

The sermon

Intro

What is the devil AKA Satan? Popular culture portrays Satan in red with pitchfork in hand. With horns, a tail, and wings.

Sometimes Satan's a silly, rambunctious source of comedy and mischief, not a malevolent being who ruins lives.

Oftentimes, movies have a plot where a character sells their soul to the devil for personal gain: prosperity, baseball ability, musical success, longer life, etc. Takeway? One a select few are Satan's property. Only a select few are aligned with Satan.

What should we make of Satan? How is Satan affecting our world? How is Satan affecting you?

READ PASSAGE

Body

Passage Focus

We're going to take three weeks to get through 2:1-10. This week external influences. Next week internal influences.

BIG IDEA: There's a world inspired by the devil seeking to shape you into its mold.

Point 1: Our former condition - dead

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked,

This is Paul's generalization of fallen humanity. Paul's doctrinal assessment of life outside of Christ.

Paul's writing to a group of believers. He's saying this is who you were. This was your condition. Not just some of them. Every one of them. Christian, this is who you were.

"in which you once walked...we all once lived" – 2:1, 3

"we" = Paul's including himself in this category.

"like the rest of mankind." – 2:3

It's not just us believers. It's everyone ever born. My one year old. My 15 year old. My wife. Me. You. No exceptions but Jesus.

"you were dead in the trespasses and sins"

Trespass = a false step. A step against God. Crossing a boundary in God's law.

Sin = any form of deviation from God's word. Doing what's forbidden. Failing to do what's commanded. Heart attitudes, wrong desires.

Walk = lifestyle.

If Paul was to describe their lifestyle, he'd say their lifestyle was a lot of "*trespasses and sins.*"

What does Paul mean by "*dead in the trespasses and sins*"?

The picture is a living corpse. Unresponsive. Inability. Powerless and unable to respond to God's commands. Living, but for all intents and purposes, spiritually dead. The walking dead.

Application

In case you're visiting with us and think Christians are a bunch of self-righteous people who like to criticize others, I want you to notice something. Paul's saying this was me. Christians say this was me.

Christian, do you believe this was you? Lifeless? Are you amazed by the new birth? Do you believe there was something desperately wrong with you? Are you amazed by grace? Something amazing has taken place inside of you!

What about your dead in sin co-worker, friend, sibling. Do you have any mercy for people in this condition? Do you grieve over their condition?

Believing children, what should your attitude be to sinful peers? Superiority? Mockery? Or mercy? Sadness?

Point 2: Following the world

following the course of this world

Before we were saved, we conformed to the world. What's the world?

World

"*world*" can mean the physical earth. Or the people of the world. Here it's an evil system with values that are at odds with God's word. The world lives as if God doesn't exist. Practical atheism. Because God isn't in the picture, the world normalizes sin and makes righteousness look odd. Mankind working against its Maker and its design. A recipe for disaster.

Take God out of the picture and you have American popular culture. Before I was saved at age 24, my life conformed to the world. In the world, I learned that making fun of neglected, poor children who smelled like urine is funny. I learned that beating people up was a good thing. I learned that people took great pleasure in mocking me. I learned that the purpose of life is to be considered "cool" by your peers. I learned that using marijuana helps you fit in. I didn't know anything about women. Except what my foolish peers taught me. I didn't know how to deal with women until there was a Sunday school class on Courtship and Dating at a wonderful church in DC. I learned that the purpose of life is having a good time which meant getting drunk at college parties. I learned to find my identity in my appearance, my clothing (heavy metal t-shirts or Structure), my friends, my social status.

I'm sure your experience differs. But that's what I learned from my peers and MTV.

The world's values aren't one size fits all. There's a variety of ways the world deviates from God's word.

1. There's rebellion against authority.

I can do life however I want. No one's going to tell me how to live.

2. There's oppression and abuse of authority.

Those with power using it for selfish ends at the expense of others (e.g., 3rd world dictators).

3. Pride.

The smug, arrogant look on the face of someone in a commercial driving an expensive car. Or a celebrity strutting on the runway in their \$20,000 suit. "Look at how great I am. Celebrate me."

4. Foolishness

The TV sitcom that normalizes parent mockery. The TV sitcom that trains your kids to disrespect you and find their identity in peer approval, clothing rather than God. It's not cute. It's destructive.

5. Substance abuse.

Turning to substances for comfort (dulling the pain), escapism, pleasure, identity (peer approval), etc. Humans created to rule over creation being ruled by creation.

6. Sexual deviation.

Women dressed seductively in commercials. Women taught to find their identity in men lusting after them. Men trained to think a woman is their body.

7. Idolatry

There are many ways to God. You can create your own path. Jesus redefined to be a social activist, not a Savior from sin. God redefined to suit our sin.

Application

I don't want my kids shaped by the world. I want my kids shaped by the word. I don't want our lives shaped by the world. I want us to flourish by doing life God's way, not the world's way.

A culture where God is nowhere to be found. Outside of his name used as a curse word or someone to call on when tragedy strikes or a concept to be questioned or a jovial, benevolent being who cares about helping people find love and nothing else (Hallmark movies).

Children, you live in a culture that's hostile towards God. This hostility takes many forms. Don't be shocked when God's values conflict with the values of your peers. Who knows how we ought to live? People who are dead in sin (your peers)? Or the God who made you? Who's the final judge? God or your peers?

Point 3: Following the devil

following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-

"the prince of the power of the air" is Satan. Before we were saved, our lives conformed to Satan rather than God.

Who's Satan?

1. Satan is a spiritual being, an angel.

Not flesh and blood.

2. Because of his pride, Satan corrupted himself and has rebelled against God ever since (Ezek 28:11-17).

Satan is a fallen angel.

3. Satan deceived Eve in the garden, provoking the fall (Gen 3:1-7).

The serpent was Satan (Rev 12:9).

4. Our world having fallen as a result of Satan's deception, it can be said, *"the god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, [by provoking the fall] to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ"* (2 Cor 4:4). *"and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one"* (1 John 5:19).

Satan exercises an influence over the whole world (individuals and institutions – e.g., Hollywood). So we find ourselves living in a culture where sin is normalized and righteousness is odd. Satan is the puppet master behind the scenes pulling the strings.

Souls aren't sold to Satan. It's true that some go darker because of demonic influence, but every person comes into the world blinded by Satan. That's why we need to be saved. 1 John 3:10 speaks of two, and only two, categories of people in the world: "*children of God, and...children of the devil.*" We follow Satan from birth. Through faith in Christ we stop following Satan.

5. The name/title Satan means adversary.

Satan is the enemy of God and those who belong to God and mankind in general. Particularly, Satan is the adversary of Christians: he prowls around seeking to devour us in the form of individual and institutionalized persecution (1 Pet 5:8-10). Empowered by Satan, the beast of Revelation makes war on the saints (Rev 13:2, 4, 7). Satan hates the church! Satan wants to ruin you. Do you believe this?

6. The title devil means slanderer.

Satan slandered God in the garden. Satan slandered Job by insinuating Job only followed God because of material blessings (Job 1:9-11).

7. Satan "*is a liar and the father of lies*" (John 8:44).

Satan deceives. Through false teachers that infiltrate the church. Through perversions of Christianity like the JW's. Through New Age gurus that promote spirituality apart from God. Through college professors that attack the Christian faith. Through the messages sent in television commercials and sitcoms.

8. Satan is a murderer (John 8:44).

Satan brought death to the human race by deceiving Eve. Satan inspired Judas to betray Jesus (John 13:2, 27). And Satan inspires the execution of Christians today.

9. Satan is a tempter.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. – Matthew 4:1

The Spirit wanted Jesus to be tempted. Satan did the tempting. The Spirit brought Jesus there to pass the test. Satan wanted Jesus to sin. Jesus passed the test. Satan failed.

10. Satan accuses God's people.

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world- he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. ¹² Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!" – Revelation 12:9-12

Satan was thrown down, cast out (John 12:31) at the cross. Apparently he was kicked out the heavenly realm he had access to in the days of Job (Job 1:6).

Note what Satan does. He accuses. Note who Satan accuses. Our brothers = believers. Note who Satan makes the accusation to. Our God. Satan comes to God with accusations against us day and night. The idea seems to be something

like we're unworthy of every spiritual blessing in Christ. Satan's right. We're unworthy. But we've been made worthy through the finished work of Christ on the cross. Accusations answered.

Having been thrown down, Satan is at work on the earth, acting from wrath. Because he knows his time will be up. His doom is sure (Rev 20:10)!

11. Satan brings disaster into the lives of believers (Job 1:12; 2:7).

12. Satan leads the fallen angels = demons.

"his angels" (Rev 12:9) are the demons. Satan has an army at his disposal. That's how he influences the whole world.

the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-

Satan is presently at work inside, within "*the sons of disobedience*" = non-Christians.

Indwelt by Satan?

Paul's saying that Satan is at work within every person who isn't born again. Christian, Paul's saying that Satan used to work within you. What does this mean?

1. We follow Satan when we follow individuals and institutions that are inspired by Satan.

When we go along with the values of the world, when we model our lives after a TV sitcom, we are in fact following Satan. Satan has inspired a culture where sin is normalized and righteousness is odd. When we go along with our culture, we follow Satan. When I found my identity in things other than God, I followed Satan. When the opinion of my peers held sway, I followed Satan.

2. It can't mean Satan actually indwells every single unbeliever in the world.

The Bible speaks of demon-possession. And demons moving in and out of people (Matt 12:43-45). If that's true, every person isn't indwelt by Satan.

3. The idea is Satan is at work within your heart because he's shaping who you are with individuals and institutions under his sway.

When we follow the evil world system, Satan is, in effect, shaping our thoughts and loves and desires and goals. Satan inspires a TV commercial and the TV commercial inspires a man to lust after a woman. Satan is at work within that man through the TV commercial he inspired. Satan isn't actually indwelling the man, but he's affected the man's heart.

Application

Christian, what does this mean for us?

1. There's a powerful, hidden, spiritual being who wants to inflict harm on you.

It's no stretch of the imagination to say that he might be inspiring opposition against you right now.

How do we fight back? Satan's overcome by Christ's blood and the preaching of the gospel and faith in God's promises (Rev 12:11). Christ's blood answers the accusations Satan presents against us. The preaching of the gospel plunders Satan's kingdom. People are rescued "*from the domain of darkness*" (Col 1:13) through the gospel. Faith in God's word enables us to stand firm against Satan's schemes and "*all the flaming darts of the evil one*" (Eph 6:16). When facing Satanically-inspired intimidation and opposition, God's promises give us the courage to endure. When facing Satanically-inspired deceptions and lies, God's word gives us discernment so we won't be duped. When Satan's accusations overwhelm ("you're not good enough!"), the gospel gives my soul rest in the finished work of Christ.

“they loved not their lives” = they loved something greater than their own well-being = God.

2. If you're faithful to Christ, you will be going against the grain.

It's unavoidable!

3. There will be temptation to go with the grain.

The world will pressure you to be like the world.

4. You will encounter lies.

Satan's deceptions vary. You exist for pleasure. You're a good person. You're fine on your own. You don't really need God's help. You don't need the church. There's more than one way to heaven. Sin doesn't matter now that you're saved. The lies are endless.

BIG IDEA? There's a world inspired by the devil seeking to shape you in its mold.

Who are you following? Where do you look for guidance? Where do you look for purpose in life? Where do you get your goals from? Where do you look for identity?

Are you looking to the spiritually dead? Are you looking to God's word? Who or what is shaping your life? We're all being shaped by something.

Later Ephesians will paint the Christian life as warfare. If you believe the influences are out there, how are you battling to withstand the world and Satan?

Where does belief in a devil and a world under his influence intersect with practice?

Non-Christian

There is a powerful, hidden, spiritual being that wants to ruin you: Satan. Satan is like the wind. You can't see him. But his effects are everywhere. Watch the local news. Analyze the commercials on TV. Observe the relational struggles you see around you. Family members struggling to love one another. Satan has plunged our world into ruin. Whether false religion, drugs & alcohol, sexual sin, greed, lawlessness (incarceration), self-righteousness. All these share one thing in common: a rejection of the one true God.

We were created by God to know, love, honor, and celebrate him. But Satan's deception plunged our world into ruin. So we sin against God.

On the cross Jesus died as a substitute such that all who believe in him will be forgiven and welcomed into his coming kingdom. Satan's time is short! On the cross the Father treated Jesus as if he lived your sinful life. If you trust in Christ, God will treat you like you lived Jesus' perfect, sinless life.

Repent and believe. Turn from the world to God. Where does your allegiance lie? Who or what is shaping you?