

If I Were Satan

Introduction. If Vince Lombardi were still alive, I am sure that he would still be teaching his players that one of the keys to winning is to know your opponent. Likewise, the best commander in a war is the one who best understands his enemy. Satan does the same — he looks for our weaknesses so his temptations will have maximum effect.

What is God's greatest purpose? It is to save people (John 3:16; Romans 5:6-8). What is Satan's greatest purpose? To keep people from that salvation. He is not a fool; he is a creature of great cunning and intelligence. He has been busy for centuries and will be busy until the end. If I were Satan and wanted to prevent the salvation of people, what would I do? I am going to go over six items with you.

I. If I Were Satan, I Would Deceive People As To Myself

- A. Satan is full of all kinds of tricks or strategies (Ephesians 6:11), but his greatest trick is to make people think he does not exist.
 - 1. Satan has been a subject of ridicule and much of the ridicule attached to Satan comes from the fact that we have read folk tales and legends instead of studying the Bible.
 - 2. Modern cartoonists picture him as a sinister being arrayed in a red suit, having a long tail and carrying a fork in his hand (cp. 2 Corinthians 11:14-15).
- B. Satan is described in the Bible as a roaring lion, a serpent, a deceiver, the tempter, the wicked one, the accuser, and the dragon. If we saw any one of these coming for us, we would run! When Little Red Riding Hood went to her grandmother's cabin, she saw someone in bed dressed in her grandmother's nightgown and cap, but underneath the clothing was the big, bad wolf.
- C. The Devil clothes himself in many garments, but he is a ravenous wolf underneath. His motive is pure evil and we should not let him fool us. If I were Satan, I would make people believe that I did not exist and while they were denying or making fun of my existence, I would go to work and lure them downward (Matthew 4:3; James 1:13-15).

II. If I Were Satan, I Would Make Sin Attractive

- A. In Eden, Eve was surrounded by matchless beauty, but Satan came to turn her from God and he made sin appear so attractive that she yielded (Genesis 3:6). Today he is still making sin beautiful to the eye.
- B. Joseph and Moses resisted the passing pleasures of sin (Genesis 39:7; Hebrews 11:24). In order for us to come to grips with sin and defeat Satan, we have to realize that he makes it desirable and blinds our minds to the true horribleness of sin.

- C. For centuries Satan has been setting his trap. He fills it with the choicest bait and catches mankind (Hebrews 3:12-13). There are still some who say, "The others got caught, but he will never get me." If we believe that, we have fallen for the best trick in his book.

III. If I Were Satan, I Would Hinder God's Word

- A. God's word is not without power (Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12). It sinks into the hearts of mankind and brings them to Christ. No wonder Satan wants to keep the word from us.
- B. In His parable of the sower, Jesus said that some seed fell by the wayside and the birds came along and plucked it up (Matthew 13:4, 19).
 - 1. We sow the seed of the word in the hearts of people and the Devil plucks it out, making it difficult to turn away from loved ones, friends, etc., in order to obey the gospel (Matthew 10:37).
 - 2. Some people think they are "too wise" to accept the Bible. They consider it to be the work of men, in conflict with the "wisdom" of men or from a superstitious age. Others may believe that the Bible is not reliable or just simply written by men (1 Corinthians 1:18-21).
 - 3. Prejudice blinds the eyes of those who would believe (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). Prejudice will pervert the truth in order to "make it fit" with ideas with which we have grown up with or that we have learned.
- C. Sometimes Satan uses fear to keep us from teaching others. Perhaps we are afraid of being rejected or of looking like a "fanatic." No matter how strong our fear is, we are still violating a commandment of God when we fail to go and teach (Acts 8:4-5, 35).

IV. If I Were Satan, I Would Try To Destroy Churches

- A. Congregations of God's people are Satan's biggest enemies. He knows that one of the best ways to destroy a church is from the inside. Over and over the New Testament urges Christians to love and work in peace with one another (Romans 12:10; 13:8; Galatians 5:15; 1 Thessalonians 4:9).
- B. Satan destroys churches with apathy. Jesus told the Laodicean church that "it was neither hot nor cold" (Revelation 3:15). Satan loves a lukewarm church because it is useless and tasteless; and if I were Satan, that is just the way I would like it.
- C. Satan also destroys churches by making its members stumble. When the members stumble they are opened up to all those people who want to hide behind hypocrisy (Acts 8:20-23; Galatians 2:11-14; 3 John 9-11).

1. If there are any of us who stumble, we have the duty to restore them (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20). The word restore means to "reset." Just as a surgeon resets a broken bone, we must reset the person who stumbles in faithfulness.
2. In 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, Paul tells the Corinthians the proper conduct in the situation of the immoral man who had repented. Paul warned them that Satan was trying to convince them not to forgive, comfort, and reaffirm their love for him.

V. If I Were Satan, I Would Give The World Another Gospel

- A. Satan gets people to misquote or misinterpret scripture. The Devil will not mind if you are religious as long as you do not follow the true gospel (Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Corinthians 11:4). New "isms" creep in all the time. Someone may have claimed to have seen a vision, another takes a verse and uses it out of context; but in one way or another, false teachers gather a following (1 John 4:1, 6).
- B. Satan preaches that God is too good to allow men to be lost (Exodus 34:6; Romans 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9, 15). He can go ahead and live as he pleases, defying God and trampling Christ under foot. Since God is too good to punish him, He will put him in heaven.
- C. Satan preaches that a man should be good and honest, treat his family well, and thus be saved (cp. Acts 10:1-2; 11:14). Many who "attend church" have a certain amount of religion and according to their own claims, try to follow the teachings of Jesus hoping that in the end God will accept them. The term "good works" occurs in the New Testament 16 times, and for some, this is all that is necessary. This is possibly Satan's cleverest trick. He is the promoter of all systems of religion including those that teach morality as a means of salvation.
- D. The Devil preaches that everyone is going to be saved. He preaches that all religions are equal. He preaches that you can join the "church of your choice" and forget about the "one body" because "all roads lead to heaven." However, why warn about falsehood if it did not matter (Matthew 15:13).

VI. If I Were Satan, I Would Get Men To Give Excuses

- A. One of the chief weapons of Satan is "you have plenty of time." He lets people believe in God, Christ, and the judgment, but he tells them to wait a while and to put the decision off (Acts 17:32; 24:25). No matter what "excuses" we come up with, turning away from the gospel leaves us without an excuse (John 15:22; Romans 1:20; 2:1).
- B. Satan knows he will never destroy your faith in the Bible, or your belief in the love of God. He does not care that you realize you are lost. All

he has to do is make you keep on waiting until "tomorrow" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

1. More absentees have been neglected, more lessons have gone unprepared, more prospects have gone unlisted, and more lost people have gone unsaved because "tomorrow" is the great enemy.
2. "Tomorrow" has sent more people to hell than probably any other cause. Where one man has died and gone to hell because he was an infidel, agnostic, or an atheist, 10,000 have gone there because they counted on "tomorrow."
3. Usually it is not a multitude of distractions that keep us away from Christ, but just one (Mark 10:21).

Conclusion. Many Christians may wonder who the most preeminent preacher is of our time. It is Satan. He is the most diligent preacher you will ever meet. He is never out of his office; he always occupies his time; he is always at home; call him whenever you want; he is always going about his business; he is never on vacation. He is real and he is out there waiting for us. Do not be ignorant of Satan's cunning ways (2 Corinthians 2:11). The good news is that Satan can be overcome (James 4:7; 1 John 2:13).