



## The Devil Wears Deception

Text: Genesis 3:1-21

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1. C.S. Lewis, in the preface to *The Screwtape Letters*, says, “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils (demons; evil spirits). One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.”
  - a. Which side of the spectrum do you lean towards?
  - b. Why do you think that is?
  - c. How will our perspectives change if we think of ourselves as constantly engaged in spiritual battles?
  
2. Read Genesis 3:1-6. T.A. identified that three lies that the serpent, Satan (See Revelation 12:9), deceived Eve (and Adam) into believing: 1) God is not really that good. 2) You don’t need God because you can be God. 3) There are no consequences.
  - a. Which of the three lies are you most tempted to believe?
  - b. When you think about the areas of your life that you are most prone to fall into sin, how might these three lies be lurking under the surface?
  - c. What are the truths that you most need to hear to combat the lies the devil most often throws at you so that you can experience freedom, joy, and victory over your struggles with sin?
  - d. What are some spiritual practices that will help you resist the lies of the devil? How do you remind yourself of what’s true?
  
3. Read Genesis 3:7-21. Contrary to the lie they believed, Adam and Eve’s failure did come with consequences. Their relationship with God suffered. Their relationship with each other suffered. Their relationship with their selves suffered, especially experienced as shame. Even their relationship with creation suffered.
  - a. How have you experienced the consequences of believing the lies in each of these four areas?
  - b. God is true to his promise that Adam and Eve’s failure would result in consequences. However, this does not negate God’s grace. How do we see God’s grace active in the aftermath of their failure?
  - c. How do these glimpses of grace point to the ultimate display of God’s grace through his Son, Jesus Christ?

Challenge: Our ultimate hope against the schemes of the devil, the “father of lies,” is found in Christ, who is “the truth.” (John 14:6) In fact, 1 John 3:8 says that “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.” This truly is reason to celebrate this Christmas. What can you do over the next few weeks of Advent to live in step with this word of commendation from the apostle Paul? “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Philippians 4:8)

Prayer: Close your group time by praying over these things.

- Praise God for his goodness, faithfulness, and grace.
- Confess your tendency to believe the lies of the Devil.
- Thank God for his provision of Jesus who appeared to destroy the works of the Devil and who was perfectly obedient and faithful on our behalf.
- Ask God for a healthy understanding and perception of the spiritual forces at work in the world and in your life.
- Ask God to help you develop practices and habits that keep you grounded in the truth.
- Finally, ask God that you would be a community of people who “speak the truth in love” to one another as you encourage one another to walk in the fullness of life that God desires for you.

## STUDY DEEPER

### Jesus and the Reality of Spiritual Warfare

While Jesus and his followers of course believed that God was the ultimate Lord over all creation, they clearly viewed Satan as the functional Lord of earth at the present time. Satan is depicted as possessing “all the kingdoms of the world”—to the point that he is able to give authority to rule these kingdoms to anyone he pleases (Luke 4:5-6).

Paul doesn’t shy away from labeling Satan “the God of the world” (2 Cor 4:4) and “the ruler of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2). He depicts this entire present world system as fundamentally evil (Gal 1:4, Eph 5:6).

According to the NT, the central reason the Son of God came into the world was to drive out the “prince of the world” (John 12:31), to “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8), and to “destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil” in order to “free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death” (Heb 2:14-15).

Jesus “disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them” (Col 2:15). In a word, Jesus came to bring a victorious end to the cosmic war that has been raging from time immemorial and to set Satan’s captives and all creation free.

The centrality of cosmic conflict in the ministry of Jesus is reflected in the first messianic prophesy given in Scripture which focuses on his victory over the serpent (Gen 3:15). Related to this, Jesus’ victory over the serpent and all other cosmic opponents pervades the NT. Psalm 110:1 celebrates the victory of God’s

anointed one over his foes, which is the most referenced OT passage by NT writers and it always applies to Jesus.

The centrality of Jesus's conflict with, and victory over, Satan and the powers is evident in the fact that salvation in the NT is portrayed not primarily as a matter of individuals being forgiven their sin but as humans and the whole cosmos being delivered from the power of Satan. Every aspect of Jesus' life can be understood as part of his battle against, and victory over, the powers of darkness. Every one of Jesus' healings and deliverances, for example, should be viewed as an act of war that advances God's kingdom and diminishes Satan's kingdom. Peter summarized it by saying that Jesus "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil." (Acts 10:38).

In this spiritual battle with Satan and the principalities, Jesus in principle won the war, struck the decisive deathblow, vanquished Satan, restored humanity, and established the kingdom; yet some battles must still be fought before this ultimate victory is fully manifested. Hence Jesus did not just carry out his warfare ministry; he commissioned, equipped and empowered his disciples, and the whole of the later church, to do the same. He set in motion the creation of a new humanity, one that again exercises dominion over the earth, by giving us his power and authority to proclaim and demonstrate the kingdom just as he did.