

Satan's Schemes

by Ron Ritchie

Ron Ritchie's sermon emphasizes the need to understand and combat Satan's schemes through forgiveness and love within the Christian community.

Duration: 30:55

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 12:12, 2 Corinthians 2:7, 2 Corinthians 2:10, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Forgiveness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the misconceptions people have about Satan, influenced by TV and movies. He mentions having a doll of Satan on his desk that looks cute, which reminds him of his four-year-old child. The speaker emphasizes that Satan's true nature is not cute or harmless, but rather a powerful enemy who seeks to attack us in our weaknesses. The speaker also highlights the importance of forgiveness and unity within the body of believers to overcome Satan's schemes.

Transcript

My name is Ron Ritchie. There are some complaints about the people coming up here and not knowing some of your visitors. How many are visitors for the first time? I don't know, what's going on? Great, yeah.

Some of our visitors may not have a scripture, make sure they do and just share yours with them, okay? Let's have a word of prayer, shall we? Our Heavenly Father, we desire very much this evening to worship you and praise you and tell you how much we love you and how we recognize that without you we can do not one thing. And we realize also that with you all things are possible. And Lord, we pray tonight as we open the word, I pray that you'll give us wisdom and insight and clarity.

I pray that you'll give your spirit of peace. I pray, Heavenly Father, that many who hear this tonight, your word, will use it as a mirror in their own life as I've had to do this all week in mine. And we've noticed, Lord, that when we hold the word up to our lives, we continually come up short.

But that you have given us truth and given us the power to take the truth and to apply it to our lives and then to grow. You've never given us truth to simply look at and walk away from. And so this evening, Lord, in so many ways that we don't even understand, we pray that you'll minister to your family through the word, through those who are going to share because they love you and want to encourage one another, that you'll encourage afterwards as we seem to love to stay and just to have life upon life.

And we simply thank you so much for this evening. And we're going to thank you for what you're going to do because we pray it in the name of your Son. Amen.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul is writing, and we're not quite sure which letter this is that he's really writing, but he's writing to a group of believers of a church that he had started. And he writes to them this time and he says, another letter that I had written to you is a letter that was filled with admonishment and encouragement and some things you've taken quite hard and it's caused pain. It's caused sorrow.

And then in verse four of 2 Corinthians 2, he says, for out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote to you with many tears, not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you. But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree in order not to say too much to all of you. In this particular case, it comes back to the 1 Corinthians 12 passage where if one member is suffering, all suffer.

If one member is rejoicing, all rejoice together. And so he says, I understand that when I wrote the sorrow that was caused to you was not just to me, it wasn't between just you and I, but all suffered here. Sufficient for such a one is this punishment, however, which was inflicted by the majority.

He had asked that they deal with certain problems in the church and certain people were involved in causing, through their disobedience, much heartache to the other members of the body. And so he had asked apparently the church leaders to carry out some form of discipline by the majority in order that the body could maintain its health. And at the same time that this believer would be brought back into fellowship by recognizing that God was serious when he asked us to do certain things and that he did not have the right, therefore, to stop the whole body in its action as it was moving forward in the community and building up believers and encouraging one another.

Sufficient for such a one is this punishment, which was inflicted by the majority. It's enough. So that on the contrary, you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

Verse 8, Wherefore, I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. For this end also I wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. But whom you forgive anything, I forgive also.

For indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, and in the original it has the idea, and I have, I have been in this with you from the start, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan. For we are not ignorant of his systems. We are not ignorant of his devices.

Now it seems quite apparent that when Paul wrote this, but this was a true statement. He was not ignorant. He did not lack knowledge concerning Satan and how he worked.

He was very clear in his mind to the activities of Satan. But for some reason down through the ages, it is quite apparent, that we have lost, laid aside, or neglected this truth that he once knew. That for many of us we haven't the slightest idea who is Satan and how he works.

Many of us have been psyched out by TV programs and movies and we've lost the true nature of Satan. I have a doll on my desk of Satan with horns and his red suit and a tail and a pitchfork and he has great big blue eyes and a beautiful little smile and I keep looking at him and he reminds me of my four-year-old. And I love my four-year-old and so the manufacturer has created such a doll that I'm in love, if I'm not careful,

with Satan because when I think of him, I think, my, isn't he cute? Gosh, he's just the cutest little fella.

And Paul is not thinking he's cute for a moment. And as you study the scriptures, you find out some characteristics of Satan and just very briefly, we understand from John that he's a murderer and a liar. He's a murderer in the sense that he's continually seeking to destroy, to cripple, to knock down and to knock out anyone in his path.

For the non-Christian, it's quite an easy target for him. He just starts the process of murder and men and women finish it, many by killing themselves. With the Christian, cannot be possessed, but he can be influenced.

He can be hassled by Satan. He can be hassled very dangerously. And Satan is a liar.

He takes something and tells you it's the truth. And when you try it out, it never comes up to your expectation. You say, I've been deceived.

Something's wrong. That's what he is, a deceiver, a liar. And Satan is an accuser.

He's constantly accusing us, telling us things that are not true about ourselves to such an extent that many times we believe that what he says is true. And this influences our life to such an extent that we cannot be available to Jesus Christ. We're put aside by our own feelings.

And he's an adversary, one who goes around as our enemy. He declares himself as our enemy. And Paul says, I am not ignorant of Satan and I am not ignorant of his devices.

Now, he says, the reason I want you to know about Satan and the way he works is because if you don't know who he is and you don't understand how he works, he will move in and take advantage of you. Where? In the weakest part he can. Where you are the weakest, he will move in and take advantage.

When I was in the Air Force and we were going through war games, I was constantly amazed that we would set out in a field trip and we would evaluate the enemy and we would spend days evaluating the strengths of the enemy. And then the colonel would say, OK, we know his strengths. Where is he weak? Because that's where we're going.

And every time we moved on the weak area, we won. And every time we moved into the strong area, we were defeated. Satan does not move in on strong areas.

He moves in constantly in our weakness. And so Paul looks at the immediate situation of a brother in Corinth who has been disciplined by the body. And he apparently has repented because Paul says to him, sufficient for this one, this punishment, which was afflicted by the majority.

That's enough. Bring him back. And he says, I want a little body life.

I want you to move in on this fellow's life, for he is sitting somewhere and sorrow is starting to build. He says, listen, I want you to move on into him. Because I don't want such a one to be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

I don't want to lose this brother. And so the first thing he asked the brothers and sisters to do in order to defeat Satan, he says, I want you to forgive them, forgive him so that there will be no opportunity for disappointment on the part of this brother so that he will not be disappointed in the grace of God, so that

he will not be disappointed in the love of God, so that he will not be disappointed in his brothers and sisters as he understands how they're to move in constantly and to be with him. I want you to go and I want you to forgive him.

Now, within ourselves, we do not have the power to forgive people. We say we forgive people. But you know, when the pressure really builds, we always seem to bring out that very thing that we told them we forgave them all about.

It's amazing. We don't plan on it. We don't work at it at all.

But we always seem to come up with that thing we said we forgave. Because within ourselves, we do not have the ability to forget like Jesus Christ forgets. Jesus Christ not only forgives us, but he forgets our past sins and encourages us to move on.

And so he says, I want you to move in. And I want you to move in understanding your relationship with Jesus. Move in and forgive this brother so that there will not be a time of disappointment.

Now, you know, excuse me. Disappointment is a very, very interesting thing. It's the concept of a feeling that what you expected from someone or something does not measure up to your expectations.

I've been amazed as I think this through, what has happened to me over the years, that up until about a year and a half ago, I really didn't understand something. I used to go around and look for a friend, and I would really work at looking for a friend. And I would have, quote unquote, a certain person.

I'd pick them out and I'd start working with them and talking to them and having lunch with them. And you know what happened? Just a matter of time, a couple of weeks, a month, pretty soon, I'd look at them and I'd say, gosh, they sure disappointed me. I'm just so disappointed in them.

I just thought that they were of a better caliber, better character than this. Gosh, am I disappointed. Boy, you go through a couple of years like this, like maybe 10, time after time after time, and you get pretty disappointed in people.

To the point that you don't want to have a friend anymore. It's too trying on you. And you're just tired of being disappointed.

And so you hold off. You don't really get to know anybody. So I was sitting with Ray Steadman up in a lodge up in Mount Hermon one day, and this thing really got to me.

And I said, Ray, I want to tell you something. I was looking in you for a friend. And boy, did you disappoint me.

I said, I don't want you to go commit suicide over this. But you just really disappointed me, Ray. I just expected more from you.

And in his beautiful wisdom, he said, Ron, what were you looking for? And I said, well, my idea of a friend was true and honest and kind and gracious. Never judged me. Always loved me.

Was, you know, open, patient, long-suffering. Had tremendous self-control. Always bragged about me to all his other friends.

Only I was serious, see. But he was, I could see him starting to chuckle. And that didn't, I just, I just saw it.

I said, see, now you disappoint me again. You're not even listening to me. I've just grown weary over this thing.

And he said, Ron, you know who you really have just described? And I said, well, I was hoping it was you. And he said, never. Forget it.

He said, you have just described Jesus Christ. That everything that you wanted in a friend, Jesus Christ was the only one that could come through like that. And like, you know, like clay falling off my eyes.

I realized this tremendous desire I had. I was looking in the wrong place. I had it the whole time and couldn't see it.

I kept expecting it in people. Knowing the word, but not really believing it. Always thinking maybe there was one of you out there that would come across as a real friend.

And then I found out that once I realized that Jesus Christ was my friend and had all the characteristics that I needed in a friend that satisfied all my desires. Then the Lord taught me to look at others as brothers who are growing in a process. They're being molded to become like Jesus, but they haven't arrived yet.

And then all of a sudden I had to do that terrible thing that all of us hate to do. I had to look at myself and I realized how disappointed I was in myself. And I learned the most important lesson to see one another as Christ sees us.

And that will never bring you disappointment. It will bring you praise. You'll just start to see their sense of worth, your brothers and sisters.

You'll be able to see their tremendous value in God's sight. You'll see them as God sees them. Brothers, sisters, growing as you are growing, being molded into the very image of Jesus, but not having arrived yet.

And you'll never be disappointed when you learn that lesson. And it comes from a forgiving spirit. And that forgiving spirit was demonstrated to us by Jesus Christ.

We are to forgive in his power and to forget in his power and to move in on one another. And that's what he says. I want you to stop disappointing.

I don't want this fellow to be disappointed. So I want you to move in and forgive him. That's number one.

So that Satan will not be able to take advantage of him in this area. Then the second thing he says is, I want you to comfort him. I want you to comfort him so that there will be no opportunity for Satan to move in and to cause resentment.

Resentment is just the next step from disappointment. And the idea of resentment is a feeling of ill will, which is felt as a result of a real or an imaginary offense against you. A real or an imaginary offense.

Now, most of us, if we're really honest, have imaginary offenses against one another. We build up things in our minds that are unreal. You can't believe as you think it through how Satan moves in on you and causes a spirit of resentment to come into your lives so that when you open your mouth toward a friend, you can't even believe what you're saying.

You can't believe what you're hearing. It's you speaking. A friend of mine's here in the audience, and I'd shared this with him earlier, but last week he came over the house, and he had phoned me earlier in the day and said, hey, do you mind if I come over the house? I said, no, delighted to have you.

Gee, I'll be home waiting for you. And I was very excited about him coming over, and I was just looking forward to it. So I was waiting all day, and I thought, gosh, he's coming over tonight.

That's just great. We'll play some chess. Maybe we'll just talk some things through, and it'll just be a good brother-on-brother thing.

My wife was away. His wife was away. And it was going to be a good evening.

So I came to the door, and I... Something slipped out. Oh, okay. I'm a Christian.

Come on. And so I came to the door, and I opened it, and I was so glad to see him, and he brought another friend. He said, hi, how are you? And I said, well, whatever.

You know, come on in. So he sat down, and we started talking, and I couldn't talk to him. And I was angry inside.

It was resentment building up because I never told him on the phone that I wanted him to come alone. I assumed that he knew that I wanted him to come alone and spend all his time with me. He's not dumb.

He's an adult. And he came, and not only was I disappointed in him, but by toasty, I was really resentful. And I started to realize what Satan was doing to me.

At no time had we ever made a statement that he was to come alone, and this was going to be our evening. I don't know what you're thinking, but I'm in trouble. So anyway, back to the plot.

As a result of an imaginary offense, had I seen him two days later, I don't know what he would have thought if I opened up on him. But fortunately for me, he called on a Tuesday and said, hey Ron, I want to talk to you about something. And I said, listen, before you say anything, and the Holy Spirit just moved in and said, get this thing squared away before this gets even more dangerous.

And I said, hey buddy, I don't think you know a thing what's happening, but I want to tell you how resentful I was towards you the last two days. And he said, well, I knew there was something wrong, but I didn't want to ask. Have you ever done that to people? They just don't understand.

But you've got all this going on in your head. You've got all these imaginary things against your brothers and sisters. And they come at you, and they're just loving you, and they're trying to walk in the Spirit.

Boy, you just cut them off. It's a dangerous place to be. Satan moves in right there when you're the weakest.

He moves in so beautiful, and he just tries to destroy you. And then the last point he says, I want you to move in on this brother, and I want you to move on him and reaffirm your love. I want you to go.

He knew that you loved him before this situation happened. He should have known that you loved him through the situation. But just in case he doesn't know this, I want you to go, and I want you to reaffirm it.

I had a gal Thursday night come to me, just quietly. We were in a house, and parents were there, and we were just kind of talking around. They went out to the other room to see something, and she just quietly came up to me, and she said, I just want to tell you how much I love you as a teacher and a friend, and just a friend of the family, and walked out of the room.

And I just stood there, and I just ate it up. Because you don't hear it that much, and it's such a shock, you can't move, you know. Not really.

But you know, you never get, you never say to people like that, oh, shut up. Boy, you say, you usually say, excuse me, I didn't hear you. You know why? Because we so desperately want to be loved.

We so desperately want to be appreciated in spite of ourselves. That a person could see me and know me that close, and say that they really appreciate me. Boy, that has to be Jesus Christ flowing through the life of that person.

Because we don't have it within ourselves to do that. Not a genuine love is Christ intended it to be. And so, he says, listen, I want you to reaffirm your love so that there will be no opportunity for Satan to move in and give you the root of bitterness.

The root of bitterness. I often think of the root of bitterness as like my danty lines. I have danty lines all over my lawn.

I got a danty line eliminator. It's a pronged instrument. And I go in and I cut them down.

And a week later, they're all back. And I look at my eliminator and I say, what happened? I paid good money for that. And I plug that in again and I cut them out again.

And a week or a week and a half later, they're up again. Just tons of them. And I look and I say, now what in the world is danty lines all about? So I went and I set out a couple of them.

And I put the danty line eliminator in there and I cut it off. And then I looked down and boy, there was a root enough to choke a horse. It just kept going down into the soil.

So I started digging the hole. And I couldn't believe why. I mean, I couldn't believe that a danty line goes that far down into my lawn.

And so all I was doing was just taking off the top of the problem. I wasn't dealing with the root. And Paul says here, I want you to reaffirm your love to this brother who now is to come back into the family.

I want you to reaffirm it so that no root of bitterness will come in. That Satan will not allow that to happen. That God will not allow that to happen.

That Satan will not be have that advantage to come in. And so our great desire this evening is just to say to you as a brother, that if there are some in this family that have had a difficult time and you're not pleased with them, and in fact, you have been disappointed. I'm hoping tonight through the power of the Holy Spirit and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, not me, because I got some to work out, that you'll go to the person that has disappointed you.

And through the power of the Holy Spirit, forgive them and understand that they're in the process of growing too. And I'm hoping that there are those of you who know of brothers and sisters that are having

difficult times, that you will go to them and comfort them so that resentment doesn't set in. Don't watch them crumble.

Don't watch them struggle. Move in and comfort them. Put your arm around them and say, I understand.

I'll be praying for you. I can't understand everything about it, but I want you to know I'm with you through this problem or this trial or this difficulty. And thus help them to eliminate any sense of resentment.

And if there are some of you who look around and you can see across the room different friends where the love has broken down, through the power of the Holy Spirit, ask Him to set you across the room to that person and to take care of that issue by reaffirming your love. Walk around afterwards and say, listen, I haven't told you, but I really appreciate you and I don't want Satan to take advantage of you in any way. I want you to know I appreciate you and I don't want any root of bitterness to start in your life.

Our Heavenly Father, we pray that through the power of Your Spirit and Your love and comfort and forgiveness that You'll help us to move in on one another in a true sense of bearing each other's burdens and loving one another as You have loved us. And Heavenly Father, I pray that You would be so pleased to make us quite aware of Satan's devices, of his systems, how he works as a murderer and a liar, as he works as an accuser and an adversary who seeks to destroy us and to keep us out of fellowship with You while we're busily fighting among one another and resenting one another and disappointed in one another and bitterness springing up between one another. And set us free, Lord, from this by obeying Your Word and really experiencing body life as You taught it to us by loving one another as You have loved us.

Thank You for what You're going to do this evening. Thank You that You're our Lord and our power and our ability. In Jesus' name, amen.

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