

Satan the Arch Rebel

by Dwight Pentecost

Satan's primary goal is to lead humanity to rebel against God, and we must resist his temptations by relying on our faith in God's character and submitting to His will.

Duration: 36:35

Scripture: Job 1:6-12, Isaiah 53:10, Matthew 16:13-16, Matthew 16:21-23, Mark 8:33

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Faithfulness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Job and how Satan tempted him to renounce God. The preacher highlights how Satan used Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples, to put temptation before Christ. The preacher also emphasizes how Satan wanted to produce rebellion and a curse in Job, but Job remained faithful to God despite losing everything. The sermon emphasizes the importance of acknowledging dependence on God and conforming one's life to their knowledge of Him.

Transcript

Since God is the Creator, all honor, might, power, dominion, and majesty rightly belongs to Him. He is a God who is worthy to be believed and worthy to be obeyed. The primary responsibility resting upon the creature is to be in subjection to the Creator.

And Lucifer, the wisest, the most beautiful of all God's created beings, rebelled against that responsibility which was his because he was a creature, and he led a rebellion against God. And his desire was to depose God from his throne and displace God as the supreme authority in the universe which God had created. And in his rebellion, Lucifer led a vast number of created angelic beings after him, and they, like the first rebel, became rebels.

When God created Adam and placed Adam in the Garden of Eden, Adam had one primary responsibility to the Creator, and that was to submit to him and to obey him. And so that there should be an opportunity to demonstrate this submission to the authority of God, God placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden and said to Adam, Thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. And Satan, the rebel, had one great burning, consuming passion within himself, and that was to lead Adam and Eve in his path of rebellion against God.

And his first temptation in the Garden was a temptation to rebel. And Eve rebelled, and Adam followed in her rebellion, and the entire race that sprang from these two was a lawless, rebellious race. This plan of

Satan is perhaps no more clearly illustrated than in the encounter between God and Satan and Job, as it is recorded in the first two chapters of this Old Testament book.

And I want to direct your attention briefly this morning to the record there, to show you that Satan's purpose for you is identical with his purpose for Adam and for himself. Satan's great desire is to lead you to rebel against God. If he can cause you to look up into the heavens and say, God, why? He has made you a rebel.

If he can lead you to experience something from the hand of God and then respond by saying, God, why have you done this to me? He has led you in the path of his rebellion. And Satan is more concerned about your rebellion against God than any other one thing. He is not so concerned about getting you enmeshed in some heathen sin as he is in causing you to rebel against God, for that is the start of every sin.

And this is so clearly brought out in the experience with Job. Job had been blessed materially, as perhaps no man of his generation had been blessed. The scripture records for us God's blessing upon him and his family, for he had seven sons and three daughters.

In addition, God had multiplied his material wealth in that he had seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels and five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred she-asses and a very great household, that is, of servants or slaves in order to take care of the flocks and herds and to provide for the family. All of this was recognized as a blessing from God, and Job took no credit for it, as though by his own wisdom or might or power he had accumulated this wealth. For in receiving this wealth, he responded by worshiping God, by fearing God, for he recognized that God who had given could just as quickly take it all away.

And it was testified of Job in the first verse that he was a man who was perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed or hated or was afraid of being enmeshed in evil. And the evidence that Job was perfect and upright was the Godward response that he feared God. For his perfection was not so much evident to his family and his acquaintances as it was manifest to God, for he showed his perfection and uprightness by abiding in the rightful relationship of a creature to the Creator.

He feared, he respected, he submitted to, he bowed to the authority of God who had given these blessings to him. We find that this was a practice of Job's life, for he came not on some stated occasion to a thanksgiving service to look back over the past year to enumerate God's blessings. This was a daily attitude, for in the 5th verse we are told, "...when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all.

For Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually." Job was a priest in the family, not weekly but daily. He offered sacrifices to God, and he reaffirmed by that sacrifice his continuing dependence and submission to God, and also as the father who was the priest, he was declaring that his sons who were under his authority were also in him subject to the authority of God.

For the thing that Job feared more than anything else was that his sons would be rebels. For he said, perhaps, it may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Now how would Job suspect the possibility that his sons might curse God? After all, they had been brought up in his family, and he had trained them and taught them and set an example of submission and dependence upon God.

But Job feared that his sons might turn out to be rebels. Why? Because Job knew what was in his own heart. And Job obviously had felt the enticements of Satan to some act of rebellion himself, so that since he, the head of the home, and their spiritual as well as their physical father had felt these temptations, he knew that his sons would be subject to those temptations.

So he guarded against that rebellion by this continued sacrifice to God. For he feared that he or his family should curse God in their hearts. Now that is God's way of setting the stage, of showing what kind of a man Job was, of the blessings that God had given to him and his conscious dependence upon God because of God's blessings.

And now we come to the envy and the jealousy of Satan, for Satan could not rest as long as there was a creature who willfully and voluntarily submitted himself to the worship of God instead of giving himself to do the will of Satan. And Satan could forget the vast majority of the human race, but he couldn't forget Job. His whole attention was focused upon this one man with the exclusion of all the other members of his generation, it seems, for this was the man who openly avowed his dependence upon God.

Job wasn't concerned with some insignificant little sinner or some criminal out here on the fringes of Job's society. Satan wasn't the least bit interested, and he took no delight in pride that that man was continuing in his sin. It was Job that plagued Satan, and it was Job that Satan desired to break and to bring into subjection to himself more than anyone else because of Job's avowed dependence upon God.

May I pause to point this out to you, that when any child of God by the Holy Spirit takes it as his purpose to live a life so as to please the Lord Jesus Christ and to walk in complete dependence upon God, he is exposing himself to all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Don't think because you voluntarily submit your will to the will of God, that submission is going to mean the end of struggle and temptation. Unfortunately, beloved, that's the beginning of it.

For as long as you continue in a path of rebellion, Satan is going to leave you alone. The Spirit of God won't, but Satan will. But when you set it as your purpose to walk so as to please the One who called you unto holiness, Satan will make you his special target and his special enemy.

That's what he did with Job. And when the occasion came that Satan was given audience to the throne of God, it was Job that God singled out as an object lesson to Satan. Now, I don't want to seem to be facetious, but I believe that God sat on his throne and chuckled in delight.

I think God took a great pleasure in pointing to Job and saying to this arch-rebel, What's the matter, Jordan? Satan? Couldn't you break him? You've broken all the rest. What's wrong? Have you run out of power? Have you lost your ability to break a man? Because here's a man who submits to me, who voluntarily loves me, and God took delight in the willful subjection of Job to himself. God pointed to Job and said, What do you have to say about him? What's your answer? He worships me instead of worshipping you.

Satan was ready, you never catch him unprepared, he's never asleep. He said, There's a good reason that Job obeys you and worships you and offers daily sacrifice. After all, who wouldn't? Look at what you've given him.

You give any man enough, you can buy him. So he accused God of having bought Job. Now, you see, if God is not worshiped because he is worthy to be worshiped, then the worship means nothing to God.

God is not honored and glorified until his creatures and those who are his new creation worship him voluntarily because he is worthy to receive worship. Constrained worship is no worship. Compelled worship is unacceptable to God.

That's why worship is always viewed in the Word of God as a voluntary sacrifice. There were sacrifices that were compelled. Every Jew in the Old Testament had to bring them, but there were also voluntary sacrifices.

And God was honored through the obedience that brought the required sacrifices, but God was worshiped through the voluntary sacrifices that men brought because they loved him, because they respected him, because they recognized his right to worship. So Job stood in front of God and insulted God and said to God, You bought him. You bought his worship and you bought his obedience.

He would be insane not to continue this ritual so that you would continue your material blessings to him. God accepted the challenge. You can take everything away.

You can't touch him, but take everything away. Now, this was Job's challenge, and I want you to notice it very carefully in the first chapter in the eleventh verse. Put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

What did Satan want Job to do more than anything else? Curse God. He had tried everything else to get Job to curse God and have been ineffectual, but now he says to God, I know a way to get him to curse you. You take it all away, and then he'll do what I want him to do.

So God gave him permission, and as a result in the twelfth verse, Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord to attempt to make Job curse God. Now, this cursing was not necessarily taking an oath on his lips. If Job had lifted his eyes to heaven with just one word, why? It would have been rebellion, it would have been sin, it would have been following Satan's plan and program for Job, and God would have been dishonored through what would seem to be an innocent question.

Do you know how the messengers came to Job? The first one in verse 14 said that all of his oxen and asses were either driven off or slain. Verse 16, all of his flocks and herds of sheep were destroyed. Verse 17, all of his camels fell into the hands of the Chaldeans.

And in verse 18 and 19, his ten children were lost in a storm. Within a few moments of time, everything that Job had was taken away, and Job is an absolute pauper. The wreck of his children and his faith in God.

And his faith even in this testing was unshakable, and even though possibly tempted to do what Satan wanted him to do, to curse God, it is recorded in verse 20 that Job arose and rent his mantle. That was a sign of mourning. You see, Job was not oblivious to the facts.

Job did not deny that this tragedy had taken place. He did not move into a world where he was withdrawn from reality. The rending of his garment shows that he was fully conscious of what these messengers had brought to him.

But instead of cursing God, he fell down upon the ground and worshipped. Job was as much a worshipper when everything had been taken away, as he was when unmeasured bounty was bestowed upon him by God. This is one of the worst defeats, I submit to you, that Satan has suffered.

For few, if any, have been subjected to the testing to which Job was subjected by Satan in order to get him to renounce God. And Job was sustained by his recognition of dependence upon God, upon the goodness of the character of God, upon the trustworthiness of the wisdom of God, upon the love of God that dealt with him as a child. Whereas Satan expected to hear the curses of wrath pour forth from the lips of Job, he was humiliated in chagrin to hear the words of praise continue to flow from the lips of this saint of God.

When a man gets into testing, it's almost too late to begin to learn to worship. It's too late to begin to learn to trust. It's too late to begin to learn to walk by faith.

And a man can be sustained through a testing of Satan that seeks to divert him from dependence upon God by walking with God daily before the storms and the trials and the tests come. And Job was able to worship because worship had become the established pattern of his life. And his dependence in former days was continued even at this onslaught of Satan, sought to get him to curse God.

Satan is not done. We can't admire anything else about him. We certainly can admire his persistence, but he did not give up easily.

And even though Satan has suffered at the hands of Job a most humiliating defeat, when on the next occasion he stands in the presence of God, God once again points his finger to Job, the one individual on the face of the earth that Satan most wanted to forget. God asks the question again, Have you considered my servant Job? And I believe if I were to paraphrase that question, I would do it this way. Satan, how do you explain a man like Job? What's your answer? The only rightful answer is, Job acknowledges his dependence upon you because of what you are, and he conforms his life to his knowledge of God.

But Job again had another explanation, and he challenged God a second time. Verse 4 of chapter 2, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life, but put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. May I emphasize it again? What one thing did Satan want to produce in Job? Rebellion, a curse, a question as to the wisdom and the love and the plan of God for him.

So now he has come to his final test. He has nothing more that he can do, for he says, If you afflict his body, there will be nothing more that he can do. And I am confident that then he will turn to me for help.

He will renounce you, for you are profitless to him. So once again, Job went forth from the presence of the Lord with the avowed purpose of working to make Job repeat the sin of rebellion that was his first sin, and the rebellion that was the sin of the angels, the rebellion that was the sin of Adam and Eve. And we find in the 8th verse, he sat down among the ashes.

The ash heap was outside of the city. It was an unclean place. It was where the outcasts went.

And Job has cut himself off from his home now, he has cut himself off from his wife, the one left to him, he has cut himself off from all of his friends, he feels that he has been abandoned, and then the temptation comes. Will you notice the subtlety of Satan here? Satan did not approach directly, but he approached Job through his wife. And his wife became the agent of temptation.

Eve was tested as Satan approached her in the form of a creature. Job was subjected to a greater task than Eve was subjected to, because this solicitation came from the one who was nearest and dearest to him. This is the strategy of Satan, not to use someone that is easy to repel, but to use the one whom it is most difficult to deny.

But the temptation is unchanged, because Satan's purpose is unchanged. For his wife came unto him and said, Dost thou retain thine integrity, thy dependence upon God, curse God, and die? And in mouthing those words, she is speaking the purpose of Satan. And she is putting a Satanic temptation before him to do the one thing that Satan wants Job to do more than anything else in this world.

To abandon his dependence, his submission, his obedience, become independent of God, and to turn and follow Satan. And I know you glory in Job's response, as I do on reading it in the tenth verse. He had to reprove his wife, for he said, You speak as one of the foolish women speaketh.

Remember foolish in the word of God has to do with one who has left God out of their thinking. He says, You are talking like a godless one, when you invite me to do what Satan wants the human race to do. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? So in all this, did not Job sin with his lips? Satan wanted one thing.

Why? What have I done to deserve that? What right do you have to do this to me? But Job refused, because of his faith in the character of God, to follow that one thing that Satan desired most of all, to declare himself independent of God. It seems to me that that which Satan wanted for Job, summarizes so adequately what Satan wants for you and me. It's not his desire that you should go downtown and rob a bank, that you should embezzle a employer, that you should be involved in some great ethical or moral scandal.

That's not his plan for you at all. What he wants is for you to look up to God and by some word or some act rebel against him. Say no to him, deny him his right to exercise absolute authority over you.

For when you do that, you have fallen into the trap that Satan planted for Job. You have robbed God of his glory, his right to be revered and worshiped. Job was not the only one subjected to such attacks.

When I turn to the 16th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, I see our Lord walking quietly with his disciples. He turned to them with a question, whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? The people began to speak, to repeat the answers that they had heard. Some explained a person of Christ as John the Baptist, some Elijah, some Jeremiah, some one of the prophets.

And after reporting what they had overheard, our Lord turned to the disciples indirectly and said, whom say ye that I am? Peter, the spokesman for the twelve, confessed his faith, thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Christ followed that affirmation of faith with a further revelation. He told them in the 21st verse that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and priests and scribes and be killed and be raised again the third day.

That was all part of the prophecy as to what Messiah would do. But the Old Testament had said that the Messiah, whom Peter had just confessed the Lord to be, was to be the suffering servant who would give himself as a sacrifice for sins that through the shedding of his blood he might provide salvation for sinners. When our Lord, upon Peter's confession, said, Yes, I am the Messiah, and I even now am on my way to Jerusalem to give myself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, Peter reached out and put his hands on the shoulders of the Lord Jesus and began to shake him, to shake some sense into him.

When I read in verse 22, Peter took him, the word translated took there means literally to shake by the shoulders. And Peter took the attitude that the Lord Jesus did not know what he was saying or what he was doing, and that Peter had to shake some sense into the head of our Lord. And he said, Lord, be it far

from thee, this shall not be unto thee.

Now, notice our Lord's reply, Be it far from thee, this shall not be unto thee. Now, notice our Lord's reply, Get thee behind me, Satan. Just as Satan used Mrs. Job as the channel to put temptation before Job to renounce God's will for Job, Satan used the disciple who was as close to Christ as any of the disciples to put Satan's temptation before Christ.

What was it? Rebel against the will of God, because God had set Christ apart to a cross. Turn from the way of God, leave Jerusalem, flee to safety in Galilee, and Jesus Christ recognized that word for what it was, a temptation from Satan. And he addressed Peter, not as the originator of that statement, but he addressed the one who had given Peter that thought, Satan himself.

He said, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence to me, for thou savest not the things that be of God, but those that be of man. And Satan had no greater purpose for the Lord Jesus Christ than to divert his feet from the path of perfect obedience to the will of God. It's the one thing he wanted.

And Satan put that temptation before Christ through the lips of Peter. And it was only a little while later that our Lord came into the Garden of Gethsemane, and the tempter was even there. And Christ resisted that same temptation to abandon the will of God for him when he bowed before the Father and said, Not my will, but thy be done.

He was obedient unto that. That is why the writer of the book of Hebrews invites us to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross despising the shame, and the joy set before Christ was the joy of being perfectly obedient and submissive to the will of God. The burden of my message to you, beloved, this morning is simply this.

That which was Satan's avowed purpose for Job, that which was Satan's purpose for Christ, to turn them from submission and dependence and obedience to God, is Satan's chief desire for you day by day and step by step. And God asks you to continue in a place of obedience, a place of subjection, a place of a worshiper, as you recognize God's right to your life. If you do not know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, the thing that Satan desires for you more than anything else is that you should come to Christ and recognize him as the one who has the right to be obeyed, and put yourself under his care, submit yourself to his keeping, trust him as your Savior.

He will put every pitfall and hedge between you and Christ that he can conceive. For since God's will and desire is for you to receive Christ and be saved, it is Satan's will and desire that you should reject Christ. And I ask you pointedly this morning, who are you following, Satan in your unbelief and rejection, or God, does he invite you to receive Christ as your personal Savior? We pray, our Father, that God the Holy Spirit, who has revealed to us the working of our adversary, might teach and instruct us of Satan's great desire for us, to turn us from this path of obedience, of submission, and of worship.

May we recognize every enticement that he puts before us, and resist it by the Spirit's power, so that we, like Job, might be used as an object lesson to Satan and his hosts, that he is worthy to be worshiped, because of our praise that ascends to the throne. This is with the riches of Thy grace and mercy and peace, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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