

Being Alert To Our Enemy

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We will begin this sermon in Matthew 16. I will just touch on this a little bit.

Matthew 16:3 “And in the morning, “It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.” Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.”

I was born in a small town just north of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but when I was four and half years old, my parents bought a home further north of Pittsburgh in a rural area. All that existed there was several homes and several farms. The farms were all within easy walking distance from our home. At least partly because of the farms, weather was always an easy topic for conversation. The farmers were always concerned about it, because they wanted their crops to grow.

I also learned a few simple things about forecasting what the weather would be the next day or so. None of what I learned was really important but one really stuck in my mind because it was formed within a poem. You probably know this poem, “Pink at night sailor’s delight; pink in the morning sailors take warning.” That was because that was a general pattern within the weather itself. If it was pink in the morning it was very likely going to rain before the next 24 hours were over and, in fact, during that day if it was pink at night the next day fair weather would continue right on through.

It kind of points out in a weak way, that there are natural progressions in what can be linked directly to the Creator God. In this case the natural progression is not in Jesus’ illustration there in Matthew 16:3, but it points to what God has prophesied, and that is that the arrival of the Messiah would follow right on the heels of what He had prophesied. Just as surely as the weather can be predicted, God’s prophesies are also going to show the next step in His program.

It is this subject of progression that is going to dominate the beginning of this message. By the time I was ten years old, World War II had begun, it was underway. In fact, America had been involved for over a year by this time. I was always, for some reason, attracted to geography and the world war presented an interesting time for me to develop that even further. I became quite interested in the war. I followed it daily because the newspaper that my family subscribed to, *The Pittsburgh Press*, had several maps on the second page almost every day and thus I followed the island by island battles in the Pacific Ocean as the American forces came ever closer to Japan.

I learned about Guadalcanal, Philippines, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and others. Besides that, I followed the war in Europe much more closely once the invasion in Normandy occurred in June of 1944. I came to know many of the cities and towns of that area never knowing that one day I would actually be visiting the Boyer family in that very beautiful area. It was not very beautiful then because it was the site of war.

The maps in the newspapers had lines drawn on them so that each day I could tell how far the armies advanced, from Cherbourg, St Lo, Caen, Rouen, and in Paris, ever on the move eastward to Germany and victory.

After I was in the church, I wondered why I was so interested in things like that. I finally concluded that one of the major reasons was I was fascinated by the progressions that one thing led to another, usually to a logical conclusion, a solution to a problem, the revealing of a mystery, or perhaps a victory.

When I graduated from high school I tried smoking. My father smoked cigars, so I was familiar with it. I had friends amongst those who I ran with who smoked regularly. I had three uncles who were military men, they smoked like smoke stacks. I admired them, they were the kind of people that maybe I would like to be, tough like them. I purchased all of one pack of cigarettes, but my mind just would not let me smoke, because what my mind did was, all I could see was a progression to sickness and death and I did not want that. I knew enough then that it was not good.

There was not spiritual righteousness involved at all. It was just one, two, three adds up and I did not like that too well. When I married Evelyn, I found out that her father was a smoker, and not only that he had been addicted to smoking for a long period of time, practically all of his life, but even he called cigarettes coffin nails. I felt justified in not smoking, but he finally got to the place where he could make the progression correctly himself in regard to his smoking. He had a cough that he could not get rid of, so he quit in one day. Once he was convinced, the progression took him far enough that he had the resolve in him that after a lifetime of addiction he was going to go no further.

Preparing for the future is basic to God's plan and purpose for His people. He gives clear and ample warning and commands so that His people are not taken unaware in the sweep of the vast moving events of these days.

God Himself is working out His purpose in stages, and each stage is in reality a preparation for the next stage. For instance God chose Abraham and Sarah and they became the first stage toward the formation of the nation of Israel. Israel became a stage for the formation of the church. We are involved in that project because the church is now progression toward Christ's return.

God promises ample warning when a new stage in the progression of His plan is approaching, and here is a promise of God that we are going to see, you are familiar with it.

Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

God is very fair in His dealings with mankind, so He promises that He will always give warnings that another progression is just about ready to take place, and the stage that people are now living in is something that is going to begin to fade into the background. So to this very day we look forward to prompts from God that He is about to do something and that is quite soon.

If we have not let down in our preparations we can then make the most and the best of the opportunities to continue to be revitalized and transformed into a spirit being.

Amos 4:12 "Therefore thus will I do to you O Israel; and because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!"

God gave clear warning to the Israelites through Amos and at the same time that Amos was working in the nation of Israel, three or four other prophets that are named in the Bible were also prophesying at the same basic time. They all, I am sure, had the same basic message, and that was what was just

about to befall them. In this case what was going to happen to them was not going to be pleasant at all, because they had not taken His previous warnings seriously enough to make any good progress.

God's purpose is moving us toward the next major stage, the return of Jesus Christ and the beginning of the re-establishment of His government directly on earth. That stage will continue for one thousand years to the release of Satan from his prison, and the final battle between God and Satan leads to the Great White Throne Judgment. This in turn is followed by the Lake of Fire and the creation of the new heavens and the new earth with God's capital city, the New Jerusalem, established on earth. Each stage progresses like the next chapter in a book.

Here in Amos 4:12, this “prepare to meet your God” statement can be taken either as an angry command or simply as a firm statement of warning. In this case it is stated after He told them of how, through a progression of devastating events, He had already warned them but the warnings were not heeded. We will look at some of those warnings.

Amos 4:6-10 “Also I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities. And lack of bread in all your places; yet you have not returned to Me,” says the Lord. “I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered. So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me,” says the Lord. “I blasted you with blight and mildew. When your gardens increased, Your vineyards, Your fig trees, and your olive trees, the locust devoured them, yet you have not returned to Me,” says the Lord. “I sent a plague after the manner of Egypt; your young men I killed with the sword, along with your captive horses; I made the stench of your camps come up into your nostrils; yet you have not returned to Me,” says the Lord.

Every time that God did something to them, it should have been like a trumpet was blowing a warning in their ears. Just like it says in the book of Revelation. The trumpets are going to blow, seven of them. As I said in that sermon on the Day of Trumpets [“How Long, O Lord?”], you will not hear these trumpets blow, but you are going to see the event that is blowing the trumpet and sending out the warning, the plagues that God is bringing upon this nation.

Are we going to be spiritual enough, are we going to believe God deeply enough that what we see and hear—seeing on television, hearing in the news reports—might very well be God warning us to wake up because the nation is being prepared to meet its God?

Each one of these was a progression and I would imagine each one became a bit more intense. So how much more intense do the things that are falling upon Israelitish nations have to get before we will take a warning? I do not think the people in the world, the unconverted, are going to take the warnings because they do not have the wherewithal to do very much about it. On the other hand, we do have the wherewithal, and in that sense we are without excuse.

We cannot justify ourselves before God by failing to take advantage of the warnings that He is giving us. God is being very fair. How did I begin this sermon? God will do nothing unless He gives a warning first.

In this case God is in effect saying that they have received their last warning. Verse 12 was their last warning and when He came again it was going to be devastating. We must not allow ourselves to fail

as they did. Success or failure is not in both choices, this way or that. As far as I am concerned what we face is a one-choice issue. Why? The reason is because our God is too good and too great in His holiness and His merciful purposes for us that we should allow ourselves to fail Him through neglect or rebellion.

Giving up on such an awesome Creator and purpose is too great to consider; the stakes are simply *too great* to let them slip through our fingers. I think in most cases for us it is not going to be rebellion. There might be a few here and there but most of the time if it happens to us it is going to be neglect, because we allowed ourselves to be too busy with things that are very small matters compared to what is happening in our lives.

Since the stakes are so great, we have reached the place in this series of sermons where I believe we should take time to review and seriously consider the one being most responsible for the increase of general persecution against the church. He is also the one most responsible for increasing personal pressures on us as individual Christians. Even though his invisibility is a challenge, there is much much more to his powers—he is an adversary to be respected but not terrified of—if we are aware of his deceptive forces, and we must always remember that we are in his element.

Please turn to I Peter 5. Remember the Bible tells us that planet earth is Satan's first estate, this was his first assignment; it was in a way given to him by God to dominate and to rule over. (This was before he rebelled.)

I Peter 5:8-10 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. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

I think it is very interesting as we continue on that Peter did not seem terrified at all of this being's great power. In an earlier message, I mentioned that we must not consider what we preparing for as punishment. They are tests and some of the tests are going to be hard, and that is why Peter said that we are going to suffer, but God is not punishing us at all. These are tests and our intensified confrontations that are looming ahead with Satan and his world are also a test and the warfare is spiritual in its major substance.

We have an advanced warning from God, and I think that you are familiar with what I am going to say. Except maybe for occasional pop quizzes, do not teachers warn us of the larger tests that are going to come? The teacher says we are going to have tests on this subject at certain intervals along the way and the teacher may give little pop quizzes here and there, but it is the way of teachers to warn, because they want their students to prepare. They do not want their students to fail.

The purpose of tests even in school are not to fail people in the subject; rather, they are used to find out where the student stands and how effective the teacher is. We have the most effective Teacher there is in the universe in Jesus Christ, and He will be doing His job, and so it is our responsibility to prepare, because He is giving us these gentle warnings.

Notice also, Peter says, we are to *resist* Satan. So let us not somehow get the idea that we are going to overwhelm and defeat Satan at his game. That *will not* happen. You might recall when Satan confronted Jesus in Matthew 4, Jesus correctly resisted him. Jesus did not try to overwhelm him; He just resisted.

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

If we resist him to the limit of our ability he is defeated. Do not think he will not come back again because he will. It says there very clearly that his challenge to Jesus in Matthew 4 was followed up later on by other challenges from him. But if we resist him, we have defeated him at that time to the limit of our ability (a little bit more on that later).

Jude 9 Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

My understanding, at least to this point, is that Michael and Satan were basically of the same rank. They are both cherubim and yet Michael, when battling against Satan, did not try to overthrow him; he simply resisted him. This great archangel said, "The Lord rebuke you!" So do not get the idea that we are going to grab Satan's tail and we are going to wail him around here and there and make him eat dust. No, we are not. He is far too formidable for that.

Here is the great reason why we do not have to defeat him, as it were, by overcoming him in a contentious way, and that is that God will be carefully watching over us, attentive to Satan's every move against us. God is not going to allow us to go against impossible odds, even as He did not allow Job to go against impossible odds. God sets the odds and He is the only one who needs to be satisfied and *all He wants us to do is resist him*. He does not want us to submit to Satan. If we do not submit to him, we have resisted him, and God is pleased.

Like a good teacher it is not God's purpose to lose us. You might recall how God, in Numbers 22-24 held Balaam in check. Balaam even had to speak what God told him to say. Because of God the playing field for each and every one of us—be encouraged by this!—has been leveled so that we can resist and hold our own against this tremendously powerful being. We do have responsibilities within this and we are going to go to II Timothy 2.

II Timothy 2:1-4 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

One of the instructions we see in this verse is that there must be commitment. We must be committed to the One who enlisted us in His service, and that of course is our King, Jesus Christ. He is the one who enlisted us, partly for the purpose of engaging in this warfare that is moving toward us.

This verse has a martial force to it, and modern translators actually warn against getting involved in civilian affairs, so they changed the translation like this: "No one engaged in warfare entangles himself in civilian affairs." He keeps his mind focused on the warfare that is at hand. And we do this

in order to be able to resist the opponent who is Satan the Devil, and at the same time, in doing this, we also please the One who enlisted us. That is an absolute necessity.

So if we are committed to God's way, pleasing Jesus Christ and the Father, then we have a leg up on making sure that we resist in a way that pleases Them. There is still the reality that we must continue with business in the world but not allow ourselves to become tangled or entangled in its deceptive web to the extent that our focus becomes blurred.

I want to turn our attention right now more directly to our enemy, and we are going to go to the book of Luke. I used this verse in my previous sermon, and it has to do with our warfare with Satan.

Luke 14:28-31 “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?”

Just think of that in relation to Satan. Is there enough in us to overcome someone that is so formidable he could blast us out of existence with a blink of an eye? He has such power, if God would permit it. So Jesus Christ is telling us pretty plainly, “Don’t get the idea that you are going to overcome Satan the Devil.” He has far more firepower than we do, that is, personally.

Luke 14:32 “Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.”

In my first Feast of Tabernacles message, we saw that we clearly owe our loyalties to the Kingdom of God. And our enemy is the adversary who has a measure of liberty in dealing with us that we might be tested. I know that you know who that is but we must step back a bit and re-examine him and his strengths.

Let us understand that what Christ says here is a preparation for battle tactics. In an overall sense what Christ is counseling us here in this directive is that we had better know our enemy. In this case considering *this* enemy, we will not defeat him, he is far too powerful.

In addition with this enemy, in this war, there is no making peace with him, because to do so would produce compromises that will result in our faithlessness to God. Remember I said that what God wants us to do is to resist Satan. He does not want us to submit to him. To submit to him would be to compromise our position under Jesus Christ. There is no compromising with Satan. We defeat him simply by not submitting to him in any circumstances.

As we are going to see here this is pretty hard. He is really wily. He is a formidable foe and we have got to get it in our minds that in the long run only Jesus Christ will defeat him. In other words, God *will* defeat him. Even Michael backed away from attempting to defeat Satan. He called upon God to be his rescuer in that kind of a situation.

We are required to live our lives by not allowing ourselves to submit to him in obedience, and God promises that He will not throw us in over our heads against him. Remember I said earlier, God has leveled the playing field. We cannot defeat him but we can defend ourselves against him.

One way to do this is to recognize his tactics well, because he will be probing for opportunities to crush us in any spiritual weakness by means of undercutting our faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in God is both our best offense and defense.

Recall how Jesus fought him in Matthew 4. Jesus' defense was believing God's Word. I am going to go through this because God is going to loosen him and his companions' restraints that presently hold them in check from doing what they are more fully capable of accomplishing. I will give you a string of scriptures that reveal his very being and potential for destruction.

Ezekiel 28:12-14 "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God. [This is Satan he is talking about, not a man.] You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.

What is being described here is an invisible created spirit being of great power who might very well represent the pinnacle of God's creative power in terms of angelic beings, and he was present in heaven at the very seat of God's throne and it is a truth that we are puny compared to our enemy.

Ezekiel 28:15 You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.

Ezekiel 28:17 Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you.

Despite all of this creative energy of God that was placed in this being, he had and he still has a weakness—his character. His character is tragically flawed and the reason is given right here, he became obsessed with his beauty. Beauty here does not mean necessarily he was glorious looking, which he definitely was. You can recall when we went through Ecclesiastes 3. In those sermons we spent a deal of time on the word beautiful, how God makes everything beautiful in its time. That word still retains some of its meaning here.

Beauty does not merely mean that he was glorious looking. Rather beauty here includes the totality of his powers, of which his appearance was merely one. He is intellectually powerful, he knows history backward and forwards. Being in the presence of God is a tremendous amount of power, because he knows how God thinks, he knows how God does things, and he knows what God's purpose is as well.

His evil piercing insight is such that he can easily lead most people into traps that result in them sinning. His major weakness was there was not sufficient humility gleaned from his intellectuality to counterbalance his drives, not merely a matter of his intellectuality but also the associations that he had with his peers there in heaven, and also the experiences that he had with them and with God. They become part of the fount of knowledge and fount of power that is his that he can make use of, and use against us.

Thus, as this thing built up he does not perceive himself as a mere created being whose responsibility was to be a servant of the Most High God, and thus his pride corrupted him. The great deceiver became deceived himself by his own heart, as it were, into rebellion against his Creator.

His pride is so great—he should have been able to look at his Creator and realize how puny he was. That every gift that he had received had been made, put into him, by that Creator and yet his pride would not allow him to reconcile all of that, to how small and insignificant he was compared to that Creator. His pride kept building and building, and by the time that he attacked God, he thought himself at least of God's equal but most likely he thought of himself as greater than.

Who knows how long Satan has lived and what kind of experiences he can draw upon to use against we puny humans. When we think of that we ought to be very thankful to God that God has leveled the playing field, and that He does not expect us to overcome Satan, just resist him.

Isaiah 14:12-14 “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer [Helel], son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart, 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' [I have heard say that that verse should really be translated, “I will *be* the Most High.” I never really checked that out enough to know whether that is a true translation.] "Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the pit."

Luke 10:18 And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”

So he attacked God, intending to be the Most High himself. Do you understand a further revelation of his character in this? I will tell you what it is. To this day he fears nobody, or any thing. His pride is that great—he fears nobody or any thing.

There is no true fear of God in him. He will not change; he will not repent of what it is that he has in his heart to do. He respects God but he does not fear Him in a way in which he would willingly submit to Him as being greater than he himself is. He is the slave of his own heart. He certainly respects God's power to some level, but you know very well that he continues plotting and is going to attempt to defeat God again in spite of the fact that he will get cast down again. It is firmly set in his mind that he is the master of all that he surveys.

He believes he deserves, and is totally justified in doing what he plans to do. When his mindset is packaged with his considerable powers, he is indeed formidable. However, despite his overweening self confidence, he lost the war and was cast to the earth and losing that war did not diminish his belief that he should still be ruling over all. "Just a little stumble." He will not change.

So he is here on the earth and to this day he is forced by God to share the planet with us, and it burns in his mind to get even and he will bring those powers to bear on us and push things as far as God permits. Never forget God has him on a tight leash where each and every one of us is concerned. That is why Peter did not show any fear of Satan. I want all of us to respect what he is and to spend time learning to recognize the tactics that he will use. That is why it says in Jeremiah 30:7 that we are heading toward a time that has never been seen on the face of this earth.

As we saw last Sabbath, the populations of earth are subservient to him. He is the source of the brutal competitiveness of mankind and thus all the wars that we see have been fought throughout time, and his being thrown down that first time does not stop him from plotting his revenge against God as a persistent, twisted, scheming, subversive, confusing, contrary force, striving to destroy God's purpose of reproducing Himself in us.

I want us to be encouraged that this formidable foe is being held in check by God, He will not allow us to be tested any greater than God evaluates our ability to resist.

Job 1:6-10 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it." Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands and his possessions have increased in the land."

Notice the beginning of verse 10, because that is what God is doing for us, "You have made a hedge around him around his household around all that he has on every side."

Job 1:11-12 "But now stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" So the Lord said to Satan, "Behold all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

Despite Satan's great powers, powers far greater than ours, he is in reality no more than a tool in God's hands. Satan cannot believe that. His pride has so twisted his mind he cannot see it, he cannot get it. We talk about people out there who cannot get simple Scripture. We can see the arch deceiver has so deceived himself he cannot really believe that God can defeat him, even though it is already happened one time.

We can see, we can understand from what the Bible shows, that Satan is clearly restrained. However this in no way means that he is totally restrained and that he is without resources to put us to a mighty test and bring us a great deal of trouble.

Consider the intensity of the troubles that he brought upon Job without literally putting him to death. Could we retain our faith in facing what God made Job face? If it happens to any of us, then we are in the same category as Job. Job *won* because he resisted and he did not allow Satan to break him, and if Job won with God on his side, we can win too, and we will.

Job retained his faith in God. There were times there that looked shaky, but he retained his faith so that God was pleased and he did not submit to Satan. I hope that encourages you. If Job did it with God on his side, you can do it with God on your side.

This is why I said earlier, faith is our best offense and best defense, because God will go to bat for those who display their faith in Him, to Him, and of course to others as well.

Satan has a couple of aces in his artillery that are important to consider, because these that I am going to go into now I feel are the areas that he is most likely to attack us in.

Matthew 24:4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Take heed that no one deceives you."

It is so easy to look at that and think of some human being deceiving us. Now that may happen, but that verse applies to Satan confronting us as well. He does not say 'no man,' He says *no one*, and that would include Satan.

There is another little factor that I think we need to consider. Every once in a while we will refer, usually in the case of something that is in Genesis 1, 2, 3, or 4, about the 'law of first mention.' It is important to pay attention to the first time that something in God's Word is mentioned or in a listing that Jesus gives the first mention of something.

There is a reason why I believe that Jesus mentioned this thing about make sure that no one deceives you, because that is the beginning of failure. If we are willing to accept a deception, regardless of whether it comes from a man or regardless if it comes from Satan, that is the beginning of failure.

Remember the time when God sent the prophet and told the prophet, "Don't stop anywhere. Just go up there give your prophecy and return." What did that guy do? He did pretty well until another guy came along and said he was a prophet and said [paraphrasing, "God changed His mind, let's go here and we'll go and eat."] The lion enjoyed his supper on that prophet, the lion that killed him.

God had not changed His mind. The first thing God said, "Don't let anybody deceive you." So we have to be up, as it were, on what God says in His Word and hopefully the ministry will do their best to keep filling our minds with what God says so that we are aware of the kind of tricky being we are up against.

Revelation 12:9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth and his angels were cast out with him.

Satan is highly intelligent, but his intelligence is twisted toward deceit. He co-operates with no one unless it serves his deceitful purposes to do that kind of thing. The way of sin among mankind began with his deception of Adam and Eve. Again, I bring this to your attention: the law of first mention. How did Satan get Adam and Eve to sin? He deceived them. Adam and Eve stood, as it were, for all of mankind. They represented everybody and so we come to the time of the end and the first thing Jesus reminds us of is, "Be careful that no one deceives you."

We are in the area in which Satan is really skilled. He does not have to obliterate everybody if he can just deceive them. We see here, God says he has deceived the whole world. That is pretty good work. So beginning with Adam and Eve, his deceptions continue to this day so successfully that the entire world is deceived. He could obliterate but that is not his main strength that he is going to use on us because God shows us what he is going to do—he is going to try to deceive us.

Those of us who are answering questions that people come up with as they read in *The Berean* or the *Forerunner* magazine, and they sometimes see statements that they cannot agree with, and so they either ask very nicely or they take us to task. The one thing that is consistent—I know with me, I am

continually amazed by the mass of clear scriptures that are misunderstood and misapplied by the unconverted, the blind of the world.

One of the clearest examples might be with John 6:44. Every one of us knows what that scripture means, but that is not the way the people in the world look at that scripture. The way they look at it, and the way they will argue with that clear statement is they claim that anybody can have salvation at any time. They never seem to catch the fact that if that is true and they are volunteering to be Christ's disciple or whatever, that because they have volunteered, God's sovereignty is taken right out of the picture.

It is not God who is choosing, it is the people who are choosing. God made that clear, that He as the Head of the family is choosing who He wants in the family. They might be very nice people, but they misunderstand.

Guess who put that misunderstanding in their minds? That is Satan's work. He has twisted that in their thinking that they can have salvation at any time. If they knew the whole picture, they would absolutely know that is no way to run the ship. God is running the ship the way He wants it run. He is sovereign over His creation, He is sovereign over His family, and He is choosing who He wants. Not on the basis of whether we are better than anybody else. It is just in His mind to choose this person and not that person right now. Later on we will get to them. It is that simple.

Satan has twisted that in people's minds and the result is these people volunteer to be Christ's disciple, and they die without going to heaven, just go to the grave and they will come up in the second resurrection and then realize that they had made a mistake based upon an assumption.

One of Satan's masterstrokes of deception has been to succeed not only that God does not exist but that he does not exist either. That he is merely used in the Bible in a figurative sense to explain the presence of evil. Since Satan has deceived the whole world I believe that you will have to admit that his influence over the minds of mankind is great. So he does not have to scare people into submission to his government. There is no indication that he terrified Adam and Eve. He very effectively persuades through deceit.

We will look at some avenues of deceit that he works involving the church.

II Corinthians 2:7-11 So that on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore, I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. For to this end I also wrote that I might put you to the test whether you are obedient in all things. Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

In this particular case, Paul feared Satan's deceit would embitter the man that is referred to in this series of verses. This man was the one who was previously disfellowshipped from the congregation as shown in I Corinthians 5. This is the man who was committing adultery with his father's wife. I take it in this case that the wife was not this person's mother, but rather a second or third marriage for that person.

This man was committing adultery with his father's wife. And so Paul told the congregation in I Corinthians to put that man out of the congregation, he does not belong there. He says, "Deliver him to Satan." The man repented. After he had been put out he was no longer in fellowship with the church, he saw the filthiness of his sin, and he repented. He was then invited to come back to the congregation.

Here is where the congregation comes into the picture again, because what Paul was hearing was that people in the congregation were not accepting this man's repentance and instead he was in the congregation but he was "out" of the congregation. He was a loner within the congregation, because a lot of the people avoided him.

That is why Paul said, "Lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow." Guess who would take advantage of such a situation where the man had honestly repented, he was back in the congregation, but then the people in the congregation would not accept him because they were too hardhearted to see their own weaknesses and accept him as a brother again?

The man would feel discouragement that people in the congregation were holding grudges against him. Boy, Satan was right there manipulating the minds of people to be unforgiving. Those people were putting themselves out of the church.

Know this: Satan's devious ways—he has the capacity to put into people's minds to hold grudges, letting anger burn in their heart and not be forgiving. So we find in Hebrews 12:15 where Paul says this.

Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness . . .

That man was being led toward bitterness. He sinned, he repented, he was allowed back in. People were rejecting him and holding grudges against him, and that's why Paul was afraid that bitterness would arise in the man, and that they would lose him.

Hebrews 12:15 . . . springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.

Why would he say that? Because attitudes like grudges will infiltrate through the congregation, defiling many along with the originators who holds the grudges. That is a perfect kind of situation for inviting Satan within the congregation. Things like that are a device of Satan, a means by which he divides and conquers.

Grudges in the congregation are quickly exploited by him to undermine the church's spiritual health. He capitalizes on insults that remain unforgiven and unresolved, and by deluding people, he causes them to foster a spirit of animosity that divides and scatters them. Satan hates forgiveness, he hates Christian love, he loves to see people in bitterness toward each other in despondency and in despair. Here is another one of his ways of deceit.

Matthew 4:8-10 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All

these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you Satan! For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.”

I will use only this one example from here because the issue is clear. Satan twists the righteous application of Scripture, attempting to turn a person to use it for personal gain or for vanity, often within the congregation, like he knows something that nobody else knows. Jesus corrected Satan here by rightly quoting and rightly applying the scripture issue that Satan raised.

Acts 5:1-4 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles feet. But Peter said, “Ananias why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.

Ananias permitted Satan to build avarice in his mind and thus lie regarding the money he had previously promised to donate.

Satan is going to work on our minds. Not through terror; he is going to work on our minds to break faith with God and His Word.

Luke 22:3 Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve.

It was Satan who instigated within Judas' mind the betrayal of the perfectly innocent Jesus and I am sure that he had twisted Judas' mind so completely that Judas believed he was fully justified in what he plotted to do and indeed did do. He managed to twist Judas' thinking about his very Creator. Do you think Satan cannot do that to us? I do not know what series of circumstances took place in Judas' presence that led him to think along that line. Really, he was plotting murder.

I want you to see the areas we are vulnerable in. Satan is so slick.

John 8:43-44 “Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 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, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

I want you to see how strongly stated this. In verse 43, Jesus rhetorically asked the Jews, “Why is what I am saying not clear to you?” Then He proceeds to answer His own question. The overall answer is, “You’re in the wrong family.” It does not actually say that, but when you see the whole context I am telling you that is correct, that they were not of the right family.

Satan is their father, and he twisted their thinking through lying to the point we are going to see that they, Satan's children, believe his lies are truth. Jesus then answers His own question by describing their spiritual father's, Satan's, influence. He does not stand in the truth; there is no truth in him. That

is hard to grasp. He lies from his own resources. Why would he do that? Because it is the only resource he really and truly has that he can use against us.

We can see that with Job. God did not permit Satan to obliterate Job. Satan is going to use lies to try to trip us up. We must not submit! His deceit is his major weapon. He can even state a truth but in the larger sense his intent is always to deceive one into sinning. That is what he did with Adam and Eve. He persuaded mankind's parents to accept what he gave them and they believed him. He continues the same path to this day. So do not forget Jesus' first warning in the Matthew 24 prophecy: "Take heed that know one deceives you."

I want you to notice one more thing. Jesus' testimony in this section here is that mankind has been so strongly convinced of Satan's arguments that they *desire* to do as Satan does. That is why this world is in such terrible shape. The world is acting to degrees exactly the way their father acts, and the desire draws them toward every work of the flesh.

This is why the world is in the shape it is in, and I believe Satan will attack the church in the way that he always has—by the use of his resources and that resource is his deceit. This is where he is trying to lead us.

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The lesson of this sermon is: God is going to allow Satan to test us, and when he tests us, he is going to use his major resource, and his major resource is to lead us by his lies into submitting to him through sin. There is an interesting list of major portions of sins that he will try to get us to commit. And every one of them is disloyalty against the Kingdom of God.