

## Rooted #5—The Enemy

The worst year of my life was 7<sup>th</sup> grade. I don't know if that's actually true anymore, but I spent so many years saying it, it's now what I think. What made 7<sup>th</sup> grade so rough was I had an enemy. There were three of them actually.

Junior High and High School were in the same building. Normally, we were kept apart, but while 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade were having lunch, I passed through the commons on the way to my next class. The big, scary ninth graders liked to play pinball with the 7<sup>th</sup> graders passed by. There was a group of 9<sup>th</sup> grade boys who took particular pleasure in pushing me. And every day I was picking up my books that had been kicked all over the commons floor.

The next semester I signed up for wood shop. Because of a shortage of shop space, my class was in the shop at the same time as the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders. Guess who was in my shop class with me? Yay. They made life a living hell. Our teacher was often off doing other things and not paying attention.

One of their favorite pastimes was to take a piece of wood over to the drill press fitted with a hole saw bit and cut out little circles of wood. They would then throw them at my head when I wasn't looking. It hurt. It seemed their sole purpose in life was to torment me and make my life miserable.

One day, they got me cornered, and I was so scared and so sick of it, I just lost it. I took a 2x4 and hit one of those boys upside the head. Knocked him clean over. Everyone was so stunned, they just let me run out of the room. I ended up spending a week in in school detention, but it was so worth it. Those boys never messed with me again.

Life isn't so different from 7<sup>th</sup> grade. You have an enemy. His sole purpose in life is to torment you. He exists to steal your purpose, kill your hope and destroy your influence. Here is what the Apostle Peter says about our enemy in 1 Peter 5.

### **1 Peter 5:8**

*Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.*

Lions don't roar until they have their prey right where they want them. When they're on the prowl, they're quiet. They're sneaking around. Satan doesn't want you to know when he's getting into position. By the time the lion roars the attack has already begun. The lion is trying to paralyze his prey with fear.

Satan does the same thing. He's on the prowl. He's hunting. And he wants to get you right where he wants you. By the time you hear his roar, he's already on the attack. He just wants to

paralyze you with fear. He doesn't want you to flee. He doesn't want you to resist. He just wants to sink his teeth into you.

**(Advance Slide)** Maybe this scares you. Maybe it doesn't. It should. When I was a kid we sang these silly songs made into the butt of a joke. I think they were trying to teach us how dangerous Satan was, but these songs just made the devil sound like a buffoon.

"I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy, down in my heart. Where? And if the Devil doesn't like it he can sit on a tack. Sit on a tack. And he can sit on a tack to stay!!"

"This little light of mine. I'm gonna let it shine. Won't let Satan woof it out! I'm gonna let it shine."

"If I had a little white box to put my Jesus in. I'd take him out and (kissing sound x3) and share him with a friend. But if I had a little red box to put the devil in, I'd take him out and smash his face! And put him right back in." There are so many problems with this song.

Have you ever just wanted to kick the devil in the teeth? To give him a taste of his own medicine? I hate Satan. I want to smash his face when I think about the pain he has caused, the homes he has broken, the children he's abused, the sorrow he's sown, the dreams he's destroyed, the lives he's shattered and the death he has inflicted. I want to smash Satan's face!

Satan is our enemy and Jesus wanted to smash Satan's face too. The very first prophecy about Jesus in the Bible occurs in Genesis 3:15. It comes after Satan, in the guise of a serpent, tempts Adam and Even into rebelling against God. One of the things God tells the serpent is this,

*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*

The prophecy is talking about a specific offspring. It's talking about Jesus. Satan bruised his heel when he died on the cross. Satan thought he had won, but in getting close enough to strike at his heel, he was close enough for Jesus to stomp on his head. The grave would not have the last say. Death would be defeated. Jesus crushed the head of the serpent. But it doesn't stop there. He gives you the power to stomp on his face as well. Romans 16:20 says,

**Romans 16:20**

*The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

One of the best places to find out more about our enemy is in Matthew 4:1-11; Let me give you a little background of this passage. Jesus has just been baptized. No, he didn't need be cleansed of his sins. He hadn't sinned at all, but Jesus told John he needed to be baptized to "fulfill all righteousness". Jesus wanted to be completely submissive the will of the Father and to set an example for us to follow.

After his baptism though, Jesus doesn't immediately begin preaching and performing miracles. No. The Holy Spirit actually leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. A part of what makes Jesus Jesus is that he was tempted in all things just as we are. Jesus couldn't give us victory over Satan if he didn't face down Satan himself, and win.

**Matthew 4:1-11 (3 Slides)**

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."*

**(Advance Slide)** *Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,*

*"He will command his angels concerning you," and*

*"On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone."*

*Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

**(Advance Slide)** *Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."*

*Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written,*

*"You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve."*

*Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.*

This event teaches us a few things about our enemy.

**I. Satan is real.**

This isn't a parable. It's not a metaphor. Jesus is literally and actually interacting with Satan. It has often been said the greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist. The Bible presents Satan as a very real, literal, living being.

We're kind of wishy washy when it comes to what we think about Satan. The Barna Research Group found in a survey last year that 56% of Americans surveyed agreed with this statement, "Satan is not merely a symbol of evil but is a real spiritual being and influences human lives." Ironically, that's a higher number than those who say they believe in a biblical view of God which is only 51%.<sup>i</sup> What does it mean when more Americans believe in Satan than believe in God?

Of course, that means that 44% don't believe Satan is real. Even scarier is the fact that 40% of self-described Christians strongly agreed that Satan "is not a living being but is a symbol of evil."<sup>ii</sup>

A couple of years ago the head of the Jesuit order declared that the devil “exists as the personification of evil in different structures, but not in persons, because he is not a person.” In turn, the Pope responded, “We should not think of the devil as a myth, a representation, a symbol, a figure of speech, or an idea.” That’s exactly what many theologians believe, and it’s exactly what many seminaries teach. The idea of a devil, according to an article in Psychology Today,

“...is simply something that germinated from the unscientific, irrational minds of early humans who tried their best to explain why bad things happen to good people, why good people sometimes do bad things, and why there is so much needless suffering in the world.”<sup>iii</sup>

Satan would love for us to think he isn’t real, that he’s just a metaphor for the evil in our own hearts. He doesn’t want us to realize that there is an enemy with a strategy and a plan to take you down. When we don’t think he’s real, we let down our guard. We are weak. We are vulnerable.

When we deny the reality of the devil, the next step is we deny the reality of evil. There is no evil there is just a lack of understanding, a lack of education. There is no evil; just poverty. There is no evil; just systemic inequalities in societies power structures. There is no evil; just bad wiring or chemical imbalances in the brain. All of these ideas are gaining traction in our culture. And if there is no evil; there is no sin; and there is no need of forgiveness, redemption or a savior.

Here’s the truth. We can't say we believe in Jesus and not believe in Satan too. Otherwise, who was Jesus talking to in the wilderness?

Satan is real, but here are some things you need to remember. He’s not God. He’s not all-powerful. He is not all-knowing. Satan can’t be everywhere at the same time. He is a created being. He was created as an angel to serve God. He was a high ranking angel, a very powerful angel, but still, just an angel. He rebelled against and he was thrown from heaven. Good and evil are not equal forces vying for control of the cosmos. God is all-powerful. Satan is defeated. The only question is how many people he can take with him. He only has as much power as we give him.

## **II. Satan will Try to Tempt Us.**

Secondly, Satan will try to tempt us. Satan has no power over your life unless you give it to him, so he has to try to convince you to cooperate with your own destruction. So, he won’t be honest about what he’s doing. He’s wily devil. He has all sorts of tricks to fool you into doing his work for him.

I want to point out three things from Satan’s temptation of Jesus that also apply to us.

### A. He attacks us when we feel the strongest.

First, he attacks when we feel the strongest. Jesus encounters Satan in the wilderness immediately after His baptism. When you think you are spiritually strong. When you think you are invulnerable to attack, that's when he pounces.

You go to a men's conference. You go to a women's conference. You've just gotten back from CIY and you are on a spiritual high. You just had a major spiritual victory. You're going to be a new person. You have a reinvigorated faith, and then BOOM, you find yourself in the middle of a wasteland under attack. That leads right to the second thing.

### B. He attacks us where we are weakest.

Satan attacks us where we are weakest. Wait a minute? You just said he attacks us when we feel the strongest. Yes. Listen carefully. He attacks WHEN we feel the strongest, when we THINK we're the strongest, but attacks WHERE we are the weakest. One is about timing. The other is about tactics. A lion attacks the herd where it is weakest – the sick, the injured, the young, and the elderly.

First, Satan tempts Jesus with food after he has fasted for 40 days. A loaf of bread sounded really good at that moment. Then, he tempts Jesus with power. Think about why this could have been such a huge temptation for Jesus. He's given up his position at the right hand of the Father in heaven. He's given up all his power and authority and glory and majesty to put on a skin suit, come to earth and live like one of the mortals he created in the dirt and dust in a weary worn world.

The only way Jesus is ever getting back to the right hand of the Father, is through torture and death on a cross. And here Satan is saying, "You can skip all that. You can share the throne with me. I'll give you power over all the kingdoms of the world."

Satan knows just where to hit you. He knows just what to tempt you with. If you are emotionally sick or spiritually injured at some point, that's where he strikes. The enemy of your hope and happiness hunts with the cruel instinct of a lion. His teeth sink in where you are fragile. He will always try to get you to act out of fear rather than faith, failure over freedom, and regret over redemption.

You can also look at Satan's temptations of Jesus as happening at every level of his being. He tempted Jesus **Physically** (4:1-4)—Jesus was hungry so turn these stones into bread.

He tempted Jesus **Egotistically**--Throw yourself down and all of the angels will rescue you. This appeals to his pride.

He tempted Jesus **Spiritually**--Worship me and I will give you all of the kingdoms of the world. Satan will come after you physical health. He will come after your spiritual health. He will come after your emotional health. He will come after your mental health.

### **C. His Attacks Can be Thwarted by the Word of God**

You have Satan attacking Jesus on multiple levels where Jesus is weakest. How does Jesus respond? How does he parry each thrust? Satan's attacks by be thwarted by the Word God. With each and every temptation, Jesus responds by quoting Scripture. Three times he says, "It is written, and then he quotes from the Old Testament. There's no countermove Satan can make. There's no response. Satan is powerless in the face of God's word. This is why the apostle Paul calls it the sword of the Spirit.

I find it interesting that Jesus doesn't rely on his own word or authority as the Son of God. Even Jesus relies and the authority God's word. If even Jesus needed to use Scripture to ward off the attacks of Satan, how much more so do we need God's word? The quickest way to give Satan power in your life is to not have God's word in it.

I want you to also notice that Satan uses Scripture. In verse 6 he says, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.' This comes from Psalm 91.

Satan doesn't always tempt us with the obvious things like alcohol, or porn or revenge. He uses even good things – family, friends, work, even the Bible. He knows no bounds. He will use even holy things and pervert them. But Satan doesn't use Scripture. He misuses Scripture. He takes it out of context. He twists it for his own use. And if you are not grounded in the word yourself, you won't see his trick for what it is. This is how we end up with Christians doing horrible, awful things for what they think are biblical reasons. There is no substitute for knowing the Bible.

### **III. Satan is a loser who has been defeated.**

This brings us to the last point. Satan is a loser who has been defeated. Jesus drives Satan away with just Scripture. Satan has no power over Him. Satan has nothing to offer him. Jesus didn't have to beg Satan to leave. He orders him to go. "Away, from me Satan!" And he was gone.

Jim was a preacher in Kentucky. One day he visited a home with a big bulldog. While in the living room, he noticed the cat kept tormenting the bull dog and wouldn't stop. When Jim asked the woman why they dog didn't do anything to stop the cat, she reached down and pulled the dog's lip up to reveal it had no teeth.

The cross means everything to us. When Christ shed his blood he paid for our sins and when we clothe ourselves with Him and are buried with Him in Christian baptism we have our sins forgiven. On the cross, Jesus kicked out every tooth in our enemy's mouth. He'll bark at you...but he has no bite!

Several years ago a Colorado newspaper told the story of Lexy Lowler. Lexy is a sheep rancher in southern Montana. She has had a problem with coyotes killing her sheep for years. She tried

sprays, electric fences, “scare-coyotes”, she even slept in the fields with her sheep, but she still lost about 50 lambs a year. She's finally discovered the secret weapon--the llama.

She said, “Llamas don't appear to be afraid of anything. When they see something, they put their head up and walk straight toward it. The coyotes see this aggressive behavior and they want nothing to do with it. Coyotes are opportunists, and llamas take that opportunity away.”<sup>iv</sup>

Apparently llamas know the truth of what James writes: “*Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.*” (4:7)

I want us to be a church full of spiritual llamas. Repeat after me:

Satan has lost. Satan is a loser. Satan is a coward. I will not be afraid of him. I will be strong when he tries to tempt me. I will be victorious when he tries to defeat me. When he reminds me of my past. I will remind him of his future. I will be a “llama Christian!”

We don't need a little red box!

Because of what Jesus did on the cross, the smashing has already occurred.

Our.

Enemy.

Has.

Been.

Defeated!

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<sup>i</sup> [Barna: More Americans Now Believe in Satan Than in God \(churchleaders.com\)](http://churchleaders.com)

<sup>ii</sup> [Most American Christians Do Not Believe that Satan or the Holy Spirit Exist - Barna Group](#)

<sup>iii</sup> [The Devil? Seriously? | Psychology Today](#)

<sup>iv</sup> [Faith Like a Llama - Shared by Johnny A. Palmer Jr. - Sermon Illustrations - SermonCentral.com](#)