

Satan's Methods

by Lewis Sperry Chafer

Satan's methods include exaltation, opposition, and counterfeits, which are designed to hinder the believer's ministry of reconciliation and the purpose of God.

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Satanic Deception"

Description

Lewis Sperry Chafer delves into the activities of Satan, emphasizing his opposition to God and believers, seeking to exalt himself above all that is worshipped. The sermon highlights the enmity of Satan towards every true child of God, aiming to hinder their service and connection with the Divine. Chafer discusses the believer's vulnerability to Satanic attacks, the importance of spiritual warfare, and the prevalence of counterfeit systems of truth and doctrines of devils in the last days, warning against deception and the need to discern between true and false teachings.

Transcript

The two great activities of Satan, already mentioned, are referred to in II Thes. 2:4 in connection with the Man of sin, who will be Satan's last and greatest manifestation. This being is spoken of as he "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped." These two activities are inseparable in that, while Satan is seeking to exalt himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, he can keep his subjects or prolong his own existence only by an unceasing warfare in which he opposes himself against God. Whether Satan now believes that he may yet succeed in spite of the decree of the Cross and the evident superior power of God, is not revealed.

It is still further revealed that the enmity of Satan is not only toward the person of God, from whom he has everything to fear, but also toward every true child of God. Too much emphasis cannot be placed on this fact. Satan has no controversy or warfare with his own unregenerate people, but there is abundant Scripture to prove that he makes unceasing effort to mar the life and service of believers. The motive for this effort is all-sufficient: they have "partaken of the Divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4), and afford, therefore, a possible opportunity for Satan to thrust his fiery darts at the Divine Person. Thus the believer becomes a medium of connection between the Divine Person and the Satanic Order; for God literally loves the unsaved through the believer (Rom. 5:5); and on the other hand, the prince of the Satanic system, as well as many of his subjects, is seeking an opportunity for a thrust at the person of God. Several important passages on the latter point may here be noted: "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world"

(Jno. 16:33). "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12). "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you" (I Jno. 3:13). "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (I Pet. 5:7-9). "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles (literally, artifices) of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:10-12 R.V.).

The teaching of these passages clearly indicates the Satanic enmity toward the believer, and the believer's utter helplessness apart from the Divine sufficiency. They also reveal a degree of enmity which would result in the believer's life being crushed out, were it not for the evident answer to the prayer of Jesus: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one" (Jno. 17:15). Certainly there is abundant reason for the believer to expect the fiercest opposition from the Satanic host in all his life and service; and faith alone insures his victory over the world.

The believer is also the object of the Satanic attack because of the great fact that unto him is committed the great ministry of reconciliation; that by his testimony both in life and word, and by his prayers, the facts of redemption may be given to the world; and if Satan can but cripple the believer's service, he accomplishes much in resisting the present purpose of God. No other explanation is adequate for the dark ages of Church history, the appalling failure of the Church in world-wide evangelism, or her present sectarian divisions and selfish indifference.

This blighting Satanic opposition can be detected in every effort for the salvation of the lost. It may be seen in the fact that no personal appeal is ever made to the vast majority even in this favored land; or, when an appeal is made, it is easily distracted or diverted into the discussion of unimportant themes. The faithful pastor or evangelist is most sorely assailed, every device of Satan being used to distort the one all-important message of Grace into something that is not vital. The evangelist's call for decisions is often cumbered with that which is misleading or is a positive misstatement of the terms of Salvation; thus the appeal is lost and the whole effort fails. The action of Satan may also be detected in that a humble messenger who is loyal to Christ and His Salvation by grace alone, will be almost unheeded at the present time: while the vast throng will be found supporting that which is religious only in its externals, but which is, in reality, a gospel of morality and subtle denial of the redemption that is in Christ.

Again, the opposing power of Satan may be seen in the matter of Christian giving. Millions are given without solicitation for education, culture, and humanity's physical comfort, but real world-wide evangelization must ever drag on with its shameful limitations and debts. This warfare of Satan is even more noticeable in the believer's prayer life; this being his place of greatest usefulness and power, is subject to the greatest conflict. In this connection it may be stated safely that there is comparatively no prevailing prayer to-day; yet the way is open and the promises are sure. Then, also, if the believer cannot be beguiled into indifference or a denial of Christ, he is tempted to place an undue emphasis upon some minor truth, and, in partial blindness, to sacrifice his whole influence for good through the apparent unbalance of his testimony.

Satan's warfare against the purpose of God is still more evident in his direct hindering of the unsaved. Not only are they constantly blinded to the Gospel, but, when the Spirit would draw them, their minds are often filled with strange fears and distorted visions. Their inability to cast themselves upon Christ is a mystery to themselves, and nothing but the direct illuminating power of the Spirit in conviction can open their eyes and deliver them from their gross darkness.

Satan has always adapted his methods to the times and conditions. If attention has been gained, a complete denial of the truth has been made; or, when some recognition of the truth is demanded, it has been granted on the condition that that which is vital in redemption should be omitted.

This partial recognition of the truth is required by the world to-day, for, while the direct result of the believer's testimony to the Satanic system has been toward the gathering out of the Bride, there has been an indirect influence of this testimony upon the world which has led them to see that all that is good in their own ideals has been already stated in the Bible and exemplified in the life of Jesus, and that every principle of humanitarian sympathy or righteous government has been revealed in the Scriptures of truth. Thus there has grown a more or less popular appreciation of the value of these moral precepts of Scripture and of the example of Christ. This condition has prevailed to such a degree that any new system or doctrine which secures a hearing to-day must base its claim upon Scripture, and include, to some extent, the person and teachings of Jesus. The fact that the world has thus partly acknowledged the value of the Scriptures is taken by many to be a glorious victory for God; while, on the contrary, it cannot be proven that fallen humanity is any more inclined to accept God's terms of salvation than in the generations past.

It is evident that this partial concession of the world to the testimony of God has opened the way for counterfeit systems of truth, which, according to prophecy, are the last and most to be dreaded methods in the Satanic warfare. In this connection it must be conceded that Satan has really granted nothing from his own position, even though he be forced to acknowledge every principle of truth save that upon which salvation depends. Rather is he advantaged by such a concession; for the value and delusion of a counterfeit lies in its greatest likeness to the real. By advocating much truth, in the form of a counterfeit system of truth, Satan can satisfy all the external religious cravings of the world, and yet accomplish his own end by withholding that on which man's only hope depends. It is, therefore, no longer safe to blindly subscribe to that which promises general good, simply because it is good, and is garnished with the teachings of Scripture; for good has ceased to be all on one side and evil all on the other. In fact, that which is evil in purpose has gradually appropriated the good until but one issue distinguishes them. Part-truth-ism has come into terrible and final conflict with whole-truth-ism, and woe to the soul that does not discern between them. The first, though externally religious, is of Satan, and leaves its followers in the doom of everlasting banishment from the presence of God: while the latter is of God, and "has promise for the life that now is and that which is to come."

It is also noticeable that the term "infidel" has, within a generation, disappeared from common usage, and that manner of open denial of the truth has been almost wholly abandoned. Yet the real Church has by no means lost her foes, for they are now even more numerous, subtle, and terrible than ever before. These present enemies, however, like the unclean birds in the mustard tree, have taken shelter under her branches, and, like the leaven in the pure meal, they are penetrating and appropriating her most sacred altars and institutions. These vultures are fed by a multitude, both in the Church and out, who, in Satanic blindness, are committed to the furtherance of any project or the acceptance of any theory that promises good to the world or is apparently based upon Scripture; little realizing that they are often really supporting

the enemy of God.

A counterfeit is Satan's most natural method of resisting the purpose of God, since by it he can realize to that extent his desire to be like the Most High. Every material is now at hand, as never before, for the construction of those conditions that are predicted to appear only in the very end of the age. In II Tim. 3:1-5 one of these predictions may be found: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of them that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

Every word of this prophecy is worthy of most careful study in the light of the present tendency of society. The fifth verse is especially important in connection with the subject of counterfeits to the truth: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." Here it is stated that in these last days forms of godliness shall appear which, however, deny the power of God; and from these leaders the believer is warned to turn away. The important element in the true faith which is to be omitted in these "forms" is carefully defined elsewhere in Scripture: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (I Cor. 1:23, 24). Therefore, that which is omitted so carefully from these forms is the salvation which is in Christ. This is most suggestive, for "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," and it is by salvation alone that any deliverance can be had from the power of darkness. Without this salvation Satan can still claim all his own. It is perhaps necessary to add that, judging from all his writings, this salvation, of which Paul confesses he was not ashamed, was no less an undertaking than regeneration by the Spirit; and whatever other theories may be advanced, this is the teaching of the Spirit through the Apostle Paul.

It, therefore, follows that one feature of the last days will be a form of godliness which carefully denies the power of God in salvation.

Again, Satan is "in the latter times" to be the promotor of a system of truth or doctrine: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;" (I Tim. 4:1, 2). These predicted Satanic systems are here carefully described. Their offers will be so attractive and externally so religious that into them will be drawn some "who shall depart from the faith;" they being enticed by seducing spirits. These attractive systems are not only from Satan, but are themselves "lies in hypocrisy," being presented by those whose conscience has been seared with a hot iron. No more illuminating terms could be used than these. A lie covered by hypocrisy means, evidently, that they are still attempting to be counted among the faithful; and the conscience seared would indicate that they can distort the testimony of God and carelessly point other souls to the bottomless pit, without present remorse or regret.

The doctrine of devils is again referred to in Rev. 2:24 as "the deep things of Satan" and this is Satan's counterfeit of "the deep things of God" which the Spirit reveals to them that love Him (I Cor. 2:10).

Thus there is predicted for the last days of this age, both a form of godliness which denies the power of salvation that is in Christ; and a system known as "the deep things of Satan" or "doctrines of devils," which calls some adherents from the true faith and speaks lies in hypocrisy. Can there be any doubt that these two Scriptures describe the same thing, since they also refer to the same time? The lies of one can be but the covered denial of salvation in the other.

Again, Satan has his assembly or congregational meeting which is his counterfeit of the visible Church. This assembly is referred to, both in Rev. 2:9 and 3:9, as the "synagogue of Satan;" an organized assembly being as important for the testimony in the deep things of Satan as it has been in the things of God.

In Matt. 13 the tares appear among the wheat and their appearance is said to be after the sowing of the wheat. So, also, the "children of the Wicked one" appear and are often included and even organized within the forms of the visible Church.

The assembly of Satan, calling itself a part of the visible Church, is to have its ministers and teachers. This is stated in II Cor. 11:13-15: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." Here is a remarkable revelation of the possible extent of the Satanic counterfeit: "False apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ" and "ministers of righteousness;" yet these are shown to be only agents of the great deceiver, Satan, who is himself transformed into an angel of light. It is evident that the method of this deception is to imitate the real ministers of Christ. Certainly these false apostles cannot so appear unless they gather into their message every available "form of godliness" and cover their lies with the most subtle hypocrisy. Evil will not appear on the outside of these systems; but they will be announced as "another gospel" or as a larger understanding of the previously accepted truth, and will be all the more attractive and delusive since they are heralded by those who claim to be ministers of Christ, who reflect the beauty of an "angel of light," and whose lives are undoubtedly free from great temptation. It should be noted, however, that these false ministers do not necessarily know the mission they have. Being unregenerate persons of the Satanic system, and, so, blinded to the real Gospel, they are sincere; preaching and teaching the best things their energizing power, the angel of light, is pleased to reveal unto them. Their gospel is one of human reason, and appeals to human resources. There can be no appreciation of Divine revelation in them, for they have not come to really know God or His Son, Jesus Christ. As all this is true, how perilous is the attitude of many who follow attractive ministers and religious guides only because they claim to be such, and are sincere, and who are not awake to the one final test of doctrine by which alone the whole covered system of Satanic lies can be distinguished from the truth of God. In this connection John writes the following warning: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (II Jno. 10).

There yet remains one mighty element in the program of Satan's counterfeits in addition to his outward forms, deep doctrines, church and ministers,—that is, the Man of Sin, the blasphemous counterfeit of the blessed Christ; who is yet to appear; who will be the very incarnation of Satan; and "whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders and all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish" (II Thes. 2:9, 10). As the whole purpose of God in the ages has its consummation in the yet future coming of Christ, so Satan, in imitation of the program of God, has appointed a coming one (II Thes. 2:9), who will be his greatest manifestation, and upon whom he will

bestow his greatest wisdom, power and attractiveness. The study of this mighty and imposing character can only be suggested in the following pages.

The titles of Satan would indicate that he is attempting, also, in his own person, to counterfeit the Persons of the blessed Trinity. He appears as "the god of this world" in imitation of God the Father; he appears as the "prince of the world" in imitation of God the Son; and "the spirit that now energizeth in the children of disobedience" is his imitation of God the Spirit, who dwells in and energizes the true believers. Thus his desire to be like the Most High has led him to a blasphemous attempt to imitate all the separate manifestations of the three Persons of the Godhead. But, since redemption, which he proposes to hinder, is the work of the second Person, God the Son, Satan more often appears as a counterfeit of Christ, both in title and undertaking; and this is the character in which he makes his last and most desperate effort before he is banished to the pit and his final judgment is begun.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/lewis-sperry-chafer/satans-methods/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net