

Opening Prayer

Let's look at what has happened since Wallace has left:

Greg

Satan tries to Pervert God's Truths

God shows up in the coincidences

Carlos

Truth about who Satan is

Woods

Why who Satan is matters to Christians

We did not coordinate! Maybe we should have. I have to say, this series of topics has me a little nervous. I should note, that I did talk with Wallace at the highest level on what I was going to talk about, and had it over half written before last Sunday.

I had been thinking if Wallace ever made the mistake to ask me to "preach" I would talk about steward leadership. But over the last two months, as I would sit down to write and think about what I was going to say today, I was being pulled a very different direction.

So to do this, I want to start with a Case Study – Ravi Zacharias

On 19 May 2020 Ravi Zacharias died in his home of spinal cancer. Around 1963, he had attempted suicide when he was 17 and a Christian worker had brought him and his mother a Bible and suggested they read through John. John 14:19 that touched him deeply - "Because I live, you also will live". He thought, this is my only hope and asked Jesus into his life.

He became one of the world's most effective apologists. Let's take a quick detour – Apologetics sounds like an awful word – I am not apologizing for Christ, or for being a Christian? But Apologetics comes from the Greek ἀπολογία, Apologíā "speaking in defense". Its first example is Paul in Acts 17:22-31.

No-OH - 22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens!...31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by

the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.” So Apologetics is explaining and defending Christianity. Josh McDowell (Case for Christ) and, my personal hero, Timothy Keller (The Reason for God, Making Sense of God) are two amazing examples. And so was Ravi for 40 years!

Back to Ravi....So who has heard of Ravi? Sadly...most of you probably know what comes next.

Shortly following his death – His second life came to light. Keeping it PG, Ravi used his position to force women into sexual encounters. He maintained multiple apartments in Bangkok, at the same time. Multiple women have claimed, that after forcing them into compromised situations, that he told them that they are “his 'reward' for living a life of service to God,". Zacharias warned one woman—a fellow believer—if she ever spoke out against him, she would be responsible for millions of souls lost when his reputation was damaged. I could go on, but you get the picture, and the depth of his sin is only important to understand....not dwell on.

This leads to a questions: Was Ravi Z saved?

We can brush that off...say of course he was not saved! For us, this is the easy road...and I will explain that in a moment, but I do not believe it is the truth. Josh McDowell, whom I have the utmost of respect, immediately suggested that Ravi could not have been saved. But later he did change that view. But I believe that there is a deeper truth that it is important that we face. Ravi was saved and allowed the Devil too much influence in his life, that he became ineffective and even damaging to the body of Christ. That means he lost his way! This should terrify us. That we can lose our way so badly that sinning at this level we claim is our just reward.

I want to begin this by looking at one of the most critical verses related to this...IMO. 1 Peter 5: 6-8 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

This verse is so important because Peter is writing to Christians. He tells them to be clear-headed, self-controlled and to keep watch, be on guard. It tells us that Satan is our enemy and specifically wants to “devour” us.

The word here for devour means “swallow or drown”. I like drown. He wants to flood you with something that can make you less effective, if possible ineffective and even damaging to you and others. While a different word, think of the parable of the seeds and the one’s dropped among thorns. That word also can mean drown.

So let’s look at how Satan works: To do that I want to look at three things:

- What Satan cannot do
- What he does do
- His Tactics

Satan cannot do to you anything that God does not allow him to do.
Satan cannot possess you nor make you do anything!

Let’s start with:

Luke 22:31 – “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat.”

This verse is both encouraging and terrifying. Satan must ask God for permission to sift those who belong to Christ. That last point is critical. For those who belong to Christ.

Job 2:6 (NIV) 6 The Lord said to Satan, “Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.”

This verse reminds me of 1 Corinthians 10:13 13 No temptation[a] has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted[b] beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted,[c] he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

Shortly before that Satan mentions that God has put a hedge of protection around Job. HE CANNOT TOUCH JOB WITHOUT GOD’S PERMISSION.

God knew that Job's response would thwart Satan. I wonder if Job ever understood how the rest of believers over time would be blessed by his suffering. God blessed Job over the rest of his life, but he also became an amazing example for us.

So now I am going to go to some shaker ground. Especially since Wallace specifically said that he trusted those he had asked to preach to stand on the Bible. There is no verse that specifically says that believers cannot be possessed by the Devil or demons. But there is no example of it, there is no guidance on what to do in case of it in the Bible...and I believe that this lack of addressing it in the Bible is because it cannot happen. When we accept Christ, the Spirit indwells us and the Satan cannot be in the same space as the Spirit, of that I feel like I do not need an actual verse to be confident of. I do know of one that is close:

Ephesians 1:13-14 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

If I am correct, and remember this is me, then Satan cannot make you do anything. Non-believers can be indwelt by Satan and demons and be made to do things they did not intend to do. Satan must use other tactics on us.

So let's look at Satan's tactics. I do note....there is some overlap here to what Carlos discussed last week, though I come at it a little different, but, I believe, completely consistent with what Carlos talked about.

3The tempter came to Him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 4Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

There are two tactics here – Working on your pride, and things you think you need. Satan knows who Jesus is but is testing him with Pride to see if he will show it. If you are the Son of God.... And what is his temptation? To change stones into bread since He is hungry. What could be wrong with Jesus turning stones to bread?

Jesus was led by the Spirit...to be tempted by the Devil. Jesus was to show that He was the perfect man and could resist the Devil after fasting for 40 days. To eat was to fail the mission and do something outside the will of God.

Tactics – greed, vanity, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth. Satan cannot put the thought in your head, but he can put the image in front of you. Unlike God, he does not know your response, but he and his can try and try again learning your responses and seeing what seems to get you to sin. If he can get you to become a repeat offender, then he hopes to get you onto a road that takes you places you never intended, ruins your witness and, he hopes, even damages the body as a whole.

As I mention he cannot put the thought directly into your mind, therefore he works through his surrogates....the non-believing world. He can affect non-believers around you to say and do things. And here, he uses his next tactic - lies.

John 8:44b: When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Satan's goal is to get you to think on your own – That it won't matter, that no one will know, that you deserve it. It is that last one that Ravi specifically said to his victims. He deserved it because of all the souls that he had won for Christ. He deserves it for living a life of service to God.

He does this by starting small and putting people and images into your life that suggest things. I am on Facebook, and every day it has a new suggestion for someone that I should be friends with. It is always a woman. ALWAYS. Frequently there is absolutely no reason why I would be friends with this person. Maybe it is a person that I have common friends with, but not always. Sometimes the profile picture is quite suggestive! But Satan starts small, something you think will not matter, just friending a pretty face on Facebook that you actually do not know, and if you are not careful, you end up having an apartment in Bangkok.....or two. When we stick our little toe in the deep end to see if the water is pleasing, Satan is hopeful to get us into the pool.

Somehow...that appears to be what happened to Ravi. It split his life into two halves....one serving God, the other hurting people dramatically. Upon discover, his wife and children now live in the aftermath of pain, his ministry has dropped his name and materials, the women he hurt still live with that pain.

I do not know the mind of God, but I note that due to the coincidence of these last three messages, that someone needed to hear this. Maybe because they are going to meet someone that they need to have thought this through, maybe because they are failing themselves into temptation. Maybe it is more than one of us, in more than one way. So I want to leave you with the remedy. What to do or the advice to give should you encounter someone who has walked away from God and wants to get back.

There are two things that you need to realize when you are faced with this situation, if the person is a believer, one they know somewhere what they are doing is wrong. 1 Timothy 5:2 talks about how unbelievers can develop a seared conscience. Romans 1:28 talks about being turned over to a depraved mind and becoming filled with every kind of wickedness, but again, this is talking about non-believers. For the believer, the still small voice is still there, the person is just not choosing to listen to it. Also, when you walk away from God, you are never actually very far from him. Satan lies to you and tells you that He is, but is right there. He is ready to meet you where you are!

1 John 1:7-9 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all[a] sin. 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

It does not say...unless you do X, or do it 50 times. It is immediate. Think of the story of the prodigal son...the Father running to him.

You just need to:

Acknowledge your sin to God and ask Jesus to forgive you

Commit in your heart to turn away from that sin

Accept Christ's forgiveness and realize you stand justified in God's eyes

Done!

Let's say that again.....

You just need to:

Acknowledge your sin to God and ask Jesus to forgive you

Commit in your heart to turn away from that sin

Accept Christ's forgiveness and realize you stand justified in God's eyes

Done!

Because that is our message to the world.... The Men's Study this week included the verses from the Sermon on the Mount regarding adultery and sexual impurity.

Matthew 5:27-28 - 27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' [a] 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

I was actually done with writing my sermon when I finished the reading for yesterday's study. Back to coincidences, I felt that I had to quickly address it.

R.T. Kendall noted that there are three levels of discipline according to the Bible. The first level is for the sinner (and remember that we are all sinners) to be internally. This is God speaking through a sermon, reading your Bible, directly into your consciousness and the person in question turning and repenting of their sin. External discipline is more painful and can be ending up in the hospital, financial challenges or being found out. The last one is in front of the Judgement Seat of Christ. He called this Terminal Chastening.

2 Corinthians 5:10 - 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

R.T. Kendall credited wanting to avoid the pain of correction in front of Christ himself. Seek forgiveness earlier. As I noted before – God is ready to forgive you immediately. He has paid that price.

Of that we are certain and it remains our primary message. So we end today in a very Wallace way, with 2 Corinthians 5:21

2 Corinthians 5:21 - 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Dear Heavenly Father – I thank you for the honor to deliver a message in Your Name.

Your enemy prowls around. But I praise the Lord that Satan cannot touch you, he cannot possess you, he cannot control you. BUT HE WANTS TO, and he is not powerless. He is the god of this age, of this world, and we need to respect that and focus on Christ