

4. We believe in the reality and personality of the devil.

(Transcript of message preached by Pastor Rick Minett on April 3, 2005 at Grace Community Church)

"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" (John 8:44).

Thomas Brooks writes: "Satan promises the best, but pays with the worst; he promises honor and pays with disgrace; he promises pleasure and pays with pain; he promises profit and pays with loss; and he promises life and pays with death." The Bible tells us, "...*the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.*" (1 John 3:8).

Is He?

According to recent research data available from a variety of sources, some 45% of Americans say they believe that Satan does exist. But the one study I found most disconcerting was done by George Barna in the 90s. He states that 48% of those who claim to be "born again" believe that Satan is only a symbol or that they are not sure of his existence. That tells us that the world is filled with people who believe that Satan is simply some make-believe creature from a cheap B-movie and evidently so does a great percentage of the church. But the Bible tells us that he exists.

Consider the fact that there is a God and He makes the world. And this God is powerful enough to make the world the way He wants, but in the midst of that world absolute happiness does not exist. In this world there is a puzzling dichotomy of happiness and sorrow, wisdom and ignorance, fulfillment and failure, kindness and malice, life and death... All these things run side by side throughout life. My point is simply this: The very fact that all these things do exist to confront and contradict the things of God should be enough to tell us that there is another personal being out there who is engaged in combating the plan of God. Why would God fight against Himself?

On top of that, the Bible clearly states over and over again, from Genesis 2 all the way to Revelation 20, that Satan is real. I've heard liberal theologians claim to believe in Jesus and yet deny the existence of the devil and hell. But how can that be? Jesus clearly believed in the existence of the devil and hell! Look around, study history; human experience tells me that Satan exists and that demons are for real. Matter of fact, there are those who believe so much in his existence that they openly worship him. If we simply open our eyes, how in the world can we deny his existence and his evil deeds throughout human history? It reminds me of the pastor who said he had a woman in his church that was so nice that she would never, under any circumstances, say a bad word about anyone. Someone asked her, "Sister, I believe you would even have something good to say about the devil." And she replied, "Well, you certainly have to admire his persistence." She was right—he is persistent! She learned that through human experience. Is He? Absolutely!

Who Is He?

The Bible tells us that he is a person, a spirit, immortal, and that he was the "anointed cherub." Satan is a created being; created by God; an angel. And like all angels, he exhibits all the properties of personhood: intellect, emotion, and will. Furthermore, he is a spirit; and like holy angels—unholy angels (Satan and his demonic host) are immaterial beings. In other words, Satan can be here with us and we not even know it because he exists in another dimension. As a matter of fact, there is no doubt in my mind that a church service is filled with angels—holy and unholy ones. The unholy ones whisper in your ear, "How long is he going to preach today? The roast is going to burn! Can you believe what Sister So and So has on today? Wonder what's on television tonight?" And the holy ones are pushing them aside so that the fresh breath of the Holy Spirit might blow in order that God can renew our minds and hearts with His Word. It's all taking place—but we can't see it because it's taking place in another dimension.

Satan is also immortal. He will never die; and that's because all angels are immortal, just like all humans are immortal. The day will come for all of us to exchange this mortal for immortality. That's why I say so often, "Death is not the end of the road, but a bend in the road. It's not a period, it's only a comma." Who is he? He's a person, a spirit, immortal, and he was the "anointed cherub."

You are probably familiar with two mighty angels in the Bible named Gabriel and Michael, but there was another angel more glorious than either of them. His name: Lucifer. He was the most breathtaking, the most beautiful creature God ever created. Isaiah 14:12 says, *"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations."* The name Lucifer carries such an evil connotation that no one that I know of names their newborn "Lucifer"—even though some have considered changing their child's name once that child becomes a teenager. But in Hebrew the name Lucifer means, "Day Star, Son of the Dawn, Shining One, Star of the Morning." He was perfection, the epitome of beauty. Ezekiel 28 makes this very clear; verse 12 says, *"You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty."*

At one time, the most important seal or mark on any package that was sold was called the "Good Housekeeping" seal. Buyers knew that if a product had that seal, that mark, on it that it was a good thing. It could be trusted. Lucifer is the only one that we know of that carried God's seal—God's stamp of approval. He was the most beautiful and perfect creature ever created, full of both wisdom and beauty. Verse 13 of Ezekiel 28 says, *"You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering..."* That verse goes on to say, *"The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created."* If you've ever wondered how God feels about music, wonder no more. The most supreme creature ever created was a musician; possibly the director of the heavenly angelic choir.

Verse 14 continues by saying, "You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones." All of that means that Lucifer walked with God in a way that no other created being has ever walked with God. And the first half of verse 15 says, "You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created..." Who is He? He is a person, a spirit, immortal, and he was the "anointed cherub"—perfect from the moment of his creation, until...

What Did He Do?

Ezekiel 28:15 says, "You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you." Verses 16-17 go on to say, "By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor..." In today's vernacular, he became "full of himself." The Bible has a simple name for it: Pride!

Again, verse 12 of Isaiah 14 says, "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations." From the anointed cherub who covers to the heinous, corrupted, vile being he is now. How did it happen? What did he do? Verse 13 says, "For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven..." He was already in heaven, so what was he saying? He was saying that he would occupy the throne of God! He was the highest angel in heaven already. If he were to "ascend" there was only one place to ascend to—the place of God. Verse 13 continues, "...I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will also sit on the mount of the congregation, on the farthest sides of the north." In other words, "I will usurp God's authority over the angels. I will become the ruler of all heaven." And in verse 14, Lucifer says, "I will be like the Most High." What did he do? One day in time past, he claimed the title of "God." From that moment on, everything changed!

What Is He Like?

Now before I tell you what He is like, let me quickly tell you what he is not like. He's not like God! Never forget that beloved, He's not anything like God. He's not self-existent; he is a creature, created by God and that makes him immensely inferior to our God who is self-existent. He's not sovereign; he may rule a demonic host, but there are boundaries to his rule and he is only permitted to rule wherever and whenever God allows him. He's not omnipotent; he is powerful, but he is not "all powerful." Only God is. He's not omniscient; he's a fallen angel and angels don't know everything. Someone may ask, "Then why does he always seem to know just how to trip me up?" That's because he's been observing human behavior for some 6,000 years now, and based on experience he is pretty good at predicting how we are going to respond. However, he is not omniscient; had he been, he would have done everything he could to prevent Calvary instead of facilitating it. Furthermore, he's not omnipresent; only God can be everywhere at all times. Satan has limits. Angels—holy and unholy ones—have to move from place to place. Never forget, the devil is not like God in any way, shape or form. He is not self-existent, sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, nor is he omnipresent.

Now let's talk about what he is like. First of all, he is an adversary! He is not your friend, he never wants to be your friend, and he will never be your friend. The name "Satan" literally means "adversary." He is an adversary of God, His holy angels, His creation, and all that call Him "Lord."

Secondly, he is a slanderer. The word "devil" means "one who slanders." And he lives up to his name because he slanders God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, the Church, and anything that is godly, good and holy.

Thirdly, he is crafty. We are introduced to him in the Garden as a snake; one who crawls on his belly so he can sneak up on his prey. The Apostle Paul warns us to be alert to the fact that Satan is cunning, crafty and crooked by telling us in 2 Corinthians 11:3: "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your mind may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

Fourthly, he is destructive. In Revelation 9:11, he is given a name in Hebrew called "Abaddon" which means "destroyer" and rightfully so because he is out to destroy everything that he can—your home, your health, your hopes, your happiness... Revelation 12 calls him a "dragon." I've seen these folks who have pet tigers. I think that's the craziest thing in the world and here's why: Tigers have a bad habit. At first they are cuddly, furry and soft; but they grow up! And when they do, they destroy. When is the last time you saw one tiptoe through the tulips? But isn't it amazing how people will just throw open the doors to a "dragon" and let him in? "He won't hurt anything..." Who are we kidding? He's a dragon! And there's nothing gentle about a dragon, is there?

Fifthly, he is evil. This is obvious, however, he is not simply evil—he is evil! He is the essence of evil! He is the personification of evil! He is the originator of evil; its creator and its founder. That's what Jesus called him in John 17:15: "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one."

Sixthly, he is a tempter. Jesus had yet to start his earthly ministry and while He was in the wilderness spending time with His Father, guess who showed up? The devil—to tempt Him. Matthew 4:3 says, "Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You...' And that's exactly how he comes to us, as a tempter: "If you'll just try this or that..."

Seventhly, he is an accuser. I'm not sure how he makes time for all the other diabolical things that he does because Revelation 12:10 tells us that he spends a great deal of his time "accusing us." It says, "...for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before God day and night..." How does he accuse? Satan says we are "nobody"—while Christ says we are "somebody." Satan says we are "worthless"—while Christ says we are "worthy." Satan says we are "poor"—while Christ says we are "rich." Satan says we are "weak"—while Christ says we are "strong." Satan says we "can't do anything"—while Christ says we "can do all things." And while Satan says that nobody loves us, Christ declares that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God. And until he is eternally bound he will continue with his accusations and that is why we must resist him and declare to him, "Thus saith the Word of God..."

Eighthly, he is a murderer. John 8:44 calls him a *"murderer from the beginning."* We barely make it into the second generation of the human race when Satan entices one brother, Cain, to murder his brother, Abel. Never forget that he hates life and will destroy life wherever and whenever he is given the opportunity.

Ninthly, he is a liar. John 8:44 also calls him *"a liar and the father of it."* He says God can't be trusted, but the Bible tells us to *"trust in the Lord with all our hearts."* He says one can sin without consequence, but the Bible tells us that *"surely our sins will find us out"* and that *"whatever we sow, we will reap."* He says there are lots of ways to get to heaven, but the Bible tells us that there is only *"one way to the Father"* and that is through His Son Jesus Christ.

Lastly, he is an imitator. 2 Corinthians 11:14 says, *"For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light."* What do you see on television when they are running an advertisement for alcohol? Do you see the guy under the bridge who hasn't had a bath for a month—the guy who has lost everything in his life because of alcohol? No! You see beautiful young people who appear to be having the time of their lives. That's exactly what Satan does. He perverts that which is good into something bad and takes that which is bad and tries to make it look good. What he first proposes is "delight." But what begins as "delight" eventually becomes "domination." He doesn't want to delight you—he wants to dominate you! That's why 1 Peter 5:8 warns us. It tells us to be sober and vigilant because the devil is roaming this planet *"seeking whom he may devour."* And he wants to devour us mentally, morally, and motivationally.

He wants to devour you mentally. The battle for the soul begins with the mind. That's why he tries everything he can to pervert the truth of God's Word, because he knows that truth will set you free. And that's why Philippians 2:5 says, *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."* The battle begins in the head before it moves to the heart. Then he wants to devour you morally. He moves to the heart and wants you to love the things that you ought to hate, and hate the things that you ought to love. He also wants to devour you motivationally. In other words, he wants to take your will. He wants you to stop trying. He wants to steal your joy and your hope.

What Is His Future?

Ezekiel 28:17-19 says, *"Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you. You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading; therefore I brought fire from your midst; it devoured you. And I turned you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all who saw you. All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; you have become a horror, and shall be no more forever."* In Matthew 10:18, Jesus makes one of the most profound statements in Scripture when He says, *"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."* In a moment's time—like lightning—he was cast out of heaven. But that's just the beginning of his fall.

Isaiah 14:15 says, *"...you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit."* The New Testament confirms this word in Revelation 20:10 by saying, *"The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."*

Isaiah's word then coincides with the words of Ezekiel as it goes on to say in verses 16 and 17 of Isaiah 14: *"Those who see you will gaze at you, and consider you, saying, 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook the kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities, who did not open the house of his prisoners?'"* In Colossians 2:15, the Apostle Paul says this of Christ: *"Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it."* The day is coming when Satan will not only be damned to the pits of hell forever and ever, but he will become despised and the display of his weakness will literally become a laughingstock to those who behold him. The final chapter has already been written and as Paul Harvey says, *"And now you know the rest of the story."*

The question is always asked, "Why? Why allow Satan to exist? Why didn't God just destroy him after his fall, along with the third of the angelic host that followed him in his rebellion?" I believe God allowed the rebel to exercise all of his power, all of his evil, and also gave him all of human history from Genesis 3 to the establishment of the eternal kingdom in order that ALL beings and ALL creatures for ALL time would know that ALL powers put together could never dethrone God. And when it is done, it will be done, and no one will ever doubt again that God's authority can ever be usurped!

Satan's rebellion began in the heavenly temple because that was the place where praise was offered to God. That's why Satan did all that he could to destroy the earthy temple; because that was the place where praise was offered to God. That's why Satan did all that he could, though failed, to destroy the "Temple Incarnate." He sought to destroy the Son who offered praise to God. And that is why he will do all that he can to destroy and pollute the current temple of God, the place where praise is offered to God. And where is that temple today? It isn't in Jerusalem—it's right here, in you and in me. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit! So what Satan wants to do is take that body which was created for God's purposes to be indwelt by His Spirit, and Satan wants to pollute it like he did the heavenly temple so that the worship of God might be poisoned.

On the other hand, God wants to take this very same temple, fill it with His Spirit and holiness, and demonstrate through us His glory and His power. And that's why preachers like me repeatedly say that we must "contend for the faith." That is why we must "fight the good fight of faith." The battle is on! There is a war on the angelic level and there is a war on the human level. This entire universe is a battleground. Make no mistake about it, Satan is contending for the souls of men. He's contending for the souls of your children, your loved ones and your friends. This is no game to him, so now is not the time to be casual in your walk of faith.

Let me assure you, the devil clearly knows the prophecies of Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, and Revelation 20. He knows he is a defeated foe, he knows of his absolute destruction, he knows that his time is limited, and he knows he will be bound in hell forever and ever. And the only pleasure he gains is by taking as many of God's creation there with him as he can.

The poet was right: "Satan promises the best, but pays with the worst; he promises honor and pays with disgrace; he promises pleasure and pays with pain; he promises profit and pays with loss; and he promises life and pays with death." Satan is contending for the souls of men, but so is God; and he has called us to contend with Him. So let us do exactly that. Let's fight the good fight of faith; resist the devil and cause him to flee, remain steadfast and vigilant, and let's overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony.