

Angels and Demons, Part 4

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This morning we're going to do something different than even the different thing that we've been doing. We're not going through a specific passage like we normally do. And then, we've taken a little break from Luke to do a short series—that's not becoming all that short—on angels, demons, and a lot of the issues that people need to learn about [on that subject]. One of the things that happens when I preach—and you don't know this because I never tell you—is when I'm preparing a sermon, I try and get a certain amount of information [on a topic], then I try to explain the text, interpret it, bring out the principles, and then apply it. Some people in the preaching class I teach at The Master's Seminary ask me, "Why are most of your sermons three points?" [And] I say, "Well, that's all I can do." It's not that there isn't any more information in the passage, it's that that's all I'm telling people. But what happens is that if I'm going to preach [for] fifty minutes and I've prepared for that and something happens and all of a sudden it gets chopped off, do you know what I cut out? Application. That is a bummer, isn't it? Application is the whole point of preaching. Now, I know that the Holy Spirit can take the raw data and apply it, but I'd rather help you.

This morning what we're going to do is do a whole sermon of application. I was thinking about this last week, and I thought, "I need to just camp on our discussion on Matthew 7, from last week." If you weren't here, we

talked about Matthew 7 and we'll mention it again this morning. I just want to spend the whole morning on application, on how that text applies. And, again, we're going to refer to Matthew 7 and [I'll] mention other verses, but just so you know, this is not our normal way of doing a biblical exposition—since it's not [an exposition]—and it's not even a way of doing a systematic theology, it's just application from last week's sermon.

A minister of the gospel determined on one occasion to preach on the text, "Now is 'THE ACCEPTED TIME,' behold, now is 'THE DAY OF SALVATION' " [2 Corinthians 6:2]. And while [working] in his study, [the minister] was thinking, got drowsy, and fell asleep. While he was sleeping, he dreamed that he went to hell and was observing this huge conclave of demons that were discussing how to keep men from coming to Christ. One [demon] rose up and said, "I will go to earth and tell men that the Bible is all a fable, that it's not divinely appointed by God."

And Satan said, "No, that will not do."

Another said, "Let me go! I will tell men that there is no God, no Savior, no heaven or hell."

"No," Satan said, "that will not do either. We cannot very easily make men believe that."

And suddenly, one rose with a very wise suggestion: "No," he said, "I will journey to the world of men and tell them that there is a God. That there is a Savior, that there is heaven and, yes, a hell, too. But, I will tell them that there is no hurry. Tomorrow will do." And Satan praised that demon and they went to work.

That story illustrates the craftiness of Satan. You know, a lot of people, when they think of Satan, they think of the occult, and witches, and real pagan stuff. You know where Satan camps out? In the local church. That's where his efforts are intensified, because that is where the Word of God is going forth, where people are being saved and sanctified. So, the more a church sticks to the Word of God and preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ, the more you can expect Satan and his demons will be attacking that church to try and prevent it from making inroads into his kingdom.

As we continue our sermon series on angels and demons, which, of course, is prompted by the text that lies before us in Luke—the text of the Gerasene demoniac—I want to talk about Satan’s deceptions. How Satan, the ruler of demons, deceives men into believing lies. Jesus, speaking to the unbelieving religious Pharisees of His day, who are plotting to take His life, said this in John 8:44:

You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

And from this statement of Jesus in this single verse, we learn two important points: 1) That Satan is a murderer; and, 2) Satan was a liar from the very beginning. From the very beginning of creation he [has been] a murderer and a liar.

Sometime shortly after creation, Satan rebelled. And he was able to convince one-third of the holy angels to rebel with him against God [see Revelation 12:4]. Realizing he could not overthrow God, Satan turned his malice and hatred toward the pinnacle of God’s creation: man. Just as Satan wanted all the holy angels to rebel with him against God, he turned his attention to man. He wanted to get Adam and Eve to rebel against God, knowing that if they did, they would die, for God had promised it so. And [Satan] succeeded. Eve was deceived, Adam rebelled willingly, and they were cursed. They first died spiritually, and later on they died physically. But what Satan wanted more than anything was to see them die in a spiritually dead state, because then he knew that they would die for all eternity. They would experience “the second death, the lake of fire” [Revelation 20:14].

Satan is now the god of this world, “the prince of the power of the air. . . , the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience” [Ephesians 2:2]. Jesus says, “The whole world lies in the power of the evil one” [1 John

5:19], and “every unbeliever is held captive by [Satan] to do his will” [2 Timothy 2:26]. And what is amazing is, they don’t know it. They don’t know it. They have no idea. They’re totally deceived.

We are going to briefly examine two general categories of deceptions that Satan uses to keep unbelievers from Christ. And I just want to [point out] before we begin [that] it’s also very helpful to study how Satan deceives Christians into sinning. And if you want to study that, I would recommend the Puritan Thomas Brooks’ work *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices*, which is a very thorough treatment in that direction.

I want to address Satan’s methods, [and the] delusions and deceptions [he uses] to keep people from coming to saving faith in Jesus Christ. He has basically two lines of attack in this area. The first is [that] Satan wants to deceive you into staying unsaved if you are already unsaved and you know you’re not a Christian. Satan’s first line of defense is to keep people from even being interested in Christianity. He has a whole bunch of lies that he spreads. He would have them live and die as atheists, or agnostics, or pagans, or members of some religious cult. And he cares not [which one they choose], as long as he can keep them from being interested in biblical Christianity. As long as he can deceive them unto death, that’s his goal.

And as you share the gospel with different people, you will encounter people who offer up some of the excuses I’m going to give you, for these are Satan’s lies and [these people] have bought into those lies, been deluded by those lies, and they will offer them to you. You need to know how to counter them. So, even if you know Christ, this whole lesson is for you, so that when you share the gospel with people, you understand what’s happening.

Satan, first of all, will convince people that they have tried God and it doesn’t work. Have you ever talked to [people] like that? You know, you’re witnessing to them, and they’re like, “Well, yeah, I tried the Christianity thing and it just didn’t work for me. I used to really be into church. I grew up in the church, as a matter of fact. I went to Sunday school, and even as an adult I went to church periodically. But God just doesn’t work for me.”

And then, the rest of their lives, they don't ever want to be interested in Christianity because they've "tried it out."

This deception of Satan's is a lie because you cannot "try out" Christianity. Christianity is a permanent state. When you are saved, when you are justified, when you are adopted, when you are sealed with the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption, when God begins a good work in you—which He Himself perfects until the day of Christ Jesus—there's no turning back. If you are saved, you cannot un-adopt yourself, un-justify yourself, un-sanctify yourself, un-redeem yourself, un-choose yourself before the foundation of the world. You cannot turn yourself from an old creature to a new creature by the grace of God and then [change] back again. Those are all works of God, and God sees to it that when He begins a work in somebody, He completes it. And though "we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself" [2 Timothy 2:13].

So, really, when someone says, "I've tried out God and it didn't work," what he or she is really saying is, "I tried out hypocritical religion, and it didn't work. I was tired of pretending. I was tired of pretending to love God, and His people, and His Word when I didn't. I was tired of sacrificing when I didn't want to do it for God. And that didn't work for me." But, no one has ever "tried out" Christianity. You either become a Christian or you don't. And if you have, there's no turning back. God sees to it that you cannot [turn back].

Second, another deception Satan uses is to point out that all Christians are hypocrites. Have you ever heard this one? You know, you're starting to talk to somebody, to share with him, "Yeah, I'm a Christian."

[And the response is,] "Ohhh. Ugg. Yeah, huh, listen. All Christians are hypocrites."

How do you answer somebody like that? Well, you answer him like this: "You're right. You are *absolutely* right." Try it sometime, and look at their jaw [drop]. "And too bad that's not all we are. We're also liars, and thieves, and murderers, and adulterers, and idolaters, and coveters, and every other sin that springs up from a corrupted heart. We're all of those things and

much more.” If someone has been deceived with this lie, do not object to the fact that Christians are hypocrites. Heartily agree with them, because we are! We are sinners. We are hypocrites.

But point out to them that we were that before we became Christians. Being a hypocrite is not something that happened to us *after* coming to Christ. We were that before coming to Christ and now that we have known Christ, we’re becoming less and less hypocritical. Christ makes us more holy and though we are imperfect, we’re progressing in the right direction. Christ tells us not to be hypocrites. *Satan* makes men into hypocrites, not Jesus. And if an unbeliever wishes to see what it means to be a Christian, have them look at Jesus. He is the standard, not His imperfect followers. While Christians are being conformed to His image “from glory to glory” [see 2 Corinthians 3:18], all of us have a long way to go. Christ is the standard, not the sinner who is growing in Christlikeness. Imagine the folly of standing before God on judgment day, saying, “Listen, God. I rejected You, I rejected Your Son, I rejected the free gift of eternal life because I knew Christians who were sinners.” Do you think God would say, “Oh, in that case, come on in!”? Not on your eternal life will He say that.

Third, Satan keeps people from Christ by reminding them that there are so many religions in the world. Have you noticed that when Satan deceives people with these kinds of things, they have an element of truth [to them]? Are there a lot of religions in the world? Well, of course there are. There’re lots of them. OK. You’re right. There are a lot of religions in the world. But implied in the statement is what? There are so many religions in the world that no one can know which one is right. And therefore, to believe in Christianity is nothing more than to take a guess, and [people] don’t want to guess. I like to ask people who use this [excuse], “Oh, so you’ve studied world religions quite a bit, have you?”

And usually they say, “Well, um, no. But, I know there are a lot of them out there.”

“Oh. So you’ve taken biblical Christianity, studied [it], found out what Christianity is like, and [have] compared it to these other religions, and now you know that you can’t tell which one [is right]?”

“Well, no.”

“I know you haven’t, because if you did, you would know that biblical Christianity is the only true religion.”

There are those who say, “I have come to the conclusion that there are so many religions that therefore I can’t know which one [is the right one].” But they’ve never studied them.

[My reply is:] “That’s interesting. So, you’re going to put your eternal soul on the line and not even do any research?” If they were to study, they would soon find out that there are really only two religions in the world: those that say men, by their good works, good deeds, good efforts, and sacrifices can get to heaven, or be reincarnated to a higher state, or something; and biblical Christianity, which says all men are sinners, all men deserve to be judged, no man is good, not even one, none can make it to heaven, and only by grace—God’s unmerited favor—can you get to heaven by placing your faith in what Christ did on the cross to save you. Period. And that separates them all. There’s really just this giant clump over here of satanic religions, and then the one true [religion] on the other side.

Fourth, Satan likes to remind people that there are many translations and transliterations of the Bible. I like to ask people, “Do you know what a transliteration is?”

“Well, uh, no.” They like to use the word [because] it sounds complex, doesn’t it? There’re really not a lot of *transliterations* out there. There are a lot of translations. Transliteration is when you take the Hebrew letters of the alphabet and you write out [something like] “Coca-Cola” using Hebrew letters. That’s a transliteration. We have some transliterated words in the Bible, such as “hallelujah,” which comes over from the Hebrew, but not very many.

But Satan likes to bring this up—there are so many translations of the Bible. And again, is it true that there are translations of the Bible—a lot of

them? Yeah. Are there bad ones out there? Absolutely. But what's implied in that statement? There are *so* many translations that no intelligent person could ever find a good one. Or that they've been copied and re-copied so many times through the ages that their accuracy is lost. The Bible is so corrupted that it doesn't even begin to resemble what God originally wrote, so why even read it? And that is the lie. Ask them, "So, you've studied lower textual criticism?"

"What?"

Well, if they had, they would know that out of all the ancient documents that exist in the world today, out of all of them, the Bible is thousands of times more reliable than any other ancient document. You have Homer—*The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*—anything. You put any one of them on the slate, and there are none that compare with the Bible in its absolute, definitive reliability. And if they studied that, they would come to that conclusion. It is undeniable.

Fifth, Satan deceives others by reminding them that they should not believe in a God who allows evil to exist. Have you ever heard that one? "I don't know if I could become a Christian because look at all the evil in the world. How can I believe in a God who allows evil to exist?"

Satan says, "Look at all the disease. Look at all the evil. Look at all the hatred. Look at all the murder, and adultery, and rape in the world. I mean, if God is God over all, how could He do this? Why would you want to trust in a God like that?"

But Satan will forget to tell you that God made the world perfect and [Satan] is the one who rebelled. God made Adam and Eve perfect, and Satan is the one who tempted them to sin, brought the curse, and the consequences of sin into the world. That was not *God's* doing. That was Satan's doing, and men's and demons' doing. He will forget to tell you that *he* is the "god of this world" [2 Corinthians 4:4], that the whole world lies in his power and all the evil and all the sin that you see in the world is *his* doing, not God's. [He also doesn't say] that when God comes back, and Jesus Christ breaks into history in His second coming and establishes His

kingdom, righteousness will dwell in the earth, not sin. [Satan says,] “Oh, I forgot to tell you that.” It is true that God allows evil to exist, but whatever you do, don’t ever ask for God to destroy all evil. We would all be swept away into eternal destruction if that was the case, especially [those who] don’t know Christ.

Sixth, Satan also likes to distract people from coming to Christ by reminding them of the natives in Africa. You ask [unbelievers,] “Do you know any [African natives]?”

“Well, no. But they’re there.”

OK. We’ve got natives in Africa. Now, it’s true that there are natives in Africa. Again, these statements that Satan brings to people’s minds, they don’t appear to be wrong. There *are* natives in Africa. What’s the big deal about it? Well, implied in [the statement] that there are natives in Africa is that there are natives in Africa who never come to know Christ. God judges them and therefore God is not a good God and should not be trusted. That is the whole argument. That is what’s implied in the “natives in Africa” thought. It’s amazing how people seem to be born with this thought of natives in Africa. Everyone knows about the natives in Africa. They’re just born with [this knowledge]. Satan whispers it in their ears, and they think, “Ah. There are natives in Africa. They don’t know God. God judges them. Therefore, God is not good.”

Well, the error of this deception is that all men have enough knowledge given to them by God to know that God exists. Romans 1 and 2 say that God gives us three things: 1) God says [that] it can be seen through creation and what exists that God is real [see Romans 1:20]. I mean, what if you went out into the desert and saw a pile of rocks—just a pile of rocks stacked up? You would look at that, and say, “Look at that! Somebody stacked up some rocks.” Rocks do not stack themselves like that. That is a very simple thing. When you look at cells, and DNA, and creatures, and all of that, you have to say, “Hey. Somebody did that. That is *engineered*.” So it can be seen through creation and what has been made that God exists. 2) Not only that, God says, “I have put my law in their hearts” [see Romans

2:15]. Everybody has an instinct of right and wrong. 3) He also gives us a conscience that accuses or defends us [see Romans 2:15].

So, God gives us all those things to know that He exists. But the problem is that all men, universally, take that truth and they suppress it. They suppress it in unrighteousness. Jesus said it this way in John 3:19-20:

This is judgment, that the Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

There is a hatred of light, of truth. So, the real problem is that God has done His part so that, as Paul says, every man is “without excuse” [Romans 1:20].

It’s also a lie that anyone *deserves* to be saved. *No one* deserves to be saved. You realize that, [don’t you]? Salvation is by what? Grace. Grace is undeserved and unearned. You can’t say, “Well, those people deserve...” because as soon as you say “deserve,” then you’re not talking about salvation. What everybody deserves is judgment. What everybody deserves is to be cast into hell because of his/her rebellion against God. And if God were to wipe out the entire human race and cast everybody into hell, He would be totally just and holy to do so, because we all *deserve* it. What we do not deserve is to have a chance at being saved.

Seventh, some people will say this: “I don’t want to have God controlling my life. I don’t want to go to hell; I would like to go to heaven. But, listen, I don’t want God telling me what to do. I don’t want to give up my sins. I don’t want to give up my pleasures.” This is a huge deception. At the core of most people’s unwillingness to come to Christ is that they don’t want to give up their pleasures. They don’t want to give up their unjust business practices, their reputation, their honor, their fame, or their power. They crave these things; they want to keep them. Because they love their sin, they don’t love God. And so they say, “Well, you know, maybe what

I'll do is do this for a while and I might consider Christ later. But, right now, I don't want God telling me what to do in every area of my life."

And this is the lie behind that: It's Satan's lie that momentary, sinful pleasure in this life followed by eternal pain and torment are a better deal than momentary sacrifice, pain and suffering in this life, and *eternal* blessing [in the next life]. What Satan wants you to do is to forget about what happens after you die. He wants you to forget about eternity. You have this infinite line and your whole life in this world is just a dot on that line. He wants you to forget the whole line and wants you to think about the dot—that the dot is all there is. And, you know, grab for all the gusto you can *now*, because this is all there is. And that is a lie. Thomas Watson said, "Who would be so foolish as to trade a drop of pleasure for a sea of wrath?" And the answer is: Anyone who is unwilling to part with his/her sin, that's who. Anyone who has been lied to by Satan and believed the lie that following God and sacrificing sin in this world for eternal glory is not worth it.

Eighth, some people say, "Well, I'll become a Christian later. After I've lived for myself and indulged in sin, on my deathbed I'll give my life to Christ and sneak in under the wire." Some people have this thought! "I'll just do my own thing, and at the end I'll just say, 'God, I'm sorry.' He's a merciful God—He'll forgive me." Well, first, this is assuming that you'll be conscious right before you die. And [this assumes] that you'll be able to live to a ripe old age. And you know what? Not very many people get there. Second, [do you think] that you can hate Christ all your life, hate God all your life, hate God's law all your life, [hate] God's people all your life, and [hate] God's ways and serving God all your life, and then on your deathbed you're going to want to switch over to really loving God and His people? No, you'll be petrified into rebellion and you won't think it's a good idea. If your heart is soft now, now is the time—before you are calcified in rebellion.

Satan uses deceptions like this to keep people from being interested in Christianity at all. [These lies] are very subtle. They have elements of

truth with lies attached to the implications of those elements of truth. Yet, in spite of [Satan's] deceptions, many times unbelievers are still drawn to Christ and Christianity. Not to salvation, necessarily, but in their own hearts they have that—as one person said—“God-shaped vacuum.” Or, they have this desire to know God or to be religious, and they have this feeling, this sense, that Christianity is true. Or maybe they grew up that way, or we live in a Christian country, or whatever. And so, they come to church.

Well, as soon as Satan sees them coming to church, he then totally switches his tactics. Before, he was trying to keep them away from Christianity altogether, but now, once he sees them starting to head toward church, he says, “Whoa. Wait a second, now. Um, change strategies.” And then Satan's devices are directed toward the lost, trying to make them think they're saved when they're not. We learned last week from those people in Matthew 7:21-23, “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not. . .’” and they list all those things they've done. They think they're going to heaven. They know who Jesus is, they're in the church, they say, “Lord, Lord, Lord”—they profess Him as Lord. They're even doing things *in His name*. And Jesus says, “I never knew you; Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness” [7:23]. [These people], Jesus says, are the “many.” *The many*. There are many religious people who think they're saved but are not.

And so, I want to address this. How in the world does Satan do this? How does he get people to be the devil's church within the Church? How does he do that? Well, let me just give you twelve [ways that Satan does this]. (I want you to know, I had eighteen, but I only have time for twelve.)

One, by having you trust in your morality. “Oh,” says Satan, “you are not all that bad of a person. In fact, you're better than most. Just look at the news! Look at the TV. Just look at all the corruption and wickedness in the world. You are so much better than most of those people! You've never murdered anyone. You've never committed adultery. You're not a thief. You don't bow down to idols. Most are far worse than you. Surely God will see your goodness and that it outweighs your badness, and He

will say, 'Come on in to heaven.' " And so [Satan] tempts you into trusting your own righteousness, thinking that it will pass the bar of God.

The truth is, your heart is full of evil, and God knows it. And you know it. And anybody who knows his or her [own] heart knows it. And you know your heart because the Bible says you do. The Bible says that, "No one knows the heart of a man except the spirit within him" [see Acts 15:8]. So, you know that you lust and crave after evil things. Oh, on the outside, you may not be committing the degree of sinful actions as famous serial killer so-and-so, but you know you're a sinner. You know you crave after evil things. You may not commit the same degree of sins, but you commit the same kinds, and the offense is the same, and the punishment is the same. You have lusted in your heart: the sin of adultery. You have been angry with someone: the sin of murder. You have put other things before God: the sin of idolatry. Yes. All you have to do is take a quick inventory of your heart and realize, "You know, I am *not* all that good. Regardless of what Satan might tell me, I am bad."

And if you look at the Bible, God's Word makes it clear: you've gone astray from birth. Your heart is "more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick" [Jeremiah 17:9]. "There is none who is righteous," God says, "No, not even one" [see Psalm 14:3, 53:3], just in case you thought you were the exception. Truth be told, you are a sinner and your heart is black as coal. And though others may see you as some kind of moral white swan, everybody knows that swans have white feathers and black skin. And God sees right through those feathers into your skin. He sees your sin. You need to snap out of it. You deserve to be judged, and unless you repent and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ and are born again, you will not get to heaven. Your morality *will not* pass the bar of God.

Two, Satan deceives by getting you to trust in your profession of faith. There are many people who think, "I'm a Christian." How do [they] know? "Well, I'm a Christian!" As if just saying it and saying it adamantly makes them a Christian. Listen, if you're born in America, I don't care how much you insist you were born in another country, you were born in America.

The only way you can be born in another country is to be born again. If you think Satan may have you by the neck on this one, I would encourage you to spend some time in 1 John and read that book, where he talks about those who say one thing, but do not know no Christ. [They are] great professors, but not *possessors* of religion, true religion. Profession doesn't save anyone.

You may be thinking to yourself, "But the Word of God says that we have to confess the Lord and that's all I'm doing. I'm confessing that I'm a Christian." That's not what [the author is] talking about. He's talking about witnessing there, but [he] also says, "and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead" [Romans 10:9]. Yes, profession needs to be there. Yes, witnessing for Christ needs to be there, but believing with saving faith from the heart must be there, too. Profession is the *consequence* of being saved, not the *means* of being saved.

Three, Satan would deceive you by having you trust in your history of religious activities. This is very subtle. Some of these are just so crafty, because if you do know Christ, and you live for the Lord, you're going to have a history of religious activities, right? Yeah. But Satan would have you believe [that] if you're an unbeliever and you're in the church, that because you've attended Bible studies, prayer meetings, and Sunday morning sermons that that surely indicates that you are saved. And if somebody comes up to [a person] and says, "Hey, are you a Christian?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, how do you know?"

"I've grown up in the church. I've gone to Christian school. I was catechized. I memorized all of these verses in the Navigators' program. I've taught Sunday school. I've gone to prayer meetings." And all of a sudden, the [person is] telling you what? Is he telling you about the gospel of Jesus Christ and about what Jesus did and his faith in Him? No. He's telling you about what? Himself, and what he's done, and what he's trusting in, which is his works. He's been deceived. A dog may hang around the sheep all day and eat grass, but it's still a dog. Satan would have you trust in the history of your religious activities as proof that you're on your way to heaven.

And you know what? It is true. If you are a Christian, you will have a history of Christian activities. But, listen, those activities alone *do not save you*. We saw that in Matthew 7: “Have we not done all these things in Your name?” [And Jesus replies,] “Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness” [7:23]. Actions do not save you. Actions are the consequence of salvation, never the means. *Never the means*. You have to be born again or you don’t go to heaven.

Four, Satan would deceive you by having you trust in your great knowledge of the Bible and doctrine. This one, too, is *very* subtle. There will be many poor souls in hell who have a great knowledge of God’s Word and of sound doctrine. Sadly, they will be cast into hell’s dungeon because they knew their Master’s will and did not do it [see Luke 12:47]. Maybe they grew up in a church that was very sound in doctrine, that had solid creeds and catechized its people and had this great, godly tradition and history, and [the congregation] memorized all the doctrines and all the verses and you [could] just poke them and Bible knowledge [would] come out. You [could] just say, “OK, what’s justification?” And out it comes. “What’s sanctification?” Out it comes. “What’s propitiation?” Out it comes. “How does a person get saved?” And vroom! the gospel shoots out of their mouths.

Listen, it’s good to have knowledge, and knowledge is necessary for being saved, but the knowledge alone does not save you. A thorough knowledge of the Bible and sound doctrine is important, and it’s the tool by which God brings a person to be saved so that they can be born again, but the knowledge itself, without the appropriation of that knowledge, doesn’t save you. “Oh,” you protest, “I not only have a great knowledge of the Bible, I know the *gospel*. I know I’m a sinner. I know Jesus is the Savior. I know that He died on the cross for my sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day and that I have to place my faith in Him. That salvation is by grace through faith alone!” You know, you could probably go up to the average Mormon today and they would agree with that. So would most Roman Catholics and so would demons.

Let's say I'm walking down the street in beautiful downtown Burbank [one day]. And I come up upon a guy, and I say, "Hey! How'd you like to make a quick \$10,000?" I reach into my coat pocket and pull out a big, fat wad of \$100 bills and kind of shake it in his face. I get his attention.

[He asks,] "What do I have to do?"

"All you have to do," I say, "is just learn a few religious facts about what is called the gospel of Jesus Christ and how one gets saved. Tell me that, and then I'll give you the cash. [You've got] fifteen minutes. I've got a little cheat sheet for you that'll help you learn it, and as soon as you can do it without the cheat sheet, I'll give you the cash."

The guy says, "OK." So, in about fifteen minutes, the guy tells me about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, who Jesus is—born of a virgin, God incarnate. He knows what "incarnate" means, he knows what "saved" is, he knows he's a sinner. He knows all those things, so I give him all the cash. Is the guy saved? Of course not! Now, change the details a little bit. You grow up in a Christian family, you go to a Christian school, you attend AWANA, Sunday school, youth group, a Christian college, and you know the gospel and sound doctrine. Does that mean you are saved? Of course not. Yet, Satan has convinced many that their knowledge of the Bible and sound doctrine is what saves them. No. The knowledge points you to the person who can save you. The knowledge says, "This is the Savior, Jesus Christ. This is who He is and this is what He did, and you need to place your faith in that guy and what He did, not what you know." And so, you can be on the precipice of being saved, have all the information to be saved, but if you don't appropriate those bits of information correctly and trust in what they point to, you go to hell as a scholar.

Five, Satan will try to deceive you by having you trust in someone else's good opinion of you that you are saved. A youth worker, a parent, or a pastor has talked to you and heard your profession of faith, and [that person] says, "You know what? You're saved. I can tell you're saved, and don't doubt it again. That's just Satan. Don't doubt your salvation again. Don't you question it. Once saved, always saved." [But] you may have some ob-

jections, because you just don't like reading the Bible, you don't like going to church, you don't like hanging around Christians. But, they told you [that] you were saved, and, I mean, these people are religious leaders—they know.

I *wish* I could tell you [that] you were saved. I wish I had a little scanner I could keep on my desk, [for] when I was doing counseling and [I could] say, “Hold on a second” [run the scanner over them], and say, “OK, this is what you need: you need Jesus.” Or, “You need to apply God's Word over here.” I don't know that! Now, there may be people who *seem* to be saved, and people who have lots of knowledge and can even repeat the gospel and from all you can tell, they seem to be saved. But, listen, you are not saved by someone's good opinion of you. That does not save you. There is only one thing that saves you: faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. That *alone* can save you. You must be born again. Never trust in someone's opinion. Trust in Jesus Christ alone, and His death on the cross, and His resurrection. Trust that. And if you trust that, you will change and it will be evident in your life.

Six, Satan deceives by having you trust in the wrong Jesus. There are so many wrong Jesuses out there. You can take any cult [or] pseudo-Christian religion, and there's something about Jesus that they've tweaked a little bit —[just] enough to damn people to hell. [They offer ideas like]: Jesus wasn't born of a virgin; Jesus wasn't God incarnate; He wasn't fully God, He was partially God; He wasn't fully man, He was partially man; He wasn't any man; He was *only* a man; He wasn't sinless; He rose from the dead, but not bodily. And on and on it goes. And if Satan can get you to believe in a Jesus who isn't quite the Jesus of the Bible, then you're believing in a Jesus who doesn't exist. And [Satan's] got you. You have to believe in the Jesus of the Bible, fully and completely, [and] in His work, as understood accurately from the pages of God's Word, or you cannot be saved. You mess with this Jesus doctrine and you get into heresy [very] quickly. Heresy is a damning lie that you would believe, thinking it's true.

Seven, Satan deceives you into thinking that your strong feelings about God and religion are proof you are saved. [If you] start talking to somebody and they don't know the gospel, they don't understand how a person gets saved, [and you say,] "I don't think you're a Christian."

"What? I *love* God! I *love* coming to church. It's so great to be among God's people, just swaying to the music." The unbelieving Pharisees of Jesus' day had strong feelings. Militant Muslims have strong feelings. But feelings are no substitute for being born again. You can feel very devoted to God, very passionate [about] God, very prayerful and thankful to God, and not be saved. Feelings are like the tides that go in and out. You have to have the granite slab of the truth and then you have to appropriate that truth in faith, trusting in what that truth points to: Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Eight, Satan also wants you to trust in the wrong gospel. This would include, of course, the wrong Jesus. This would [also] include trusting in gospels that aren't quite right. [For instance:] You are saved by grace through faith *alone*, but if you don't get baptized, you're going to hell. [Or,] you are saved by grace, but every time you sin, you lose your salvation and if you don't keep your sins confessed, you'll go to hell. [Or,] you're saved by grace through faith, but if you don't continue doing what God wants you to do, you will end up in hell. And so, your whole salvation is not dependent on Jesus and His work on the cross, it is dependent on you trying to keep yourself saved. And that is a lie. That is just old-fashioned works salvation.

Nine, Satan would also have you believe that you're saved if you feel sorry and guilty when you sin. "I know I'm a Christian [because] when I sin I feel so bad. I just know that's God's Spirit within me." Listen, Esau, described by the Holy Spirit as "that godless man," felt sorry, but he had no place for repentance. The author of Hebrews makes it clear: He was a godless man [see Hebrews 12:16]. Sorry, yes? Sorry unto hell. Judas was sorry. He was so sorry he killed himself. He felt so guilty over his betrayal of Christ, and yet Jesus said it would be better for him not to be born and called him the son destined for damnation [see Matthew 26:24; Mark 14:21]. Paul, in Romans 2:14-15, tells us that the ungodly pagans and Gen-

tiles have the law of God written in their hearts and it accuses them, and they feel guilty. That's normal.

Everyone feels guilty when they sin, unless they have a totally seared conscience. God has put His conscience in everyone, His law in everyone. Everyone has it. [Even] the natives in Africa don't just punch somebody in the face while they're walking by. Everyone who has a conscience that isn't seared is going to feel guilt and sorrow to some degree when they sin. [However,] guilt and sorrow, though part of repentance, are not what saves you. [Feeling] guilty may be used by God to bring you to the place where you turn from your sins and place your faith in Christ, but you must be born again.

Ten, Satan would deceive you into thinking you are saved because you like to hear good preaching. Sometimes people come to church, [and they say,] "Oh! Good sermon!"

And Satan says, "You know what? If there ever was a good Christian, it's you. I mean, look at you, how you come and take this abuse from the preacher week after week! Every week you leave convicted! No one could endure that unless they were really saved. Oh, you're saved and never doubt it. Unbelievers don't like to listen to preaching like *that*." James describes these people, [saying]:

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. [James 1:22-24]

In other words, he doesn't make any changes. Ezekiel had the same problem in his day. God, speaking to Ezekiel about the people who listened to his preaching, said this in Ezekiel 33:30-32:

But as for you, son of man, your fellow citizens who talk about you by the walls and in the doorways of the houses, speak to one another, each to his brother, saying, ‘Come now and hear what the message is which comes forth from the Lord.’ “ [33:30]

That is, “Let’s go hear Ezekiel preach. The guy’s awesome!

[The passage goes on,] “They come to you as people come, and sit before you as My people and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouth, and their heart goes after their gain. Behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; for they hear your words but they do not practice them. [33:31-32]

[They are] hearers only, who have deluded themselves. Now, listen to me, salvation is by grace through faith alone and not a result of works. *But*, saving faith works. Saving faith is not dead. Saving faith is not stagnant. It changes a person’s life. “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we would walk in them” [Ephesians 2:10]. Titus [2:11-14] says:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously in the present age. . . , to purify for Himself a people. . . zealous for good deeds.

That’s saving grace and saving faith. This is why John the Baptist said, in Matthew 3:8, “Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.” It’s why Jesus said, in Matthew 7:19, “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown on the fire.” It’s why John the Apostle said, in John 3:36, “He

who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” It’s why Peter, after preaching the gospel in Acts 5:32, said, “And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.” It’s why Paul, the champion of salvation by grace through faith alone, speaking of his ministry, said in Romans 1:5, “Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake.” It’s why the author of Hebrews, speaking of the perfectness of Christ, said in Hebrews 5:9, “And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.”

Is that clear or what? And those verses are not teaching salvation by works. They’re teaching that when you’re saved, you work. Why? It’s because living faith—saving faith—makes you [work]. It drives you to serve God. It makes you want to serve God, to please God, to live for God, to fear God, to love Him with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength [see Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27]. Satan doesn’t care what damning bait you swallow as long as you swallow it. And he would have you think you can get saved by your works. And if that doesn’t work, he wants you to think that faith which doesn’t work saves.

And if you are saved, then he’s going to try and make you think you’re not. Is that strange? Yeah. You’re not saved and in the Church, [but] he wants to make you think you are. You are saved and in the Church, [and] he wants to make you think you’re not. Everything’s backwards with Satan. That’s why he is the “father of lies” [John 8:44]. That’s why we’re doing this: we’re trying to expose some of his convoluted deceptions.

But listen, dead faith doesn’t save anyone. Hearing minus doing equals damnation. That’s why Jesus in the last part of the Sermon on the Mount says, “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand” [Matthew 7:26]. Not the rock. Saving faith changes a person’s life. They become “doers of the word” [James 1:22].

Eleven, Satan desires to deceive you into trusting in something you did after hearing the gospel preached. And this is very deceptive, too. This one has really snagged a lot of people. You know what happens: some preacher gets up there, he's relaying the gospel to his congregation, preaching the gospel, doing a great job, and then at the end, he says, "So, if you want to become saved, raise your hand." Raise your hand? Or, "If you want to become saved, I want you to sign the prayer card," [or], "I want you to stand up, and we're going to bow, and we're going to pray the sinner's prayer," or, "Come forward and pray."

And what's interesting is, yes they heard the word of God, yes they were convicted about their sin and when they're brought to the very edge of placing their faith in Jesus, they think to themselves, "Well, I guess I've got to do the last part," and up the hand goes. "I'm saved now. I raised my hand." (Groan!) Listen, people sometimes hear the gospel preached, get saved, and raise their hand, or sign the card, or come forward, or pray the sinner's prayer. That happens. And, some people hear the gospel, raise their hand, or sign the card, or come forward, or pray the sinner's prayer, and then become Christians. But many don't. Many trust in what they've done at the very end to get them in. I've [asked] people, "So, how do you know [you're a Christian]?"

"I went forward." Went forward?

And I [ask], "So, is that what the Bible says? 'Go forward and you shall be saved'?"

"Well, no, but I did. It was at this crusade," or, "It was at this church" or, "When I was growing up," or at camp or whatever. And, you know, Satan can use these things. Granted, [pastors] have had people raise their hands or come forward so [the pastor] can see who's interested or giving their lives to Christ so they can disciple them, and those motives are all good. But it needs to be very clear that [raising your] hand, or signing the card, or coming forward, is not what saves you. It is repentance and faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone [that saves you]. And Satan laughs, knowing that they are not trusting [in] Christ, but in what they did. And the devil re-

joices that they have joined his church within the true Church, and now he has this whole congregation of unbelievers among the true believers, who think they're saved when they're not.

Charles Spurgeon, in his sermon "A Powerful Reason for Coming to Christ," [wrote]

Satan tries to keep men from Christ by pointing them to ministers, and evangelists, or other eminent believers. Persons are impressed under a sermon, and they say, "I should like to speak to some Christian man." That is very good, but after all, it is not the thing which is commanded by the gospel. You are to believe in the Master, and it will not suffice to speak to the servants.

You've got to go to Jesus.

Finally, twelve: Satan deceives people into thinking they are saved because they are willing to give up something to follow Jesus. People say, "You don't know how much I've given to this church. I've given my money. I've given my resources. I've given my time. I've given my skills. I want you to know, I have given up so much." They show up for Sunday morning and evening worship, Wednesday night prayer, and Friday morning 6 a.m. discipleship meetings. They are willing to read their Bibles faithfully and be at church, and get involved in ministry. And Satan says, "You know what? You are saved! Look at you!" And this is the deceptive part of it, because true Christians do these things. But these things don't save you. They are the consequence of being saved, not the means of being saved.

And when somebody says, "How do you know Christ?" If your mind goes to anything you've ever done, I would worry for your soul. If I say, "How do you know you're a Christian?" and your mind runs to the cross, sees Jesus on the cross, dying there for your sins, the resurrected Lord, His blood shed for you, then there is great hope. But if all you can think about is what you've done in the past, I would say that you have been deceived.

Because a lot of people think, “I have this desire to be saved, and I’m doing things, so I’m a Christian, right?” No. Not necessarily. Some people think, “I can just give part of my life to Jesus, or most of my life to Jesus. I’ve given up smoking, I’ve given up drag racing down Main Street, I’ve given up all these things and I’m mostly Jesus’.” No. Listen to what Jesus says in Luke 14:26-33 (you’d better pray that the Second Coming happens before we get to *this* passage):

If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? ”Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, “This man began to build and was not able to finish.” Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

Does that sound like a partial commitment? Die to self, take up your cross—those are *total* commitments. Don’t think that you can just be kind of religious, do some good deeds, give up some of your time and energies, and still have this favorite sin in your life that you just don’t want God controlling. You either come all the way, or you don’t come. Jesus will have you all, or He will not have you at all. That is it. There’s no such thing as, “Well, I’m willing to serve You, Lord, with ninety-nine percent of my

life.” No, you’re not willing to serve Him, because if you were, you would give Him everything.

Satan is using these very same kinds of deceptions today in this church and around the world. I know that if you are a believer and you share the gospel with people, you will encounter these very same things. Satan’s first line of deception is to keep people from Christianity. If they get interested, then [he] tries to get them convinced they’re saved before they become saved.

Now, you may be out there thinking, “Jack, I am totally confused about my own state now. I mean, some of the things you said, I kind of feel like maybe I’m deceived. I mean, I don’t know.” Well, you can know. You *can* know, *right now*. You can know [you are saved] if in your heart you know you’re a sinner, [you know] that Jesus is the only Savior, [He] is God incarnate, born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, died willingly on the cross to make provision for your sin as a substitute, died the death you should have died, was buried and rose again on the third day. By placing your faith in Christ alone, in His work on the cross alone, in His resurrection alone, and by believing that to be true, believing you cannot save yourself in any other way, by any other means, [you will be saved].

If you do that this morning, you will be born again. Because God cannot lie and He says He will do it. He will change you, He will transform you, He will adopt you, He will turn you into a new creature, and transfer you from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. You will never be the same again. Why? Because He will put His Holy Spirit in you, He will seal you until the day of redemption, and He will never let you go. You won’t be able to jump out of His hand, and nothing will be able to snatch you out of His hand, and He will perfect you until the day of Christ Jesus. And you will have no doubt [that] you’re saved, because not only will you have the Word of God, which tells you how to be saved, you’ll have the Spirit within you, testifying that you are a child of God. And not because you’ve been good or because you’re trusting in any of the other things we’ve talked about.

Jesus [wants] to save you if you don't know Him. He commands all men everywhere to repent, and you're in that group. And so, if you don't know Christ this morning, you need to come to Him now. You don't need to come forward, you can do it in the pew. Just give your heart to Christ, just cry out to Him, and say, "I've been trusting in this and I've been deceived, I've been deluded." Place your faith in Christ alone, and when you do that, God will take it from there. You will be a different person. You will read your Bible and see things that you never saw before. You'll think of God all the time. Your conscience will be totally rearranged—you'll have this whole different worldview. You'll begin to love the things of God. So, this morning, place your faith in Christ alone, be born again by God's grace alone, so that you can serve Christ for eternity and Him alone. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for our time this morning as we [went] through Your Word and looked at many examples, and talked about how Satan deceives people. And, Father, we know that we were all there at one time—we've all been deceived at times into believing lies. Father, if there is anybody here who doesn't know You, [who] has been deceived into offering up certain excuses, I pray that the fear of You, and the dread of You, and the dread of hell, would fall upon them in such a furious way that they would come to repentance and faith right now. That they would no longer [offer] up any excuses or trust in any other thing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And for the rest of us, who do know You, who have experienced the life change that comes about by placing our faith in Christ and being born again by Your Spirit, I pray that You would, Father, help us to share the gospel and to be able to give an account for the hope that is within us, so that when we talk to people, we will be able to answer these deceptions, these lies. That we would be able to break down these fortresses and "every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of [You]" [2 Corinthians 10:5]. That, Father, we would be Your ambassadors, well-equipped, not just to have big heads full of knowledge, but Father, lives on fire to do Your will. And, Father, we pray these things because we know it's Your will. In Christ's name, Amen.