

Destroying the Works of the Devil

The people who will experience the fullest meaning of Christmas this year are the people who know and feel that there is something in them that needs to be dealt with.

Text: 1 John 3:8 - Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

Before you can receive Him as healing Savior you must recognize Him as a destroyer God!

Jesus Came to Destroy Something

Jesus said, *“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous but sinners” (Mark 2:17).* The only people who understand Christmas and embrace Christmas for what it is are people who feel sick, and who desperately want their sickness destroyed.

Unless you welcome Jesus as a destroyer in your life, you can't have Him as a Savior.

Christmas is the celebration of the appearing on earth of God's eternal Son and the reason He appeared is to destroy the works of the devil. So, the reason there is a Christmas is because God aims to destroy something.

God's aim is to destroy the work of the devil in the lives of faith-filled people.

The **works** of the devil are many and today I want to talk about just one that that is certainly the work of the devil's.

Satan is a thief and a robber. He robs revelation by obstructing the Word.

John 10:10 - The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

John 18:37 - Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

These words were spoken at the end of His life... but they are about Christmas. “For this reason I was born ...” For this reason there is Christmas. Christmas exists because Jesus came to bear witness to the truth.

Satan Working Against the Word:

Mark 4:1-20 - Again, he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. v.2 And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: v.3 “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to

sow. v.4 And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. v.5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. v.6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. v.7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. v.8 And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.” v.9 And he said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

v.10 And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. v.11 And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, v.12 so that “they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.” Note: There were those who had rejected Jesus. They even plotted to kill Him and their refusal to believe His words had closed the door of revelation to them.

v. 13 And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? v.14 The sower sows the word. v.15 And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. v.16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. v.17 And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. v.18 And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, v.19 but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. v.20 But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

Why Does Satan Seek to Steal the Word?

1) To Hinder Fruit-bearing

a) If the Word does not take root we cannot bear fruit!

Mark 4:20 - But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

b) Think of it this way: Imagine you plant a pear tree this winter. The 1st year you harvest 30 pears, second year 60, third year 100! You have the potential to produce that kind of spiritual fruit once the Word gets in you. This is why Satan works against the Word getting in you.

2) To Destroy Discipleship

A persistently fruitless hearer of the Word cannot be a disciple of Jesus.

Jesus said, “you must abide in me and my words must abide in you...” John 15:7

John 15:8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Therefore fruitfulness is essential to being a true disciple of Jesus and since the *abiding Word* is the key to fruitfulness, discipleship is at stake if Satan takes the Word away.

This is what Jesus said in John 8:31, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples.” If the Word is taken away from our hearts, we cannot be followers of Jesus.

3) To Block Salvation

- a) Jesus says in John 15, “Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away ... If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.” Ultimately what is at stake if Satan takes away the Word of God is our salvation.
- b) Without the Word of God abiding and taking root in our heart, we cannot bear fruit, be disciples, or inherit eternal life.

Three Satanic Strategies to Steal the Word

1) Hardness

Proverbs 28:14 NIV - *Blessed is the one who always trembles before God, but whoever hardens their heart falls into trouble.*

a) Satan works overtime to keep people from giving serious attention to the Word of God.

i) Distraction

(1) In church:

(a) He may keep you up late Saturday night with all kinds of distractions so that you can't stay awake during a Sunday message.

(b) He may send thoughts into your mind about tomorrow's meeting with your supervisor.

(2) In Life: It takes a lot of discipline to overcome the distractions of TV, work agendas and “*cares of the world*.”

ii) Disdain

Disdain is intense scorn. To disdain someone is to look down on them. It's to belittle a person or a thing.

(1) Satan often causes hurt feelings or resentful reactions to block the Word.

- (2) These feelings might be against the messenger or against his language or simply against the truths of the gospel. People may hear and understand exactly what is being said, but despise it.

Paul said the gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing.

Examples:

- The exclusiveness of Jesus and the cross for salvation
- Tithes and offerings
- The sanctity of sexuality, particularly in marriage

iii) Deception

The work of Satan is to blind the mind of the unsaved.

2 Corinthians 4:3–4 - And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. v.4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

2) Shallowness

- a) Satan's attack against the Word is not just directed against that first hearing of the Word. Even after a person has heard the Word and received it with joy, Satan does his best to take it away and bring the person back into darkness.

Mark 4:16–17 – v.16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. v.17 And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.

b) Tribulation and Persecution

- i) Tribulation = Personal Problems
- ii) Persecution = People Problems

He tries to overwhelm immediately with hard times and hard people.

If the Word has not gotten deep enough in you, you will burnout!

3) Prosperity

- a) If persecution and trouble doesn't work Satan will sometimes resort to prosperity.

Mark 4:18–19 - And others are the ones sown among thorns; they are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world, and the deceit of riches, and the desire for other things, enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

- b) In America, the devil majors not on soil #2 but on soil #3.

Elerbee - I can remember as a young man being told that if I continue being so fanatical about the Bible and this Jesus freak stuff, that I would end up poor. He offered me a partnership in his construction company.

In October, I drove by his warehouse and it was rusted and unkempt. He is no longer in the construction business, but is an over the road truck driver.

The Rich Young Ruler: *Mark 10:21-23 - And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." v.22 Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. v.23 And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"*

Three Christ Given Strategies to Defeat the Devil

- 1) Break open your heart for God's work.
 - a) Prepare the ground of your hard heart.
 - b) Break it up deeply to avoid shallowness.

- 2) Welcome the Word of God with hearing ears.
 - a) Welcome the challenging truth of the Word. Don't avoid it because it's hard to live.
 - b) Welcome it because you are welcoming Jesus. Jesus cannot be separated from His Word.

- 3) Cultivate a desire to do God's will.

John 7:17 - If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.

Your attitude toward *God's will* gives Jesus something to work with!

It releases Him to destroy the works of the devil.