

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



Satan's Strategy to Defeat Us

KEY PASSAGE: Romans 8:5-9 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Matthew 4:1-11 | 2 Corinthians 4:3-4
Philippians 4:19 | Hebrews 9:27

► SUMMARY

Some people who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior have suffered repeated defeat throughout their lives simply because they don't realize they have a spiritual enemy.

Many today mock the idea of a literal devil, but Scripture clearly states that Satan is real, and his goal is to draw people away from God, to thwart His purposes, and to cause division.

► SERMON POINTS

Satan is a liar, and no one is immune to his attempts to deceive. Therefore, to stand firm against his lies, believers in Christ need to understand his strategies.

What is a satanic attack?

It's a deliberate, willful assault by Satan upon an individual for the purpose of doing harm in the spirit, soul, or body, or all three. These attacks could come at any time or from anywhere. The devil tries to trip us up when we are at our weakest, and he knows exactly who or what to use as a lure. He often tempts us with what we do not need or should not have as he seeks to bring us down.

■ **Romans 8:5-6** "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace." The thoughts of the unsaved are governed by what Paul calls "the flesh," and the result is death. He is not referring to the physical

human body but to an internal drive that opposes God. In contrast, Christ's Spirit lives within believers, governing their minds and behaviors according to God's desires and giving them life and peace.

- **Romans 8:7-8** "Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Since unbelievers are controlled by the flesh and influenced by Satan, their thoughts are opposed to God. Furthermore, without the Holy Spirit, they have no ability to obey Him or please Him.
- **Romans 8:9** "However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." The indwelling Holy Spirit—not church attendance, baptism, or good behavior—is the distinguishing mark between Christians and the rest of humanity. Although Satan still deceives and tempts believers to sin, their disobedience does not result in the loss of their salvation.
- **2 Corinthians 4:3-4** "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." Satan is always working to mislead and blind people to the truth regarding Christ. The result is a world characterized by sin, conflict, and deception.

Satan's battleground is the mind.

He infiltrates the world with his lies, and even believers can be deceived. He's always ready to interject his ideas into our minds and lead us astray by convincing us that there will be

no consequences for sin. If we believe his lies and disobey our heavenly Father, we will suffer His loving discipline. But the Holy Spirit also reminds us that we are God's children whose sins have been forgiven through Christ's death on the cross, and we can never be separated from our Savior.

Satan's Strategies

■ He directs our attention toward a need or desire.

This strategy began in the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden when Satan drew Eve's attention away from the abundance of God's provision to the one thing He withheld—the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And the devil has been using this same technique ever since to stir up lust for a particular person, greed for a certain possession, and envy for what belongs to another person. He promises that having the objects of our desires will satisfy us, but nothing outside God's will ever brings lasting joy but only disaster.

■ The devil chooses times when we are the weakest.

After Jesus fasted for 40 days and nights, Satan came to Him suggesting that He turn stones into bread to satisfy his hunger. Yet Jesus didn't come to serve Himself but to obey His heavenly Father. In the same way, the devil comes to us when we are Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired. Together these form the word HALT, which is exactly what we should do when we are tempted at the point of our vulnerability. We must stop and consider that this is a satanic attack.

■ He creates doubt in our minds. Satan's biggest target is the Word of God.

He wants believers to rationalize themselves into disobedience by misinterpreting verses or taking them out of context to support their desired sin. Once the devil gets people to doubt the veracity of any part of the Bible or to declare those parts irrelevant or outdated, he gets a foothold in their lives from which he can promote his lies.

■ Satan wants to get us in a debate.

Temptations are not to be debated but rejected. When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, He always responded the same way by saying, "It is written," followed by a passage of Scripture

(Matt. 4:1-11). God's commands are not given to keep us from something good but to protect us from the self-destruction of sin.

- **The devil uses deception as his key weapon.** To deceive is to mislead by obscuring truth. Satan does this by making what is evil look good.
- **He wants to create division.** He tries to convince young people that the Bible is outdated and that older people lack understanding of reality. His goal is to replace unity in the family, church, and society with strife, distrust, and division. Since the Word of God promotes harmony, peace, and godliness in relationships, he begins by stirring up doubts about its truth.
- **Satan's goal is to destroy us.** If he can convince people to doubt a portion of Scripture, he can then persuade them to reject even more of it. In fact, the verses that address the area of their temptation are the first ones they begin to doubt.

Satan is a liar who stands against the truth of God's Word. Yet for those of us who belong to Christ and believe His Word, it is our greatest protection against the enemy's lies. When we fill our minds with Scripture and live according to its principles, Satan's schemes lose their power over us.

► RESPONSE

- What kinds of battles is Satan waging in your mind? Have you been listening and considering his ideas? What Scripture passages do you know that refute his lies?
- Do you believe that the Bible is true from Genesis to Revelation? The veracity of your answer is revealed by how you live. Are you living according to God's revealed truth, or are you ignoring or not practicing what it teaches?

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