. How does our Father want us to deal with the influence of Satan; of his provocations?

How does our Father want us to deal with that? We know our Father allows Satan to provoke us with thoughts and emotions and feelings, as a test. The Father allows that and then watches us to see how we are going to react to it. What do we do with these thoughts, these emotions and these feelings? We don't have time to turn there, you can read it later, in 1 Chronicles 21. It involved David and I'll just read you the first verse.

1 Chronicles 21:1 *And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. (KJV)*

Satan at some point put a thought into David's head that it would be a good thing to number Israel. David came up with all kinds of reasons why Israel should be numbered despite the fact the scripture says that shouldn't happen. He took it to his advisor and Joab said no, that this was not a good idea but under the provocation of Satan, David went ahead with it and after it was completed, God told him you have sinned, you take your pick of what I'm going to bring on this nation because of your sins. David decided on a plague because it was of a short duration and that happened and as a result of that, 70,000 men—doesn't say women and children but probably women and children—died, because David allowed Satan to put thoughts in his head and to provoke him into an action that was against God's will. That is a model of what Satan wants to do with each one of us. Satan and demons plant thoughts in our heads; feelings to tempt us to run with them and thereby sin. This puts distance between us and our Father.

The question for us is, when that happens—when we have a feeling, an emotion, a thought, that comes into us and it is not Godly, do we entertain them or act on those feelings or thoughts or do we reject them? God watches to see what we do. It's critical—absolutely critical—that we learn to recognize when those thoughts and feelings come into our minds. My problem in times past is, those feelings can come into my mind and then there is a finite amount of time before I wake up and realize what's going on here. You want it to happen instantly—that's the goal. But sometimes we're just fat, dumb and happy and all of a sudden, we are in a different place than we were an hour before or a day before or a week before. We are being influenced by evil forces and we are not aware of it. One of our jobs is to be self-aware; sensitive to how we are thinking, how we are feeling and then we analyze if this is from God or some other source.

When we are tempted, first thing we need to ask is,

“Is there a spiritual force behind this, am I being tempted or tested?”

Let's go back to 1 Peter 5:8, we were there before and focused on the later part of the verse. But this time we are going to focus on the first part of the verse because Peter gives us a strategy for dealing with our adversary.

1 Peter 5:8 *Be sober* [not talking about not drinking, the Greek means “be calm” or “collected in spirit” and to “be aware”], *be vigilant* [the Greek can mean “cautious” or “take heed” and what Peter is saying is, I don't want you to let these thoughts or emotions to rile you up but I want you to be calm, collected, to have your wits about you, to be cautious, to take heed about these thoughts, emotions or feelings that are coming into you from Satan]; *because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:* (KJV)

What God wants us to do is to be constantly aware that spiritual forces are trying to influence us, to deceive us, with the ultimate end of turning us away from God our Father and then destroying us.

So, the lesson is—the big lesson—is to be constantly self-aware of our thoughts, our emotions and our feelings. Are these thoughts, emotions or feelings from God or are they from Satan? If they are not Godly then we have to go to the Father and ask Him to rebuke those thoughts; to nip them in the bud and get them out. Judas didn't do that. David didn't do that. If we can be self-aware, we will then immediately recognize when something pops into our head that is not Godly. We can immediately recognize the source of those thoughts and emotions; that they are not from our Father, they are from our adversary. Once we recognize the source, we can turn away from them, we can reject them and get our minds on what our minds should be on. That's given to us in Philippians 4:8. When we have ungodly thoughts, here is a recipe for changing that; a very familiar scripture for all of us. Think of this scripture as an anecdote for when Satan's provocations and thoughts and emotions come into our minds because he is really projecting his nature into us. That's what he wants, for us to do his will and not our Father's will.

Philippians 4:8 *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true* [our Father's name is Yehovah, which means He has always been, He has never had a beginning. He will always be, He will never have an end. He is now, I Am, He is always here—that is true], *whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely,* [Satan is anything but pure or lovely, his thoughts are the opposite of pure and lovely] *whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* (KJV)

Put your mind on these and when these wrong thoughts, emotions and feelings come in, reject them and put your mind on things that are pure and lovely and have a good report.

Let's summarize now.

The Spirit world is real. We ignore it to our own peril. We need, as God's people, to deal with reality. Satan exists, demons exist and Satan's goal is to steal, to kill and destroy. We have to realize that and deal with that. We cannot ignore it or sweep it under the rug. We need not be afraid either. 1 John 4:4 is another memory scripture, but in relation to facing the provocations, the assault of Satan, we cannot forget this scripture.

1 John 4:4 *Ye are of God, little children* [we are God's little kids, no matter how old we are, we are God's kids], *and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you* [through His Holy spirit], *than he that is in the world.* (KJV)

The prince of the world, the god of the world—what we're being told here and have to have absolute faith in, is that our Father, the Almighty, the Most-High, Yehovah is more powerful—immeasurably more powerful—than Satan. The fact is, like anything else, we have a part to play. We need to do our part by having faith in the Most-High God that He is in control—not Satan—the Almighty is in control. Our part is to discern, when we feel moods and thoughts and attitudes come into us that are not right, that are not Godly

then we have the faith that when we pray to our Father, He will rebuke those thoughts. We need to pray daily. Remember the model prayer, Matthew 6:13, Christ said this is the manner in which you ought to pray, and what did He say? Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one. We should pray that every day. Not just rote, saying these words but in our own words, every day, pray that God would protect us and keep us safe and deliver us from the provocations, the enticements of the evil one. Christ goes on to say, "it's Yours, that is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever" It's not Satan's, it's our Father's.

Above all we need to stay close to our Father. The closer we are to our Father, the less susceptible we are to the strategies of Satan. Let's go to James 4:7. Staying close to God involves humility. We can't be close to God if we are haughty or arrogant.

James 4:7 *Submit yourselves therefore to God.* (KJV)

Prostrate yourself and just say, God I am nothing apart from you; I have no power, I have no wisdom, I have no strength but You do and please give me that because of what I am facing as a human being.

7 continued) ... *Resist the devil* [the accuser, the diabolos], *and he will flee from you.* (KJV)

That is a promise, but we have a part to play; we have to resist. We must resist and never cozy up, never cultivate those evil thoughts, never titillate ourselves with them at all. We cannot go there. We have to put them out and rebuke them.

So, let's never forget the reality of Satan and his desire to steal us from God, to kill us physically and to destroy us spiritually. We will close with one final verse, Romans 8:31, in this battle we have with Satan, every minute, every second of every day, we need to keep this in mind. We need to realize that Satan is there and real and wants to destroy us but here is the promise.

Romans 8:31 *What shall we then say to these things? If God* [our Father, Yehovah, the Almighty, the Most-High] *be for us, who can be against us?* (KJV)