

Satan (Part 5)

How to Overcome Him

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 24-Oct-92; Sermon #044

We're confronted by Satan in virtually all of the books of the New Testament. In the case of the book of James, he was writing to a congregation in varying stages of confusion and fighting.

In James 3, he is instructing them as to how to recognize "demonic wisdom." I will call it that because that is what James calls it. He says that wisdom, in James 3:15, "is earthly, sensual, demonic." That ought to tell you that it is originating in Satan and it is spread by him and his demons, using people to create confusion and disorder amongst the people so they don't know what to make use of in terms of the knowledge that God has given.

What James is saying is that a lack of peace is very good evidence that Satan is involved because God's way will not produce what Satan's way is producing. Again, we are told—and it's made very clear—if we are confused at all about the source of something, we are to look at the evidence, the fruit, of what is being produced. That ought to give us some sort of indication. *By their fruits you shall know them.*

James is not concerned with what those used of Satan *say*, but how they live and what they produce in their and others lives. Perhaps we know people who are trying to force their opinions on others. We've all done it to some degree. We've all been more interested in the victory of the self than the victory of truth. We all know people who are cunning—we might call them the smart operator, people who know how to manipulate others and circumstances for the satisfaction of their desire. We've all been more interested in the victory of the self.

Some of these people will lie, they will cheat, they will bribe, and then they will cleverly cover up their part in it in order to avoid detection. To them, the end that they are trying to accomplish justifies the means, even if one has to lie, even if one has to throw a tantrum, even if one has to pout to get his way.

This is the attitude that regards people who have differing opinions as enemies to be defeated rather than friends to be persuaded.

I want you to see this all within the context of what James is writing to a Christian congregation. This is not an epistle that went "to the world." It was not something that he said on an evangelistic campaign, but something that he wrote to a group of people who were already converted.

God says through James that what we have just described is unspiritual, it is demonic, it is false to the truth of God, and is nothing more than selfish ambition. (You can pick that up in James 3:14.) "If you have bitter envy and self-seeking"—the way we would probably translate that today is selfish ambition, which is a form of pride and arrogance.

What was happening (as we're going to see when we get in to chapter 4 where the problem lies and James put his finger right on it) is that these people who were part of this Christian congregation were judging by worldly standards and they were making their own personal gain within the congregation their highest goal.

God says this is not from above. It is demonic. He is indicating here that envy, vanity, and selfing ambition will always eventually produce confusion, disorder, disharmony, instability, and evil things. All of this is gotten out of that five verse section, from James 3:13-18—that it is good for nothing in terms of producing a fruit of righteousness. Rather, what it does is destroy spiritual life. Again, a reminder that Satan is undergirding this and it is being spewed forth from his mind.

From verse 17, I'm going to give you a check to see how to discover whether our actions are from above.

James 3:17 says, "The wisdom that is from above is first pure," meaning it has no ulterior motive, it is not self-seeking. This is its basic characteristic and it undergirds all of the rest of the checklist. It is pure—no ulterior motive. It is a searching or seeking after truth.

"Peaceable" means that there is no spirit of competition involved. It is a way that produces right relationships. Another way of turning that would be it is peace-loving, not competitive.

"Gentle" indicates someone who is considerate of others even though one has every reason to be punitive. It is a term that is used in the Bible to describe God's attitude toward Israel. If there was anybody who had the right to take punitive action it was God, and yet His action toward them was considerate even though He was the one who was receiving all of their anger and bitterness. The sin was against Him.

"Willing to yield" means submissive, ready to yield, easily entreated, conciliatory, but it does not in any way mean weak. It simply means someone who is not obstinate. The antonym of obstinate is someone who is easily entreated and conciliatory.

"Full of mercy and goodness" means ready to help even though the other is wrong, which is very difficult to do.

"Without partiality" means single-minded with the truth, unambiguous, straightforward, impartial.

"Without hypocrisy" means that there is not even a hint of deception; sincere, never pretending, always honest.

All of these character traits produce peace because God, not Satan, is at work in them. They are characteristics of His personality. Those who strive for peace are those who are going to produce a crop of righteousness.

We understand that in the physical realm a certain kind of environment is necessary for the production of a good crop. If we put something in a field and if the environment is not right, then the crop is not going to produce what it should or what it could. God is telling us that what He is after in us—the crop of righteousness, the fruits of His Spirit—also requires a right

environment, and that right environment is peace. He is not saying that some righteousness cannot be produced in other environments. He is saying the most and best will come out of an environment in which there is peace.

It becomes very obvious why Satan strives to create confusion, disharmony, disorder, and instability, because righteousness cannot be produced well in that kind of a circumstance. He knows what he's doing.

I remember seeing the movie *The Time Bandits*. Satan played a part in that movie in which he was seated at what looked like a great big bowl of soup or something. He was looking into it and he could see things in the soup and every once in a while he would reach out and take his stirrer, stir the whole mess up, and get everything all mixed up.

That's what he does, because he does not want God's purpose to work! He knows the way to upset the apple cart is to create bad relationships. He will do it, of course, by taking advantage of human nature.

Whenever James wrote this, there were no chapter breaks, and he went right on to the next thought, which picks up at the beginning of chapter 4. We see it confirmed that those people were having fights and quarrels right within the congregation. Now where did they come from? They come from our desires. Here's where Satan is stirring the pot.

What happens when one person's desire runs head-on into another person's desire? There's going to be a clash of some kind, because there is only so much to go around—whether it happens to be material wealth, a piece of land, power, position—whatever area of life we look into, people are going to be desiring things—social status, power or whatever.

We begin to see why Satan takes advantage of our desires. Getting people to bump heads is going to be achieved by getting them to act on their desires. Having desire is not wrong, but an unlawful desire is wrong.

We need to understand that for the Christian, there are two possible objects of affection (in this context). The one is the world and the other is God, and they are opposed.

James 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses [these were people in the church]! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

To have a warm, familiar attitude with this world is to be on good terms with God's enemy. What does it mean, in more practical application, to be a friend of the world? It is to adopt the world's set of values and wants, to want what the world wants instead of choosing according to divine standards or divine truths.

In other words (if I can put it any more clearly) if a person does that, he has actually made himself to be subject to Satan because Satan is the ruler of this world! That is a choice that we want very much to avoid. The worldly person will almost invariably choose to satisfy himself—he will take action on his desire; he will choose to satisfy himself and he will eventually produce confusion, division, and war. It cannot be otherwise because the spirit of the world is the spirit of Satan, and laws are at work, and laws produce what they are designed to produce.

That was the problem in the congregation to which James wrote. If another apostle had been writing it, such as the apostle Paul did when he wrote I Corinthians 3, he said, "You are yet carnal." These were converted people, but they were carnal and they were showing it by their choices. That's the key. It was not that they did not have the spirit of God. It was that they were still so weak spiritually, they were choosing to fall back on what they had in the way of character, understanding, knowledge, and vision from the world. They were showing that Satan was still dominating their lives.

This is understandable because Satan is a very wily and powerful adversary, but he can be overcome. He can be defeated. Christ did it and we can do it too, because Christ is in us.

When I was a boy, the *Tarzan* movies starring Johnny Weissmuller were very popular. There were always several sections in every movie that had a great deal of suspense (for a small boy, that is) and usually there was at least one or two standard jungle scenes where it was either dark or twilight (just about ready to get dark or be dawn). The sound that came out was of

shrieking birds and monkeys. There would also be the standard shot of the slithering python going through the tree, and one of the great cats like a lion, tiger, panther, or a leopard would be seen padding silently through the jungle.

There would also be a shot of an American or European who looked very much out of place where he was, and also very frightened and defenseless, surrounded by a situation with which he felt a great deal of vulnerability. Always it would seem that at the critical time, Tarzan would show up and he would either command the animals to go away or he would fight them in a desperate struggle, kill them, and the person would be rescued.

What stuck in my mind was how vulnerable the person looked out of his element—so weak, so unaware, and so ill equipped to be in that predicament, and I—vicariously sharing that experience with them—was very fearful and clutched the arms of my seat out of fear for them.

The Christian's position in relation to Satan and his demons is similar, but in one sense perhaps even worse, because we are far more vulnerable than the European or American in the African jungle who needs to be protected by Tarzan. Satan, who is described as being a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, is stalking *us*. We are surrounded by the world that in many ways is similar to the jungle and is even said, "It's a jungle out there," by some people.

But worse than the wild animals, it is filled with people unwittingly being used by Satan the Devil. With mankind, it appears—at least on the surface—that we have been blindfolded, our ears are plugged, and our hands are tied behind our back, because Satan is invisible and he is soundless. Our mind is free to operate, but we can neither see him nor hear him, and he is incredibly more intelligent, clever, and powerful than we are.

It's difficult enough to be aware of him, let alone overcome him in combat. It's like David against Goliath. It's like the Israelites against the people of the land—and you remember how fearful they were of the people of the land. How can we ever do it? Will we draw back like the Israelites? How can we ever do it? There is a way.

Let's go to I Peter 5 and listen to this instruction. Remember I said earlier that though Satan is not the major topic in these books he does come into the picture, showing that the apostles were aware that there was someone that was stirring up the pot within the congregation.

I Peter 5:8-9 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

I would say that this verse certainly gives indication that there is little room for carelessness. We are being called upon to be thoroughly self-controlled and to be alert. You can imagine if you were in a jungle like these Americans and Europeans in the *Tarzan* movies, your adrenal glands would be pumping that stuff right out into your blood stream and every nerve in your body would be aware of the danger. Your eyesight would become more acute, your hearing, your willingness to fight, to run, to flee—to do whatever is necessary to preserve your life. You would really be on edge.

So be sober, be alert, be vigilant! Why? Because Satan is aiming to undermine our confidence, to sow discord, and to get us to stop believing and revert to carnality. Those are the directions that he is going to try to push us.

Notice it says, "Whom he *may* devour." "May" indicates permission. It is something that must be given. He has the ability to do it, that is, devour us spiritually, but it doesn't have to happen. If we could put the advice in verse 8 into more common twentieth century language, instead of saying "be sober"—although there's nothing wrong with that—we might say, "keep cool; keep your head screwed on right; don't lose your presence of mind; try to keep calm about this; don't be fearful or don't lose your temper."

He also says to be vigilant and it would mean (in that kind of a jungle situation) "to watch." That same kind of phraseology is also used in reference to prayer. It would be part of our responsibility to pray that we not enter into temptation. That's part of being vigilant.

All of these things—the roaring lion, the resisting, the afflictions, suffering, persecution, perfection, and strength—are all related as a part of operations that fulfill God's purpose. We have to begin by understanding that Satan—despite his incredible intelligence, his cleverness, and his power—is still yet an unwitting dupe in God's hand to bring about God purpose.

God is far more powerful than Satan. I am sure if we wanted to make a ratio, as great as Satan's power is over us, God's is far more greater than Satan's power over us. All of these things are playing a part in what is going on in our life.

Let's turn back to James 4 and again, here we are at almost the end of the book, and Satan comes on the scene in James' letter to these people.

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

Resist and he will flee. Resist what? See the context that precedes it. Resist fulfilling an unlawful desire. That would fit the context, because Satan is always trying to lead us into self-indulgence.

Let's continue this theme in Ephesians as we explore our responsibilities. You'll notice a theme in the last couple of verses, spelling out our responsibilities: Be sober, be alert, resist.

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

Has Paul not said, "don't give him an opportunity for a bridgehead, a toehold, to induce us into sin"? Sin brings death and that is Satan's aim—to bring about death.

In this context, not giving him a bridgehead ("not giving place to the devil"), is directly tied to a feeling—anger. Anger of and by itself is not sin. Be angry and don't sin. There is an anger that is godly. Righteous indignation would be a godly anger. But nursing an anger for the wrong reason (here comes the fulfillment of a desire) gives Satan the toehold that he needs. He will very easily turn it into bitterness or a sinful conduct.

Let's understand very clearly and plainly that having a desire is not ungodly. It is not sin. God gave us these feelings, even ones we might consider to be somewhat negative. But even something like anger is not of and by itself sin. Life would be terrible without feelings. It would be bland. We have to understand that these are areas that Satan, if we are not alert, vigilant, and on guard—he can turn something, the feeling, that is a blessing from God—into a toehold or bridgehead to sin. That's what we have to be careful of. When the emotions begin to work (even positive ones), they can push us into the wrong direction.

Let's go back to Luke 4. The sermon takes a bit of a turn here now that we've established that this is an area that Satan can work in—that he can take a blessing from God and turn it into a curse if we permit, if we give him permission to do it. God is showing us it is something under our control.

The context in Luke 4 is the temptations of Christ. We are not going to go into the temptations (I want to just pick up on one thing here), because there are some who feel that maybe Christ was only tempted this one time. But that is not true.

Luke 4:13 Now when the devil had ended every temptation [test, trial, pressure], he departed from Him until an opportune time.

Satan must have a massive ego. Anyone who feels he could defeat God and actually engage in warfare against Him must have an awfully arrogant attitude. We find here that when God became a Man and was encumbered with flesh, that Satan again attacked, but he did not attack one time. He did it over and over and over again, always looking for a new angle, a new bridgehead, a new toehold.

I point this out because I want us to understand clearly that his testing, that his temptations, that his attempts to lead us into sin will not end until we are in the Kingdom of God. He will keep trying and keep coming at us at somewhat different angles. Do not expect that he will attack us only in areas of weakness. Christ didn't have any weaknesses. Satan's arrogance is so huge

he attacked God (if we can put it this way) in God's most invulnerable fortress—right at God's own home in heaven, which means that he will attack us in our very strengths as well.

We can be sure he will come at us from several different directions. If he fails one time, he will come at us again another time. If the success is only partial, then he will come at us again from a somewhat different angle. In the case of Christ, the attacks on Him were very personal ones and I have no doubt that from time to time, he will attack us very personally as well.

In this episode, Christ was committing Himself to the *modus operandi* that He would be using in the work of God. That's why the temptations were what they were, because Christ had spent forty days mulling this over, meditating on it, trying to get concrete ideas and conceptions of how He would present the truth of God to the world; how He would represent God the Father. Christ worked it out, so these were the areas Satan chose to attack Him on.

1. Christ committed Himself that He would not bribe people with materialism. In others words, He was not going to concentrate on supplying people's material needs. That would be a distortion because it would get people's eyes focused on the wrong thing and turn Christianity into a prosperity religion. The focus, He says, has to be on the Word of God and on serving God.

2. He committed Himself to not lowering God's standards. I am sure that Jesus reasoned this way: God is God. He changes not. Truth is truth. It doesn't change either. Black is black and white is white and therefore He would not get a following at the expense of lowering the standards of God and making it attractive by liberalizing. People had to focus on the truth of God and we'll see why in just a bit, because it is the crux of defeating Satan.

3. When Satan told Christ to cast Himself off the parapet of the Temple, it's indicated that Jesus would not rely upon sensationalism. He only healed the people who came to Him, and there was a certain amount of advertising in what He did, but there were other things He could have done that would have been

awesome displays of His power, and He refused to do them. Again, that would have put people's focus in the wrong direction and they would have followed Him because sensational things happened around Him.

Let's begin to focus on what our lines of defense need to be. I want you to notice that I said defense. We can't see him; we can't hear him. There's not a great deal we can do offensively against Satan and our best offense is going to be a good defense.

Did you notice the instructions from the apostles? Resist, stand, be alert. I don't know that at anytime they used any indication of offensive action. Even the sword of God's word (which we'll get to if we have time) is one that could be used offensively, yet in the context in Ephesians 6, it's all defense. He says stand and defend yourself against the fiery darts of Satan.

Even in using defensive measures, Satan can be beaten. You can be sure he's going to go on the offensive and when he goes on the offensive, we can go on the defensive and we can still defeat him.

I John 2:13-14 I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.

I told you earlier that when we get to the book of John, we're going to find Satan is undergirding much of what John has written. He may not be mentioned directly in terms of being Satan, but the reference is there. He is the wicked one.

Did you notice that was written in the past tense? *You have overcome the wicked one!* What we have is an encouraging mind conditioner intended by God **to give us the will to resist**, and I will tell you why. Let me put it this way: to give us the will to continue steadfast in the faith.

Satan's most persistently used weapon is our fear (he takes advantage of our fear) of denying ourselves some pleasure—something that will satisfy; something that will make us feel good. Again, let us understand, to satisfy ourselves, to make us feel good, is not evil in itself. But he can take advantage of those things and twist and manipulate them into something that is evil. We somehow get the feeling that if we don't satisfy this, we will be left out of all the fun we deserve.

I want you to think about the episode in the Garden of Eden, because that undergirds the way that Satan is going to be working to manipulate you and me. They didn't resist the forbidden fruit. They got the feeling that they had to have it in order to satisfy the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life. What Satan subtly did is he removed the fear in their mind of what God had said. He removed the fear of God, which in this case was the fear of death.

He said, "You won't die." That was partly right because they didn't die immediately, but die they did. They probably took that bite of the fruit, ate, and felt justified in what they did because they didn't die immediately. Therefore, the serpent must have surely been right.

This process is also very clearly shown in the book of Job. Satan cynically responded to God when God said, "You see My servant Job?" Satan said, "Skin for skin. A man will do anything to save his skin." But Job, unlike Adam and Eve, resisted. He didn't take the bait, even when Satan put on the most excruciating pressure in taking away his family, taking away his wealth, taking away his health. Job still remained steadfast even though there was a lot of questioning of what was going on and why it was going on, because Job did not know that both God and Satan were involved in this thing.

Now we know because it's written in the book and we can take advantage of it. God gave us an insight into the cynicism of Satan and the way he approaches you and me. He knows human nature. "Skin for skin; a man will do anything to save his skin." He knows how to manipulate humanity to take advantage of desires.

Why is this [I John 2] written in the past tense? Because the victory is already won because death has been overcome through Christ's sacrifice! Faith in that sacrifice works to free us from our bondage to Satan and death. That doesn't mean that we will be removed from the heat of the battle or the perils of the battlefield. But it does assure us that if we are faithful, if we are loyal to God, victory is ours because our David has already defeated their Goliath!

If you remember that story, even after Goliath was defeated, the Israelite army had to go out and defeat the Philistine army. They chased them from one end of Philistia to the other, but the battle went on. The war is won, the major battle is over, but some battles still go on and that includes ours, because the creation of God's character in us is still going on.

I John 3:7-8 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil [he's not talking about somebody who commits one sin out of weakness, but somebody who is living it as a way of life], for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose [connect this to I John 2 and to our situation] the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

This section shows the diabolical source of sin that is from the devil, that God's enmity against Satan is absolute, and that God's enmity lies at the very heart of God's commitment to rescue man from Satan. He is doing it! He will do it! The major battle is already over. Christ defeated Satan. We are part of the mopping up operations, but the war goes on.

God will destroy. This word "destroy" does not mean obliterate in the English sense, but it means, "to break the power of." His power over mankind is absolutely broken because of what Christ did! He is still alive; he is still working, because God's plan is being worked out and we're a part of it now.

"Destroy," as it is used here, means to break the power of. On the other hand, if we take it from the English meaning of the word destroy, God will destroy what Satan produces. He's going to destroy the system of this world that is

against God. We know that in the lake of fire, God is going to destroy all of mankind that is unrighteous too.

If we are faithful, we will be victorious as Christ was.

There is something that John establishes very clearly in the whole book. There are so many verses along this line. I won't go into them, but the next time you read I John, please take note of it, and that is that the test of whether one is of the truth is always conduct.

I John 3:10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest [made clear]: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

Conduct is always the test. Sinful conduct is totally incompatible with the life that comes from God. The children of God are those who find salvation. That word salvation means "deliverance from sin by being conformed to Christ's nature through the vision God gives to us and the knowledge of Him as well."

I John 5:18 We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.

Understanding this verse is important to understanding this whole relationship so that we can be victorious. Remember Job.

I'm going to read this verse to you from two other translations of the Bible, because there is an alternate way to translate it and it is my own opinion that the second way (the one I am just going to read you) is the correct one. It is not that this one here is totally wrong, but rather it is secondary.

From the Philips translation:

I John 5:18 We know that the true child of God does not sin. He [the child of God] is in the charge of God's own Son [meaning Christ] and the evil one must keep his distance.

That is so clear. Remember Satan's complaint against God regarding Job? "Why shouldn't he serve You? You've put a hedge around him!" That's exactly what happens because of your faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That's why the verse in I John 2 is written in the past tense!

Let me read it to you from the Revised English Bible.

I John 5:18 We know that no child of God commits sin. He is kept safe by the Son of God and the evil one cannot touch him.

You talk about Tarzan! We have somebody far better than Tarzan keeping Satan away! It becomes very clear when we begin to connect this with other scriptures. I will give you John 17:12 and 15, where Jesus prayed to the Father, and He said, "Father, keep them from the evil one."

Do you think that God is not going to answer the prayer of His own Son? Certainly He is. He says, "I pray not that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one." God is responding to that prayer and keeping Satan away.

God knows His children's limits. He knows the power of Satan. In order to protect us, He will allow Satan not to have a free hand like he has with the world, but He very jealously guards us from the worst of Satan's temptations.

Do you remember in Luke 22:31-32, when Peter over-confidently said to Christ, "I'm willing to go to the death for You!" Jesus said, "Well you know Peter, Satan has desired to sift you, but I've prayed for you that when that occurs that your faith not fail." Do you think God was not going to respond to that? Certainly He did.

Jesus said, "When you're converted, when you come to yourself after this occurs"—He knew what was going to happen to Peter, to all of them. Their faith was going to fail and they weren't going to be loyal to Him. They all ran and God responded to that prayer.

The word fail, incidentally, does not mean "give out wholly or completely." Peter's faith did not give out completely even though he failed to remain loyal to Christ. He rebounded because God was there with him.

We are counseled by Jesus Christ, admonished in the Lord's Prayer, to pray for deliverance from the evil one. God will hear that and He will respond, because our relationship with God is absolutely essential to victory over Satan. To add to the other point that we will be tempted, the battle goes on, and we must be confident God is watching us, He is with us, and He is keeping Satan at bay.

In II Corinthians 10, we will pick up on another principle.

II Corinthians 10:3-6 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

Though we are physical and sin is still with us, we do not have to be at the mercy of corrupt human nature; we don't have to allow Satan an opportunity, and it is right here that our resistance must begin. We have the knowledge, the assurance from God that He is with us, that He's put a hedge around us, so we should be able to go confidently forward through this jungle, through the world, knowing that God is not going to allow us to be tempted or pressured above what we are able.

Our warfare is spiritual, so our weapons must also be those that are bestowed by God's Holy Spirit. Carnal weapons such as cleverness, ingenuity, organizing ability, reliance on charm, psychological manipulation, forcefulness of personality—they don't mean a thing to Satan. He can blow them aside. They don't impress him at all.

These things may give superficial victories, but they don't drive evil out! That's the problem. If we are trying to use things like that we will always be fighting a losing battle. We are trying to fight spiritual evil with human strength, carnal strength. We are overpowered, outmatched, outgunned.

Remember Zechariah 4:6? "Not by power nor by might, but by My Spirit," says the Lord of hosts. The warfare is against invisible and intangible spiritual forces that invade our minds! See II Corinthians 10:5. *Casting down imaginations*. Those things take place in the mind. Arguments—those things take place in the mind and these are spiritual forces that invade our mind and insinuate devilish thoughts.

How do these thoughts appear in our minds? The verse tells us. They are thoughts that exalt themselves against the knowledge of the truth of God.

Let's think about Adam and Eve. Where did they make their mistake? They allowed what Satan said against God's truth to insinuate itself on their minds and they began to think about it. "Hey, that sounds logical, reasonable." Once they did that, they were hooked.

What we have here are things that we might call opinions, deductions, reasonings, arguments, guesses, assumptions, convictions—but in this context they all have one dominant theme to them and that is they exalt themselves against the knowledge of God.

Let's reflect on something. Do you remember the time Jesus was telling the disciples (in Matthew 16) what was going to happen to Him, and Peter said (out of a good heart, I am sure, when we understand it; there were good intentions in what he said), "Not so Lord, this shall never happen to You!" Jesus shot right back, "Get you behind me Satan," because what Peter said (even though Peter did not understand it) was a thought that exalted itself against what God's Scripture said in the Old Testament about what the Messiah was going to go through.

Jesus immediately nailed Satan to the wall because He recognized where that thought—even though it was well-intentioned by Peter—was against the truth, against the knowledge of God, therefore that couldn't have come from God's Holy Spirit. It came from Satan.

There we have a beautiful, clear biblical illustration of what Paul is talking about here [II Corinthians 10:3-6]. When Adam and Eve sinned, they sinned because they permitted a thought that was against the knowledge of God,

against the truth of God, to lodge in their minds until it seemed to them to be reasonable and they acted on it.

Thoughts or arguments mean ideas that germinate in the mind, give rise to desire, and then to action. Wrong ideas of God, man, or even life itself are the roots of sin.

Are you beginning to see what is our main weapon in defeating Satan? It is truth, faith in truth. That's what Adam and Eve did not have. They didn't believe what God said and they sinned.

John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources [or he does what is natural to him], for he is a liar and the father of it."

What God says is the truth. What Satan says is the lie. Satan lies as naturally and spontaneously as God speaks the truth. They are opposite of one another, opposed to one another, enemies of one another. But the One speaks truth and the other speaks lies. The only way that the world or we are ever going to change is when we believe God and act on it. It doesn't have to be stated in a complicated way. That's what God is giving us the opportunity of doing—to act on His truth, free from being encumbered by Satan the liar. Did not Jesus say, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"? It is lies that put us into bondage.

We could follow this right through the Bible. There are so many references to it.

Romans 1:24-25 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, *who exchanged the truth of God for the lie*, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

There is a lie that is above all other lies. It is the belief that something or someone is to be venerated and therefore obeyed in the place of the Person

and truth of God. That is the essence of idolatry. Most of the time, the one that we do that to and for is our self.

In I Thessalonians 2:10-11, Paul writes that those who are going to be destroyed (if I can put it that way) are those who refuse to receive the love of *the* truth (definite article).

When we understand these things, we find that the children of God are characterized by their love of truth, and the children of Satan by their refusal to recognize and accept truth. It becomes very clear.

Let's go to Matthew 4:4 where we have the boss Himself and His experience:

Matthew 4:3-4 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word [the truth] that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Even when Satan says truth, even when he quotes scripture, he puts a perverse twist to it. Now how did the Boss fight Satan? With truth! There it is! That's how you defeat Satan—being confident that the victory has already been won; being confident that God has put a hedge around us so that we will not get into a situation confronting Satan that is beyond us; and being absolutely reliant upon the truth of God! Even though we may not be able to see how it is going to be worked out; even though we may feel that following the truth of God is going to require a considerable sacrifice of our self; yet we have the example of Jesus Himself showing us that He fought Satan by relying upon the truth of God. He trusted what God said.

You might wonder why Satan used "if." He did not use "if" to get Jesus to doubt His Sonship. Jesus knew who He was. Rather, he was trying to get Him to reflect on "if's" meaning. "Surely, *if* you're the Son of God, You have the right to expect to satisfy what You feel Your needs are at the moment."

Jesus didn't fall for it. As hungry as He was, He knew that was a trap. He knew He didn't have to be concerned about supplying His material needs because God would do it for Him. Didn't He later say, "If God so feeds the birds of the field..."? That's what He meant.

This was a temptation for Christ to use His Sonship in a way other than the God ordained purpose for it. What is the God-ordained purpose of our calling? *To seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.* That's the truth of God. God will supply it. So Jesus' answer was, "Thank you, but I'll just wait for God to supply My need."

Let's reflect on these three things:

1. We can be confident because the victory has already been won. The warfare continues, but the major battle is over. Satan is defeated and it is God's intent to destroy the works of the devil.
2. We can be confident that God has put a hedge around us, even as He did Job, and because we are in the charge of His Son, Satan has to keep his distance.
3. We are to resist Satan through the recognition of the truth of God and the resistance of Satan's desire to lead us into sin. He will do that through thoughts that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God.