

# Two Deceptions Of The Devil

by Sandeep Poonen

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*This sermon delves into two deceptions to watch out for, emphasizing the devil's deceptive nature and the need for discernment. The first deception highlighted is the misconception that avoiding hell is the ultimate win, while the devil's true victory lies in distracting believers from wholehearted devotion to Jesus. The second deception discussed is the misunderstanding that the love of God eliminates the need for fear, emphasizing the importance of reverent fear in response to God's love and the balance between love and holiness.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:1, Matthew 4:1, Proverbs 24:30, Exodus 23:29, 1 Peter 1:17, Proverbs 9:10, Matthew 7:26, Zechariah 3:17, Revelation 5:6, Amos 5:21

**Topics:** "Discernment", "Balance of Love and Fear"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I wanted to share on two deceptions to watch for. Two deceptions to watch for that I wanted to share with you all. We know that the devil is a liar.

He's called the father of lies. But he's not going around spreading lies that the sun goes around the earth or things like that. He's a deceiver.

So his lies have a lot of truths mixed up in there. That's the kind of liar he is. He's a deceiver.

And so, for example, when you think about the devil, when he deceived Eve, he did not tell her outright lies. If you analyze his statements to Eve, you can see that these things were technically true. But they were a deception.

He told, for example, he told Eve that she would not die. She did not die physically when she ate the fruit. But she did die spiritually.

And I wonder if for the rest of her life, Eve or Adam ever figured out the devil's deception. So the devil is not going to tell us blatant lies. There will be a lot of truth mixed in there.

And that's what makes it harder to differentiate. And the devil, as we know from Jesus's example, even use scripture to try to deceive him. So he can even use scripture to use it to deceive us, which is why we have to not only stay close to scripture, we need good teaching, but we also need to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit to hear what he is saying, where he is, where he is moving, and where he is shining the light or where the devil is lurking.

So this is the first deception that I wanted to share. Here's the deception. I win as long as I don't end up in hell.

I win as long as I don't end up in hell. And the deception is that the devil only wins if I end up in hell. Hell is the final destination for many humans.

And the devil would love for every human to end up in hell, but the devil knows that he won't succeed in this mission for many Christians. For the sincere Christian, he's not going to get them to end up in hell. So the devil is primarily happy to win by dampening their single-minded focus to Jesus.

As we heard last week, he can get us to focus on ministry or serving or many other things, as long as he can dampen our devotion to Jesus. And so the devil wins if he's able to lower the temperature of my heart's devotion to Jesus by one degree right now, and get me over time to get used to that lower temperature from 98 degrees to 97 degrees. Most of us will go by a person who's 97 degrees hot for the Lord, and we'll all marvel.

But the devil may be more patient than we give him credit, because he lays low. It says even in Jesus' time, he left Jesus to come back and attack Jesus at a more opportune time. So he also knows part of his strategy is to lay low.

That's part of his deception. I mean, also let's think about the temptation to Jesus. The temptation to Jesus was very real.

There would have been real consequences to Jesus if he turned stone into bread. He could not be our Savior, but he might still have been the holiest person who ever lived. The track record of him living for so many years, and if he'd slipped up once, I don't think Jesus would have gone to hell.

He would have still been far beyond John the Baptist, but he definitely could never have been the Savior of the world if he even slipped up once. So when the devil tempted Jesus, not all of his temptations were trying to get him to go to hell. Some of them were, you know, worship me and I'll give you everything that I have.

But the devil was also content with one little victory now, and he was totally happy to just get Jesus to sin once now. So is the devil trying to get me to hell eventually? Of course he is. But for most of us sincere Christians, maybe most of us or all of us on this call, is the devil more interested in trying to get us to sin just once and right now? Now, those are two very different missions, and if we were to watch for the devil and his deception and say, I'm not trying to get you to hell.

I just want you to lower your guard a little now. Then we may see that he's winning a lot more battles than we think that we are allowing him to win. I was reminded of this quote by Susanna Wesley.

She was the mother of two, at least two, very, very godly men, Charles and John. And she said this, whatever weakens your reason, your desire to follow God, whatever impairs or hurts the tenderness of your conscience, whatever hides your sense of God, whatever takes off your relish or your enjoyment for spiritual things, whatever increases the body's control over the mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may seem. Whatever weakens my reason, well, what weakens my reason? A lot of times it's my feelings.

I know what the right thing to do is, but I don't feel like doing it. Susanna Wesley knew that's sin. Whatever it hides or lessens the tenderness of my conscience.

Jesus called the conscience the lamp of the body. If my eye is clear, the whole body is clear. Whatever hides my view of God, God is pure, pure light.

If we don't want to walk in the light, that is sin. And I love this one, whatever reduces my enjoyment for spiritual things, whatever reduces my relish, my enjoyment for spiritual things. Marvelous light that this woman had and I was really blessed by that.

Or increases the authority of the body, my stomach, I want good meals. I'm in a bad mood if the meal isn't cooked right. If I'm living according to the flesh, I must die, is what Paul said.

I was put to death at ease of the body by the power of the Holy Spirit. That's the essence of 2 Corinthians 11 3. The serpent was not deceiving Eve to go to hell right away. She was not being offered hell and the fires of hell.

She was being offered something that looked very enjoyable, not only from a human standpoint, but even from a spiritual standpoint. And the devil mixed up a lot of truth in there, but he was trying to lessen the commitment to Jesus. And as the serpent deceived Eve, the devil is not trying to get us to hell right away.

He's not trying to deceive us that way because he won't succeed in most sincere Christians, but he can lead us astray for that simple, pure devotion of sitting at the feet of Jesus. So the devil is much wiser than we may give him credit to. I don't know if you know this, but the Bible says that the devil is wiser than Daniel.

And even though I'm uniquely made, the devil has seen maybe millions of people like me over the last 6,000 years. I'm 40 plus, 45 years old. The devil has seen people for 6,000 years.

He's probably seen a million people who have my personality and my reactions, my biases, my tendencies for the most part. He's not easily fooled. I'm the one who's easily fooled.

And his favorite trick, dear brothers and sisters, is to lower the temperature. Not to get people to go to hell, not to believe all kinds of prosperity doctrines. His favorite trick is to just lower the temperature when nobody's looking.

Just one degree colder from our fire heart. And if we watch for that, that we watch for the decrease in my desire for God, then I see the battle more real time than, no, I'm getting afraid of the fires of hell. It's like that proverbial frog who gets killed by the temperature of the hot water going up slowly.

In the same way, the devil can slowly decrease it. And we have to watch for that. There's this beautiful story in Proverbs chapter 24.

We can turn to Proverbs chapter 24, verse 30. It tells the story of a field that is completely overgrown. It's like a completely untended garden covered with thorns and the stone wall is broken down.

Proverbs chapter 24, 30 and 31. I passed by the field of a sluggard and by the vineyard of the man lacking sense. Man lacking sense.

He was a fool. He was a sluggard. Look at what it looks like.

Behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles. Completely a wasteland. Its surface covered with nettles.

And its stone wall was broken down. But what was the cause of this complete disaster of a vineyard and a field? We see that in verse 33. Surprising.

A little sleep. A little slumber. A little folding of the hands to rest.

That was the diagnosis to the problem of a field that completely became a wasteland. That's all it took. A little.

A little sleep. A little slumber. A little folding of the hands.

The little foxes that ruined the vineyard. And I want to say this carefully but I want to make sure that the point remains. I wonder if most of us have the confidence that we won't end up in hell.

And I actually think that's a good thing. I don't believe Jesus lived every day thinking I'm so afraid I'm going to go to hell. God wants us to live without any fear of hell.

But we can also lose sight of the way the devil is winning ground in our lives by distracting us. By telling us, hey, look at the flames of hell. Look at those flames.

The fires are so far away. You're fine. You don't have to worry about anything.

And little by little, the thief and the deceiver that he is, is stealing things. Just a little bit here. A little bit there.

So what's the path we should choose? I've heard a lot of sermons about renewing our zeal. I've heard preachers who preach passionately about having a first love. But I want a sugar high.

I don't want something that peaks me up really high and then falls me flat two weeks from now, two months from now, two years from now. Here's a simple suggestion. Exodus 23, verse 29 and 30.

Here's a word of encouragement to protect us against the little foxes. The little by little. Here's God's promise to us.

I will not drive them out before you. Exodus 23, verse 29 and 30. I will not drive them out before you in a single year.

So that the land may not become desolate. Because that's the end result. If you get victory too soon and everything, it'll end up becoming thorns and thistles because you'll start folding your arms.

Little sleep, a little slumber will come in. And the beast will become too numerous for you all at once. But I'll drive them out little by little.

It's the little by little actions that we need to take, dear brothers and sisters, to become fruitful and take possession. So dear brothers and sisters, do something little today. Don't try to do something massive and big, waking up at five in the morning and spend one hour in prayer.

Do something small. Slip in a small prayer of gratitude today while you're washing the dishes. Sneak in a small check and talk with God when you're taking out the trash.

It's the small things that can add up. Caleb said that there was a lot of the promised land to be captured even after 45 years or something. And if we're idling, we're losing ground.

The only way to advance is not to have some big rah-rah sermon at us, but to do something little. Do something little. Every little thing counts.

Every little resistance to temptation is a victory. That's what the saints of God have taught us from before. Let's do something little today and keep that fire and watch the knob of the temperature and say, Lord, I want to maintain that fire little by little.

I want to watch for the devil. He's not going to jerk it down from 90 down to 50. It happens far more often than that.

He's trying to get it down from 90 to 89 and say, Lord, I want to guard that. I want to have frequent check-ins with you. Small little prayers of gratitude, praise to you.

The other deception I want to share is this, that the love of God means that I have no fear. That's the deception, that the love of God means that I can live without any fear. I want to explain that word fear.

God's love will never run dry. I don't have to live in some kind of morbid fear of him. Calvary proves that perfect love casts out fear.

And there's that verse, perfect love casts out all fear. And the devil can take me to that verse and say, I know plenty of verses that say, look, I can live without fear. But 1 Peter 1 says, if you call God as your father, live out your lives in holy fear.

The devil doesn't want to take me to that kind of fear. And to protect me from deception, there is one crystal clear proof that I'm embracing the love of God. One, and that is I'm growing in my reverence for God.

Holy fear must rub off on me. If I know the love of God or if I claim to love, know the love of God. If I sit on the lap of infinite love, I must hear the cries of holy, holy, holy, that the angels are singing closer to the throne.

If I sit on the lap of love, I have to open my eyes to see the slain lamb that is right there in front of the throne of God. Love without reverence is guaranteed ruin. I got that from Proverbs 9, verse 10.

Proverbs 9, 10 is a verse that we may know. I learned it because it was the motto of my high school growing up. That the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God.

Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, which means I'm a fool if I don't have the fear of God. And then Matthew 7, verse 26 told me about this fool who built his house on sand. He was the man who heard the words of God.

He was the man who heard about the love of God. He was a man who could even speak about the word of God. He was a man, a woman who could even sing, had great God-given talent to sing and talk about the love of God.

But he didn't obey. And he didn't obey because he never got reverence. He never had the fear of God.

He could even cry when he sang and spoke about the love of God. But he could be fooled because, I could be fooled because it never translated into submissive obedience to God. That comes out of a reverence for God.

That comes in the infinite lap of love. That's where I get the fear and reverence for God. So when we hear people talking and raving about the love of God, we can say amen to that, but I have to ask myself, Lord, I can trust the message, but can I trust the messenger? Because even the devil can quote scripture.

That doesn't invalidate the scripture. But I can't trust the devil and I can't trust people who are bringing in messages about the love of God as we hear sermons or music. I have to say, Lord, I can trust the message, maybe because it's backed up in scripture, but can I trust the messenger? I need to have discernment.

The loving voice of God will always have lavish love, but it will also have holy fear. And that came to me as I recently heard some Christians speak and sing so eloquently, so eloquently about the love of God. And I was blown away by the depth of the expression of God's love for them.

It was so eloquent and so moving, but something didn't seem right. And then I realized what it was. I didn't see a corresponding fear of God in their lives.

I didn't see a fundamental hatred for sin. And it was plain and simple, not judging, but discerning that they love themselves. I don't know these people.

I didn't know any of them. I don't know their lives, but what I picked up from them is they were singing and speaking eloquently about the love of God, but I still saw a love for themselves. So even though they were very moving and eloquent in their describing the love of God, they loved the fact that God loved them.

So they were still in the center. So even the love of God, they relished it because it didn't require them to get off the throne and reverence God. No, dear brothers and sisters, the loving kindness of God will lead me to repentance, a repentance of loving myself.

It says the last days will be characterized by a massive, massive love of self. So in the last days, many will come in the name of Jesus saying, Jesus is love. Come as you are.

God will wash away all your sins. His love is unending. They will never run dry and the scriptures to back it up.

But the love of God compels me to get off my throne and fall at his feet and accept absolutely nothing except God be on the throne. That must be the action and the reaction to us sitting on the lap of love. What must we do? We must recognize that we are fools if we don't fear God.

Love without reverence is ruined. Where do we get the reverence from God? Where do we get a proper reverence from God or reverence of God? On the lap of God, not standing at a distance, not standing at the foot of Mount Sinai, being so afraid to approach the holy mountain. That's old covenant.

The new covenant says come with boldness because of what Jesus did on the cross and what he finished. Come and sit on the lap of love. But then when we sit there, seated in the heavenlies in Christ, that's where the work begins.

And that's where we have to learn the difference between the love of God and self-love. And we have to watch for what we hear and what we see. What do we hear when we're seated on the lap of love, on the throne of God, where God sits? That's where God says, come here.

You're seated in the heavenlies with God. What do we hear? We hear the voice of love singing over us, Zechariah 3. That's the voice of God singing over me. But all the songs of God that are singing over me, saying how much he loves me, are sung to the beat of God's holiness.

That's the heartbeat of God. God is beating up, throbbing with holiness. And as we sit on the throne of God, the angels surrounding the throne are singing just one thing.

Not, you're loved, you're loved, you're loved. That's told by the fact that we're sitting on the love of God. But what's being sung with the angels all around it is, holy, holy, holy.

That's the balance of the love of God, seated on the infinite love of God, sung to the beat of holiness. What do we see of God when we enter his presence? We see God running. Dear brothers and sisters, he doesn't send the archangel Michael to welcome us in.

I don't believe there are pearly gates in heaven, but even if there are, there's no angel standing there to greet us. No, that's too cheap for his children. The father himself is running out to meet us.

That's a beautiful picture I had, is when we leave our lives here on earth to go home. We're transported into the presence of God, but God's running out to meet us. And he's running out to meet us every time we turn to fully face him.

And he welcomes us into his house. And there's a banqueting table that he's prepared for us, and the banner over it is, I have loved you with an everlasting love. But as we sit on the lap of love, as we feast on God's goodness, what's closest to the throne? We see that described in Revelation chapter five, and I've spoken about it before, closest to the throne, closer than all of the elders, the 24 elders, is the lamb that was slain.

It's not Jesus Christ. It's the slain Jesus Christ. And that's what's front and center in my eyes.

That is Jesus who I killed, who my sin did this to them. And these are the things that must balance out this beautiful love that embrace us before we jump out and we try to love other people. A love for other people where there's no reverence for God will lead to ruin.

Understanding, any understanding of the love of God where there's not corresponding reverence is ruined. And it's proved by my response to the love of God. I have to ask myself, Lord, what is my response to the fact that you love me? Am I willing to fall at your feet and give glory to the lamb that was slain? That's what happened in heaven, when the lamb is finally revealed, the slain lamb is finally revealed.

And so that's how I know. That's where I know that I've really been gripped, that God is silently planning everything for me in love. How do I know that I've really been gripped with it? And I'll fall on my face and say, God, what a good God you are.

I have, even though this is so painful, even though this trial, you don't understand it. But Lord, if you, almighty God, are loving God, are planning everything in my love, my response is I fall at your feet and say, wow, I'll throw my crowns. Dear brothers and sisters, I've seen that my eyes need to be open to the reality that the most beautiful things of this world are filthy rags compared to the beauty of God's holiness.

Most beautiful things of this earth. That is why my eyes still get attracted to lust and get drawn that way more than it should. Because I've not seen the beauty of God's holiness, which is why I grab my eyes away, that I tear my eyes away from that.

The most beautiful things of this world is loss compared to the beauty of God's holiness. And my eyes have not seen that, which is why I get attracted to the beautiful things of this earth. And I need my eyes to be opened to see that it is loss.

It is filthy rags. That is why we must teach our children to be modest, modest in the way they dress. But much more than that, modesty is a lifestyle.

The beauty of pretty bodies, athletic builds, attractive figures is loss compared to the beauty of God's holiness. And that's the problem with my eyes. It's not that I'm such a sinful person.

I've not seen the relative beauty of God's holiness and the beauty of elegant homes, a nicer home and a nicer car. The beauty of that is loss compared to the beauty of a gentle and restful spirit. I've not seen that.

That is why I have a spirit of complaining that remains in my heart. It's a beauty issue. As I see the true beauty of God's holiness, I will become modest.

Boasting will be excluded from the people who are people of faith. Modesty will become me. Humility will become me as I see the beauty of God's holiness.

So dear brothers and sisters, let's go to the lap of love. That's where we'll find holiness. Let's sit there.

Let's not stand in the corners. Let's not sit at the edge of God's throne. Let's go onto his lap and say, Lord, I don't want the temperature to decrease by even one degree.

I want to do something small today to tell you that I love you. I want to do something small today to build that connection with you and to maintain that connection with you. Every resistance to temptation, every little resistance to temptation is a victory, Lord.

And I want to do that now. And Lord, I want to learn more of your holiness. I've got a beauty issue.

I think the beauty of the world tells me that's the problem. I'm so attracted by the beauty of people and beauty of cars and beauty of homes that I think the upgrade in my home is going to solve the problem. I've not seen the beauty of a gentle and uncomplaining and a restful spirit.

Lord, that's my problem. That's what I need the Holy Spirit for. That's what I need to fall at your face and say, Lord, that's what you brought me all the way up to your lap to see, to see your beauty.

Dear brothers and sisters, I hope that we will fall at his feet in response to what we heard last week. God is silently planning every little thing for us in love. I pray that we may fall at his feet and say, Lord, we're unworthy of that.

Show me before I go out into the world, show me your holiness so that I may live in holy fear. That's the proof. That's the right.

That's what gives me the right to call God my father. May God help us in the days to come. There will not only be people who are gripped by the lavish love of God, but that will be people who are gripped by holy fear.

Thank you for listening.

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