

Christian Ministry Unit 1

Introduction to Theology

Week 8 – Satanology Part 2

Introduction

This week, we will conclude our study of Satan's covert tactics, and overview his overt tactics.

1 Peter 5:8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

Covert tactics

TEMPTATION: Temptation is Satan's enticement to mistrust God's love and wisdom and violate His moral will. Temptation is a sub-set of seduction through the world system (*kosmos*). All temptation involves an implicit rejection of God's love and wisdom. Through temptation, Satan tells us (like he told Eve in Gen. 3) that God's way is unfulfilling, unreliable, etc.—and that by choosing to disobey God's moral will, we are only doing what we need to do to achieve fulfillment, happiness, security, etc.

- COMMON AVENUES:

Satan usually presents a combination of *circumstance* (the opportunity to sin) and *thought* (the suggestion to sin).

Some temptations are highly situation-specific; others are ongoing.

- PURPOSES:

Satan hopes to enslave you (or keep you enslaved) to sin, which will keep you from being an effective worker for God (Rom. 6:16; Jn. 8:34). Especially if you are responding to God's conviction to get free from a certain sin-habit, expect the devil to heap on the temptation.

Satan hopes to destroy Christ's reputation. Remember: It is not all about you! He views you as a pawn. If Satan can tempt you to sin in a way that reflects negatively on Jesus, he can more easily hinder others from coming to considering the gospel (Titus 2:7,8 – e.g., lazy worker, gossip, outbursts of anger at work, self-righteousness, selfishness, etc.). (Of course, we should admit failures and apologize to uphold Jesus' reputation.)

Satan hopes to infect the Body of Christ. If you submit to defeat, this compromised attitude may spread to others (1 Cor. 5:6 – e.g., sexual laxness; spiritual sloth).

Satan hopes to set you up for accusation (see below).

- COUNTER-MEASURES: We must fight temptation in very practical ways—but we must also fight it on a deeper level.

Practice prevention by staying actively involved in growth and ministry! David was especially vulnerable to temptation because he wasn't in the battle where he belonged (2 Sam. 11:1-5). "Idle time is the devil's playground."

Consider beforehand the consequences of falling to temptation. Listen to God's warnings (Ps. 32:8,9), remember the price you have paid, and learn vicariously from others (Prov. 5:9-14; 6:26-29). Serve others by delivering timely warnings!

Don't toe-dangle! If you know you are weak in a certain area, stay away from situations where this temptation is likely to occur (Matt. 6:13; Rom. 13:14; Prov. 5:8; 6:25 – e.g., sexual temptation; going to places where people are getting high; internet porn and chat rooms; mall & catalog browsing; etc.).

Remember God's sovereignty over Satan in the midst of temptation. God limits the degree and duration of Satan's temptations to what we can bear (1 Cor. 10:13). In fact, God uses Satan's temptations to strengthen our faith (Lk. 22:31,32; 1 Pet. 5:8-10). This is why the Greek word *peirasmos* is translated both "trial" and "temptation." It is important to affirm this promise to God when you are being tempted; otherwise, you will tend to let the force of the temptation deceive you into believing that it is impossible to victoriously resist.

Cry out to God for his help and determine to take "the way of escape" (Heb. 4:15,16). God may feel absent and the temptation may feel overwhelming, but he will be near at hand as you take this step!

When under sustained temptation, share this with your Christian friends and ask them to pray with/for you and advise you. Since sin thrives in secrecy, bringing the issue out into the light helps to break its power (1 Jn. 1:6,7). This also makes you more accountable to handle the situation righteously.

When under recurrent temptation, ask God to reveal what need you are not trusting him to meet. Much of the power of temptation lies in the inordinate desires ("lusts") we already have (Jas. 1:14,15). For example, you may be recurrently tempted to unrighteous anger because you want to get security from controlling your circumstances rather than from trusting God's promises to care for you. Repenting from this unbelief will be necessary to escape the anger trap.

ACCUSATION: Accusation is personal denunciation based on real or alleged sins in order to alienate you from God and demoralize you from serving God. God calls Satan the "accuser of the brethren" (Rev. 12:11; Zech. 3:1-5) because this is one of his most common forms of attack.

- **COMMON AVENUES:**

Satan will accuse you both *directly (through your conscience) and indirectly (through other people).*

Satan commonly accuses *new Christians' concerning their assurance of salvation* ("And you call yourself a Christian after what you did--again!").

Satan commonly accuses *older Christians concerning their identity, ability to change and/or minister, etc.* ("You'll never change. You'll always be

_____.” “You are completely ineffective in evangelism—why even try?” “After being in the flesh all week, what makes you think you can teach with spiritual impact?”)

Key differences between God’s conviction and Satan’s accusation:

Both work through the conscience, by registering a painful or discomfiting verdict on your actions. Accusation will commonly follow on the heels of conviction—but you must receive God’s conviction while rejecting Satan’s accusation. In general, God’s conviction draws us toward God, while Satan’s accusation alienates us from God. Here are some ways this works:

- **Conviction focuses on specific actions and attitudes** (“You mistrusted my promise to provide for you and you lied to get what you need”), while accusation uses our actions to lead us to false general conclusions about our relationship with God. (e.g., “God is disgusted with me;” “God will never be able to use me;” “I will never be free from this sin;” etc.).
- **Conviction is constructive and forward-focused** while accusation is destructive and backward-focused. God wants us to repent learn from our failures—and as soon as we respond properly he wants to move forward with us. Satan wants to keep hammering us about past actions even if we have repented.
- **COUNTER-MEASURES:**

Satan will accuse you even if you have not sinned—especially if you have a very sensitive conscience. For example, you may have righteously confronted a brother who responded by accusing you of intending to hurt him. In this case, you should refuse to capitulate to the charge that you have done wrong. If you are unclear, get objective input from trusted Christian friends.

Satan’s accusations usually have some factual basis because we are sinners! When this is the case, God says:

- *Don’t defend yourself* by rationalizing, minimizing, blame-shifting, etc. This deep-seated tendency comes from self-righteous pride, which plays into Satan’s hands. The answer to this kind of accusation is God’s undeserved mercy, not your professed righteousness!
- *Confess*: Agree with God that you have sinned and take full responsibility for what you have done (Ps. 51:4). You should then also agree with God that he forgives you fully based on Jesus’ full payment for this sin (Rev. 12:11*). **Rev. 12:11*** *And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.*

Confessing to a trusted Christian friend and praying together is often needed to experience the healing grace of God (Jas. 5:16).

- *Action*: Choose by faith to draw near to God (Heb. 10:22), and choose to step out to serve (Heb. 9:14).

DIVISION: Division is personal alienation between Christians (especially workers). It is rooted in sinful attitudes like envy, pride, and selfish ambition (Jas. 3:14-16), and it manifests itself in relationships broken by unresolved anger, personal resentment, malice, bitterness, etc. (Eph. 4:26,27,31).

- **PURPOSES:** Satan understands better than we do the importance of unity in the church in spiritual warfare. As long as we are united, we will be effective. But if he can get us filled with suspicion, selfish ambition and negativity toward each other, or if he can discredit our leaders, he can neutralize the church.

Division destroys effective outreach, because a key to our witness is the love that we show toward each other (Jn. 13:34; 17:23). If people see the same kind of alienation between Christians that they see elsewhere, why should they listen to our message?

Division demoralizes and demotivates all who are involved in it. It is terrifically draining to be in an environment of suspicion, resentment and hostility. Some often drop out of fellowship altogether, and then become isolated and neutralized. Even seasoned workers who persevere through it flag in their zeal, and may become unwilling to risk getting close to people again.

Division prevents effective leadership. If a significant group becomes divided from the leadership of the church (or worse if the leadership itself becomes divided), the work of the church comes to a halt. Leaders must supply clear direction for the church, and the people must trust and respond to their leadership—or we are an easily defeated rabble.

- **COMMON AVENUES:**

Passive division: Workers are disengaged, not initiating consistent encouragement and appropriate admonition. There are no outward problems, but there is no desire to relate and enjoy one another. The unity has already been weakened so that the group is ripe for the outbreak of active division.

Active division: Workers are openly alienated from each other. We call this “affective conflict” because the conflict is personal, involving suspicion, negativity, bitterness, etc. (Jas. 3:13-18).

NOTE: Issue-oriented conflict (e.g., doctrine and methods) is not division. Issue-oriented conflict is normal, healthy, and even important because it produces positive change. Luke records an example of this kind of conflict between Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:36-41. They disagreed sharply (*paroxusmos*) over an important strategic issue—personnel on a hazardous mission. They couldn't agree on personnel, so they split into two mission teams, divided the mission, and went on. In his later letters, Paul speaks favorably of both Barnabas and Mark. We have issues-oriented conflicts in this church. Sometimes we have to defer to those in leadership over us. Sometimes we need to give each other some elbow room to work in our chosen way. Sometimes we even need to go to another church that is better suited to what we are called to do. All of these things can happen without being divided in the biblical sense. But

when issues never seem to get resolved, or new issues emerge as rapidly as old ones are resolved, this usually signals that the real problem is affective.

NOTE: Christians often deny that they are engaged in affective conflict because they know that sustained affective conflict is wrong. How would you know if you are doing this? Consider the following symptoms:

- *A recurrent memory of offenses committed against you by them.* When you aren't resentful, you remember that the situation was unpleasant, but you tend to forget the details.
 - *A focus on the negative aspects of the person.* When you aren't resentful, your perspective is “He has a few irritating idiosyncrasies, but he is basically a great guy, etc.” When you are resentful, this perspective is exactly reversed.
 - *A habit of mentally rehearsing telling the other person off.* This may be about specific hurts received, or about other unrelated issues. This is simply the veiled expression of retributive desire.
 - *An aversion to being around the person,* especially in situations that are one-on-one or personal.
 - *Being angry/unable to rejoice* when he/she is blessed, succeeds or is honored, and *being (secretly) glad* when he has bad fortune, fails, or is criticized.
 - *Using “humor” to express your negative feelings.* (Prov. 26:18,19)
 - *Gossiping about the other person.*
- COUNTER-MEASURES: Think of division as a spiritual cancer. We overcome it in much the same way we fight against cancer in our own bodies—in three ways:

Prevention: “The best defense is a good offense.” Good nutrition, exercise, etc. make us much less likely to develop cancer in the first place. In the same way, there are spiritual things we can do which build unity and make us much less likely to become divided from one another.

- *You can consistently initiate love toward your Christian friends* (Heb. 10:24,25). It is difficult for the enemy to sow division between people who are consistently and consciously praying for, encouraging, and having fun with one another. Are you making time for this? Are you focusing on initiating it yourself and giving freely instead of on how well others are doing this with you?
- *You can work together on reaching outward to others* (Phil. 1:27; 2:2). When we are linking arms to reach out to those who don't know Christ and to help new Christians learn how to walk with Christ, we will be largely immune to division. But if we selfishly become a “holy huddle,” it won't be long before we begin to get offended by one another's idiosyncrasies and minor offenses. Leaders, are you setting an outward direction and tone

for your groups? Members, are you taking ownership to play your part in reaching out to other people?

- *You can maintain a proper attitude toward your leaders* (1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12,13). Satan works especially hard to divide people from their spiritual leaders because he knows that if he can alienate the sheep from their shepherds, he can ravage the flock. This is why the New Testament, while holding high moral standards for leaders and circumscribing their legitimate sphere of authority, also calls on non-leaders to respect them, be prepared to follow them, and reject accusations against them unless they are objective and serious. Do you have this attitude toward your leaders—or do you indulge the freedom to resist them and sabotage them and suspect them?

Early Detection: The statistics are overwhelming that early cancer detection is often the difference between life and death. It is so much easier to “nip it in the bud” than to get rid of it once it has spread. The same thing is true with division in the church. Because our enemy is creatively active and because we are fallen people, we will not be able to prevent all division. But we can nip it in the bud by taking the following steps:

- *Monitor your thoughts about others and repent from any underlying sinful attitudes* (Jas. 3:14,16; 4:1,2). Like all sin, division starts in our thought-lives. Satan will insidiously slander your Christian friends and leaders to you, drawing your attention to and exaggerating their flaws and weaknesses, interpreting their offenses against you in the worst possible light, and judging their motives. Do you practice suspicion toward your suspicions about others? Or do you pour gasoline on the fire by indulging them and speaking them to others? Once you do this, you give Satan more room to operate. Also, beware of taking up the offense of another (Prov. 26:17; 3:30).
- *Help your Christian friends turn away from division.* When you see evidence that they are tolerating these kinds of groundless, slanderous thoughts, speak an objective, corrective word and call on them to get before God about this! Refuse to tolerate gossip, and insist that they either drop their unfounded suspicions or take redemptive action (see below).

Aggressive Treatment: Once cancer has begun to grow and spread, it is life-threatening. Only immediate and aggressive treatment can catch it before it rages out of control. In the same way, the New Testament gives us strong directives to take aggressive action when division actually breaks out. This is not a formula, but the Holy Spirit will guide you on how to apply these directives.

- *Try to talk out personal conflicts as soon as you become aware of them* (Matt. 18:15; 5:23,24). If you know you are divided from another Christian, don't withdraw and slander him to others. Go and talk it out, and be ready to listen to his response instead of being dogmatic about your interpretation. What if you hear that he is divided from you? Sure, he

should be coming to you—but there is a higher priority here than conflict etiquette! Go and ask what you have done to offend him.

- *Apologize where appropriate--even if not reciprocated* (Matt. 7:3-5). Instead of being defensive, ask God to show you your fault. And if he shows you, acknowledge it and ask forgiveness. If you have slandered him, go and correct it. What is more important to you—preserving unity or your own pride?
- *Choose to forbear and forgive--even if not reciprocated* (Col. 3:13). Division thrives and grows when both parties are unwilling to do this. But when even one party chooses to do this, the damage is usually greatly reduced. This means committing yourself to pray for them and do good to them as the Lord shows you how to do this. Are you doing this—or are you reserving the right to withdraw and retaliate until they respond the way you insist on?

Are you willing to call upon your friends to do these things?

- *Ask for help from others if necessary* (Phil. 4:2,3). Sometimes we need the objectivity and wisdom of another mature Christian in order to resolve our issues and hurt feelings. When stalemated parties get this kind of help, they often get reconciled. Is this what you need to do?
- *Formal church discipline is appropriate for unrepentant divisive members* (2 Tim. 2:26; Titus 3:10). In those few cases in which someone insists on spreading discord in the church, God calls on us to correct him, warn him, publicly expose his rumors—and even to remove him until he repents. Are you willing to practice this “tough love?”

REMEMBER: You'll never stop all divisive conflict in the church. The key is to promote and model unity, and deal with conflict in a godly way. If you do this, God will protect you from division and polarize the group (1 Cor. 11:18,19). Ken Sande's book, *The Peacemaker*, provides excellent practical guidance on this subject.

Overt tactics

Overt tactics are more obvious manifestations of Satan's attacks. Christian workers should be able to identify and counter at least three different kinds of overt tactics:

- **DEMON-POSSESSION:** The Gospels and Acts describe instances in which individuals have been “demonized”—substantially overtaken by specific demonic spirits.¹ These authors are careful to distinguish demon-possession from physical sicknesses (see Lk. 4:40,41), even though demons can sometimes cause physical sickness (Lk. 13:11-17). Mk. 5:2-13 describes a classic case of demon-possession.

¹The biblical incidence of demon possession appears to be concentrated around the ministry of Jesus and (to a lesser degree) the apostles. It is significant that the epistles do not mention demon possession or teach Christians how to exorcise.

Note the symptoms, many of which (signified by #) are psychologically unexplainable:

Supernatural strength* (5:4)

Paroxysms (5:5) – not to be confused with epilepsy

Self-destructive behavior (5:5)

Personality-split (5:6-10) – sometimes manifested by multiple voices

Resistance# (5:7) - intense resistance to spiritual input that might include falling asleep, outbursts of rage, inappropriate laughter, fleeing a spiritual conversation, intense distracting thoughts, and possibly hearing voices

Transference# (5:13) - shift of demonic presence from one being to another

NOTE: The Bible infers that genuine Christians cannot be demon-possessed because they transferred from his dominion (Col. 1:13) and indwelt by God's Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), who is stronger than Satan (1 Jn. 4:4*).

*1 John 4:4*⁴ You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.*

However, scripture clearly teaches that Christians can be destructively affected by Satan if we allow his influence into our lives (see below).

- **SUBJECTION:** This term refers to situations in which true Christians seem to be controlled by demons (2 Tim. 2:24-26; Acts 5:1-10). Though the Christian is presumably not possessed (see above), he manifests symptoms similar to (though usually less pronounced than) possession. Christian workers have observed the following symptoms, but we have no specific biblical examples that describe these symptoms.

Resistance to Christ and spiritual truth (abnormal difficulty in conversion and growth)

Excessive immorality or blasphemy without control

Strong depression after conversion, with no previous history of such depression

Medium and/or occult powers (visions, telepathy, astral projection, divination)

POSSIBLE REASONS FOR SUBJECTION & POSSESSION:

- Demonic powers are sometimes passed on from family members who have been involved in occult practices
- The individual has (past or present) involvement with occult practices which God has forbidden (Deut. 18:9-13**). These practices may include tarot cards, Ouija, new age channelling, spirit guides, etc.

Deuteronomy 18:9–13⁹** “When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. ¹⁰ “There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one

who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer,¹¹ or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.¹² “For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you.¹³ “You shall be blameless before the LORD your God.

- The individual has been involved in open and blasphemous sin—especially for those previously involved in the occult (cf. Eph. 4:26,27).
- **INDIVIDUAL DEMONIC PERSECUTION:** This term refers to unusually strong attacks on Christians. All Christians may experience demonic persecution—but it is more common for those who are committed to ministry. This is not a biblical category, but supported by Christian experience. Symptoms may include:
 - Severe depression, especially when there is no apparent reason to be depressed or history of clinical depression
 - Nightmares and night terrors, especially preceding teaching or other ministry activity
 - Voices, visitations, etc.
 - Severe accusation that persists despite confession and appropriation of God’s grace

Deliverance from overt satanic attacks is promised by Christ as we appropriate his authority by faith. This deliverance may be instantaneous and dramatic, or it may be more gradual and subtle. The following steps may be necessary:

- Possessed or subjected persons must be willing to turn in faith to Jesus Christ, who alone has the power to deliver them from Satan. In Lk. 11:24-26, Jesus emphasizes that apparent deliverances will not last apart from commitment to him.
- Possessed or subjected persons must be willing to confess and forsake sins that may be the grounds for Satan’s control. Thus, the Christians in Ephesus confessed and forsook their occult practices and burned their occult books (Acts 19:18,19).
- Christian workers seeking to deliver possessed or subjected persons must engage in prayer (Mk. 9:29) and rely exclusively on God’s Word.
- After possessed or subjected persons have turned to Christ, workers should announce their forgiveness and security in Christ (passages like Rev. 12:10; Col. 1:13; 2:15; 1 Jn. 4:4 are especially helpful), and urge them to devote themselves to the means of growth (especially Body-life).
- Demonically persecuted Christian workers should claim God’s promises (see especially 1 Pet. 5:8-10) and rebuke Satan aloud, and determine to move forward with their ministry responsibilities. They should also seek prayer help from other Christian workers. Sooner or later (often after fulfilling a ministry responsibility), the attack will give way to power of the Spirit for ministry (see Lk. 4:1-14).

Memory Verses

1 Peter 5:8* - Christians need to be alert to Satan’s attacks.

1 Jn. 4:4* – Christians need not be afraid of demons because of Christ

Deut. 18:9-12** – Occult practices forbidden

Homework Assignment

- 1) Read Ps. 2:1-12; Isa. 11:1-12; Zech. 14:1-11,16-19 and record what role Israel will play in God's future kingdom.
- 2) Church Visitation assignment (due last week of class)