

# ***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **SOUL-SAVING LESSONS “Knowing the Enemy—Satan”**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

One of the most impressive characteristics of any military leader is his ability to know the enemy. For example, Alexander the Great was a powerful conqueror during his day. One of the things that made him such a powerful force was his ability to know his enemy. He spent large amounts of time studying the culture and the habits of his enemy. He discovered the enemy's method of attack so that he could better understand his enemy. He tried to understand his enemy's goals and the manner in which his enemy worked. This knowledge empowered him so that he was able to understand and eventually defeat his enemy. The same principle is true for Christians today. In order for us to be able to defeat our adversary Satan, we must know what he is like. We must understand how God describes his character. And we must understand his methods of attack so that we can counter them. We also must know what goals this enemy of our soul has so that we, as children of God, can defeat him.

As we begin to think about Satan as our enemy, we need to understand that God has described his character for us. We can understand what Satan's character is like. For example, Satan is described as a liar. One thing that we can be sure of is the fact that Satan is not going to tell us the truth. He is not concerned about truth, or about us knowing right from wrong. Rather, he is concerned about us believing a lie and eventually being lost. As Christians, we need to understand that Satan is a liar. I would like for us to think about the words of Jesus in John 8:44. Jesus taught us about Satan when He said:

“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

Satan is a liar. He lied to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. And throughout history he has been lying to people in an attempt to convince them to follow his will, not God's.

We also can know in regard to Satan's character that he is the prince of the devils. We are told quite clearly in Matthew 12:24 that Satan is “Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.” He is not just a devil or a demon. Rather, he is the chief, the prince, of the devils. We could describe him this way: he is the best of the worst! We need to know that Satan is a fearful adversary. He is not just someone who wants to tell us a lie. He is the worst devil we can imagine. He has power beyond belief—far beyond any of the other devils. We must realize that Satan will do everything he can to cause us to fall short of God and His will.

We can know that Satan is the god of this world. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul described some people as being under the influence of “the god of this world.” These people were not under the influence of the God of Heaven and Earth. They were not under the influence of the God of creation. They were under the influence of the god of this world. This is a clear reference to Satan, who is the one who causes people to fall into such as humanism, unbelief, evolution, ungodliness, and immorality. Satan is the one who is behind the evil that

we see in this world. Think about the crimes that men commit against each other. Think about all the sin that we see today—things like drugs, immorality, and all the things that go along with them. Part of Satan's character is that he is the god of this world. He is the one orchestrating those types of things.

We also can know that Satan is a murderer. John 8:44 specifically states exactly that. In Genesis 3 we see him orchestrating the death of Adam and Eve. They are in the Garden of Eden and the old serpent, Satan, tempts them. He convinces them that there is nothing wrong in eating of the tree of which God commanded them not to eat. It was at that point that death entered into the world. One thing of which we can be sure: Satan wants us to die—not necessarily physically, but spiritually. He is a murderer, and he has been that way since the beginning of time. If we know that, it helps us to understand his character. It puts us on guard against things like that. Imagine if a murderer got out of jail and moved next door to you. Would you be on guard? Would you be alert? Would you be watching out for him? Of course you would. The same ought to be true of Satan. He wants you to die, not just physically, but in a lost state. He wants you to spend eternity in Hell with him.

We can know that Satan is referred to as "the old serpent." In Revelation 20:2, he is depicted as "that great serpent of old." This reminds us of Genesis 3, where Satan came to Eve in the form of a crafty serpent—one of the scariest animals of all. Few people like being around snakes. Serpents are scary animals. This is the idea that God is describing to us. Satan is a fearful adversary. Just as a crafty serpent sneaks up on his prey to bit them when the prey least expects it, so it is true for us today that Satan is like a serpent. Imagine if you were in a room full of serpents. What would you do? You would get out of there as quickly as possible. Would you pet one of the snakes? No. Would you have anything to do with it? No. You would get as far away from it as you could. This principle of Satan as a serpent helps us understand his character, and should help us as we deal with him. I do not want to have anything to do with him. I do not want to be around him. I want to get as far away from him as I can—and as quickly as possible.

We need to know today that Satan is our adversary. In 1 Peter 5:8, we learn a valid principle concerning Satan. As we think about Satan being our adversary, we need to know that he is the great enemy of the soul. As our adversary, he wants to do us great harm. He wants to oppose us in every area and defeat us. In Matthew 16:23, Jesus spoke to Peter and said, "Get behind me Satan!" Peter had inadvertently taken on an adversarial role. He wanted to prevent the Savior from carrying out God's will. But Jesus wanted Peter to know that he had, in fact, taken on an adversarial role. And in so doing, he had become like Satan because he wanted to stop Christ from doing the will of His Father. Satan is not someone who "does a little wrong every once in a while." Rather, he is the enemy of our soul. He wants nothing more than for us to be lost and to spend eternity in Hell with him. Satan is often referred to as the devil, as he is in 1 Peter 5:8—"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Satan is depicted as our enemy, to be sure. But the idea behind the word "devil" is "slanderer." The Greek word *diablos* is used 38 times in the New Testament to describe Satan. If people are slanderers, they tell lies. They distort the truth. They present things not as they actually are. That is how Satan is. He will do everything possible to slander God, Christianity, the cause of Christ, and even our character. We must recognize that Satan is not the type of individual we want to be around, or with whom we want to associate in any way. In Matthew 13:39 he is described as "the enemy." Satan is our adversary. He is our enemy. He wants to be sure that we are not in a right relationship with God and thereby cause us to be lost.

However, we can know not only Satan's character, but also his goals. We can know what he is trying to accomplish in our lives. What is Satan trying to do? What are his goals? What is his main purpose? One of the things that Satan wants to do is to undo the work of God and His Word. Consider the text of Mark 4:14-15, where Jesus teaches us about Satan's methodology in undoing God's Word. Jesus said, "The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts." Here we see the Word of God being planted and received. It appears as if initially the people who hear it want to obey it. But Satan comes in and takes the Word out of their hearts. Satan undoes the implanting of the Word. He does it through temptation, pride, sin, and lust. Whenever the Gospel is preached, one thing that Satan tries to do is to cause the Word to have no positive effect in the lives of the people who hear it.

Another one of Satan's goals is to cause men to renounce God. Consider the example of Job. In Job 2:4-5 we see a second "heavenly council." Satan comes before God, and God asks him, "Where have you been?" Satan answers by saying, "I have been going to and fro upon the earth." God then asks, "Have you considered my servant Job?" Satan says, "You allow me to cause him some kind of physical pain and he will curse You to Your face." Today, Satan is trying to cause people to curse God. He is trying to cause men to renounce their faith in God—whether it is through physical pain or through lust and pleasure. When bad things happen in our lives, we should consider whether Satan is attempting to get us to renounce our faith in God. This is one of the things that Satan tried to do with Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11. He tried to tempt Christ with the lust of the eye, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Satan said, "I will give you all these things if you will fall down and worship me." Satan's point was, "If you will devote your allegiance to me, then I will give you all these physical pleasures." How many people have fallen for that line today because of lust, desire, or the simple decision to do what they want to do? Perhaps Satan provides the opportunity, and they then seize that opportunity. We need to know that Satan is trying to get us to bow down and worship him rather than God.

Satan also is trying to instigate evil against men. In John 13:2 we are told that Satan entered into the heart of Judas. Verse 27 of that chapter tells us that Judas then determined to carry out an ungodly plot against the Savior because Satan had tempted him to do so. Satan does that same type of thing today as he tempts us to do evil through the pleasures around us. Think about Judas. It is apparent that Judas had a problem with greed. John 12 informs us that Judas had stolen money from the apostles' money pouch. Satan knew that Judas had a problem with greed. So he used thirty pieces of silver to tempt him. Satan instigated evil against Judas and against the cause of Christ. Against how many people is Satan instigating evil today—through the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the power and money that surrounds us? Satan is using those things to tempt us to do things with which God will not be happy. And we need to know that!

Satan also is trying to convince us to secure the worship of men. In Luke 4:6-8 the context once again is the temptation of Christ. One of the things that is clear from this passage is that Satan wants us to worship him, not God. He told Christ that he would give him all the things He could see if He would simply fall down and worship him. Satan wants us to believe a lie, not the truth, so that we will be lost. The text of 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 teaches us that very principle. We do not have to attend the "Church of Satan" or physically fall down and pay homage to images of Satan in order to worship him. If anything occupies first place in our lives other than worshiping God and serving Him, then who are we really worshiping? Jesus pointed out that if we are not with Him, then we are against Him. If we allow the things of this life—family, lust, pleasure—to get in the way of worshiping God, then Satan has achieved one of his goals by causing us not to trust God and put Him first.

Here is what we need to know about Satan's goals. Satan—more than anything in the world—wants us to be lost. That is his main goal. He wants us to be lost and to spend eternity in Hell with him. Remember once more 1 Peter 5:8—“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Consider also Luke 22:31, in which Jesus is speaking to Peter. Jesus says, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.” From this verse, we learn an important point about Satan's goals. Satan wanted Peter to be lost. Jesus describes Satan as separating the wheat from the chaff, with Peter being the chaff! Today we must understand that Satan wants us to be lost. If there is anything that I want you to understand about Satan's main goal, it is that he wants you to spend eternity with him in a Hell where “the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched” (Mk. 9:44). Knowing that empowers us. It allows us to understand that if we do not live properly, then that is where we will end up. But if we defeat Satan, then we can know that we do not have to go to Hell. Instead, we can be with God in Heaven for all eternity.

Once we have understood Satan's character and goals, then we need to understand Satan's methods of attack. How, exactly, is Satan going to attack us? How is he going to try to convince us to deny God? How is he going to try to cause us to lose our souls? What are some of his methods of attack?

We need to know first that Satan will sometimes try to appear as an angel of light. There is a passage in 2 Corinthians 2:11 that teaches us this very principle. There we are told that Satan makes himself to appear “as an angel of light.” Think about an angel. An angel is something that we envision as depicting righteousness. Satan, through some of his methods, can look that way. He may convince people that certain sins really are not so bad, and people may “buy into” that. Or, Satan may use religious error, which some people would put under the category of godliness and righteousness. Satan may come in those forms and try to cause people to think that they are right with God because they are doing “religious” things. In all honesty, however, they are not at all correct.

One of Satan's methods of attack is to try to create doubt among God's people. Genesis 3:1ff. is a perfect example of that very thing. In this context, Satan came to Eve in the form of a serpent. He asked in essence, “Did God really say that you could not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Is that really true? The only reason that God said that is because He does not want you to be like Him—knowing good from evil.” Satan is going to try to convince us to doubt God and His character. He may try to make us ask, “How could a good, just, and upright God send anyone to Hell?” Some people have been caused to doubt God's character as a result of such a question. If we put this in human terms, we can understand how this ought to work. Imagine if someone had committed a crime such as rape or murder. The person stands before a judge, and the judge says, “I know that you did something that was wrong, and I know that you have committed terrible crimes.” Then the judge slams down the gavel and says, “Innocent!” What would we think about that today? Why, we would have that judge thrown off the bench! God, like a righteous judge, must punish those who have committed evil acts. We must remember that people have been given an opportunity. They have been given access to the Bible and to the truth that it contains. Satan knows that. Thus, he will try to create doubt in our minds concerning God's character. He also will try to create doubt in our minds regarding the Bible by convincing us to ask, “Is the Bible **really** the inspired Word of God?” We need to know that it is, and why it is. We need to know that fulfilled prophecy proves that the Bible is God's Word. We need to know that there is scientific foreknowledge in the Bible that overwhelmingly shows the Bible to be the Word of God. In short, we need to trust in every way that God's Word is true.

Another method of attack that Satan uses is his constant misuse of Scripture. A perfect example of this very thing is found in Matthew 4:6 where Satan said to Jesus, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you, and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Satan misused two Old Testament passages to suggest that if Christ threw Himself from the top of the temple, God would take care of Him. But that is not the context of either one of those passages. Satan tried to use Scripture in such a way as to show that God and His Word could not be trusted. Satan uses the same ploy today. He misuses Scripture on a number of different subjects. When the plan of salvation is given, Satan may convince someone to offer only John 3:16—"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Thus, some will hear that and say, "All we have to do is believe." But that is not all that God had to say on that matter. Jesus Himself said in Mark 16:16, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

Another one of Satan's methods of attack is to be wily and cunning. In 2 Corinthians 2:11, Paul reminds us to beware of the wiles of the devil. The text of 1 Timothy 3:7 describes him as being crafty. Satan will do whatever he can to deceive us and to cause us to doubt God and His character. But we as Christians need to understand that God, through His Word, has given us the power to defeat Satan. We have a power over Satan. But what is it? Can we defeat and overcome the devil to ensure that we are not lost? Yes, we can. One of the ways we can do that is through the use of our Christian armor. As we think about our battle with Satan, one of the things that can help us the most is the realization that we have been given everything we need to defeat Satan. Ephesians 6:10-17 teaches us that we must stand strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and that we can overcome the devil. But how do we do that? We must put on the Christian armor. Paul wrote:

"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Eph. 6:13-17).

If we will arm ourselves with truth, righteousness, salvation, faith, the Word of God, and prayer, and if we will wear those as our Christian armor, there is no way that Satan can defeat us. We, of course, must make sure that we are wearing the armor properly and that there are no chinks in it. We must make sure that we are living as we should and that we know the truth. But the most encouraging thing is this: If we arm ourselves properly, Satan cannot (and will not!) defeat us. God has given us everything we need to be sure that we can defeat the devil. Let us realize today, then, that we **can** defeat Satan!

One of the things that helps us overcome Satan is the knowledge that we have the resistance of faith. Consider 1 Peter 5:9. Right after we are told, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," the Bible says, "resist him steadfast in the faith." We can resist the devil. We can overcome him. James 4:7 teaches us that if we resist him, he will flee from us. If we remain firm in the truth and remain faithful to God, we can overcome Satan. We can know today that we have power over Satan because God's Word teaches us so. One of the most important pieces of our Christian armor is the Word of God. Think back to Matthew 4:4,7,11. In those verses we learn an important principle about how to overcome Satan. When Jesus was tempted, what did He say? He said three times, "It is written..." "It is written..." "It is written..."

The same thing is true for us today. As we face trials and temptations, Satan will not be able to defeat us if we arm ourselves with the Word of God. Psalm 119:1-12 teaches us this very principle. "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word" (vs. 9). The text also says, "I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You" (vs. 11). If we want to defeat the devil today, then we, like Jesus, must know the Bible. We must come to the Bible and study the Scriptures. Studying the Bible helps us to know that whenever we find ourselves in situations where we are tempted, we do not have to give in to that temptation. Rather, we can be reminded of what God says and how we can overcome Satan.

Another principle that we need to remember is that our faith helps us defeat Satan. Faith is an important of our Christian armor in the fight against Satan. In Ephesians 6:15-17 we read of "the shield of faith." The text of 1 John 4:4 provides great encouragement. John wrote: "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." John followed up that comment with a statement in 1 John 5:4 where he said, "And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith." We as Christians can win the battle if we know about Satan's character and about his goals and methods. If we arm ourselves properly, we can win the battle.

Are you a child of God today? Have you obeyed the Gospel? If not, you are still a child of the devil. But here is the encouraging thing. Today you can begin to win the battle by obeying God's will. Believe in Jesus as the Son of God. Be willing to repent of your past sins. Confess Him as your Savior. Be baptized in water. Then, you can become a child of God. We are praying that through the Gospel of Christ you will overcome Satan in your life.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “KNOWING THE ENEMY—SATAN”

1. According to Jesus' teaching in John 8:44, Satan is the father of something. What is that “something”?
2. In Matthew 12:24, how did Jesus refer to the devil?
3. What designation did the apostle Paul apply to Satan in 2 Corinthians 4:4?
4. What designation did Christ apply to Satan in John 8:44?
5. What designation did the apostle John apply to Satan in Revelation 20:2?
6. What is the meaning behind the word “devil”?
7. To what did the apostle Peter compare Satan in 1 Peter 5:8?
8. How did Jesus describe Satan in Matthew 13:39?
9. According to Mark 4:14-15, what is one of Satan's main tactics in the war against human souls?
10. In Matthew 4:1-11, what three things did Satan use in his efforts to tempt Christ to sin?
11. According to John 13:2, who was behind the actions of Judas to betray Christ?
12. According to the instruction found within this lesson, what one thing does Satan want more than anything else in the world?
13. How did Paul say (in 2 Corinthians 2:11) that Satan might appear?
14. What request did Satan make in Luke 22:31?
15. How is Satan described in 1 Timothy 3:7?
16. What does 1 Peter 5:9 urge us to do when Satan tempts us?
17. According to Ephesians 6:10-17, what “equipment” do we possess that can help us carry out the command found in 1 Peter 5:9?
18. When Jesus was tempted by Satan (Matthew 4:4,7,11), how did He respond?
19. What is the message found in Jesus' temptation (Matthew 4) for us today?
20. According to Psalm 119:1-12, what must we do if we expect to overcome Satan?
21. The text of 1 John 4:4 contains amazing encouragement for the child of God. What is that encouragement?
22. What, according to 1 John 5:4, is our victory over Satan?