

The Demoralizing Devices of the Devil

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[0 : 00] I want to turn to James chapter 1, James chapter 1. The death of Christ on the cross is the event of all of human history that everything else in human history revolves around.

Among other things, the sacrifice of the Lamb of God on the cross did two things. One is it gave us the opportunity to have salvation and to be made right with God.

If we acknowledge that we've sinned against God and done wrong, and we ask God to forgive us, and we commit to follow Him with our lives, and to live for His cause, He will forever save us.

Because of the cross, He will forgive you, empower you, and provide you an opportunity to spend eternity with the security of being with Him because of the cross.

The second thing the cross does for us is it defeats Satan. Satan has been defeated. The cross of Christ has established the eternal fate of the evil one.

[1 : 23] Revelation 20 verse 10 tells us that He will be cast into the lake of fire. He has some time until then. And Scripture teaches us that He has given permission to test our wills and to tempt us in the meantime.

But oh, when He tempts us, how we must be careful. Do not take the ploys of the evil one lightly.

I want you to listen to what James says about it. In James chapter 1 verse 13, he says, Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempts no one.

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin.

And sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. Trials, temptations, and turmorals will come from the evil one.

[2 : 32] And I want to share this morning some demoralizing devices that he uses. It is not exhaustive. There are other measures, I'm sure.

But I've tried to somehow scripturally summarize some things for us to look for. If you're not a note taker, today's the day to take notes, to just write down these seven things.

Because I want you to have this list before you. When you face things in life, and you're wondering what in the world is going on, I want you to look at this list.

And I want you to notice the demoralizing devices that the devil uses. First one is deception. His key and his most used snare is his deception.

Revelation 12, verse 9, And the great dragon was thrown down that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan. Listen to how he's described. The deceiver of the whole world.

[3 : 40] He was thrown down to the earth and his angels were thrown down with him. That speaks of, in history, when he came out of heaven and was cast down.

But I want you to notice how he's identified there as the deceiver of the world. Jesus said in John 8, verse 44, He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.

Listen to this last sentence. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character. For he's a liar and the father of lies. Satan lies and always has a ring of truth to it.

It's kind of like a counterfeit bill. It looks real, but it's really worthless. And so is the devil's doings.

They look real. They look good. But they're worthless. Listen to the passion of the Apostle Paul for God's people. In 2 Corinthians 11, 3, he says, But I'm afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

[5 : 00] You know why we're led astray? Because he tries to convince us that what's wrong is right, and what's right is wrong. He's not good, but he looks, likes to look good and to use good things to lead us astray.

For instance, Satan has never used the ploy, I'm going to turn you into an alcoholic. He never said that. But I want you to hear what the writer of Proverbs warns us about in chapter 23. He says, Oh, my friend, it looks winsome.

It looks so winsome. But so often, so very often, this lie from the evil one becomes a sin plague in a family's life that affects generations.

He never sells it like that. He never says, Let's destroy your marriage and your family. That's not a ploy of his.

[6 : 46] He don't say that. Instead, he whispers to a man, Don't she look fine? And to a woman, He listens to you.

He cares about you. He gives you more attention than you get at home. He just tries his best to lead us to a mirage, an illusion, what seems like an oasis in the desert, but it's not.

It's not. It'll make you more parched than you think you are. He deceptively draws you to the attractive, but it's a setup.

One of his keep, I think the main snare is deception. He also uses destruction. Apollyon, in Revelation 9, verse 11, is what he's called, and that word means destroyer.

It means to create chaos and to lay waste and to ruin and to make desolate. For the devil loves to smash and to mangle and to twist and to mutilate and to disfigure every way that he can.

[8 : 15] Satan makes nothing. He destroys just about anything that he tries. Vandalism, looting, mayhem in the streets.

It's demonic. It's what it is. It's demonic. How can you turn a national championship or a world championship on the pro level? How do you turn that in as a celebration of a city into turning over cars and lighting things on fire and busting out windows?

How is that a celebration? Because it's evil. It's demonic. When people don't get their way and they tear up stuff, it's of the evil one.

And quite honestly, it's not just cars and buildings. It's lies. Those riots are just an evidence of a greater evil that he does and lies.

He does it by lying. He does it by distorting. He does it by counterfeiting. He does it by clouding. But Paul calls it the devil's schemes. He destroys.

[9 : 27] He destroys. Wrecks havoc. The third demoralizing device is darkening.

I don't know how else to put it because that's the way Scripture puts it. But Satan darkens the mind to the light of the Word of God.

He hates the Word of God. He hates it. God's Word is living and breathing and active. It cuts to the heart of the matter and God uses it.

And so Satan works hard to keep folks out of God's Word. He'll tell you that it sounds archaic. He'll tell you the same kind of thing that he told Eve in the garden.

Did God really say? Making you question what God's Word really says. I was on the phone this week with somebody who lives a long way from here, who's made decisions in his life, led by the evil one, caused a lot of destruction.

[10 : 38] And one of the things he wanted to talk about was does the Bible really say? Does this really apply? What does this really mean?

And I'm prepping for this sermon when I'm having this conversation, at least in those same days. And I thought, and I said, Satan's darkening the mind.

It's as if it is evening outside and we lost power in this room. It just darkens. Sometimes it's on a dimmer and sometimes it's real quick.

But he just darkens. He'll lead pastors away from preaching it. Give folks advice.

Teach leadership. Teach how to be a good person. I mean, all that's attractive and there's a place for all of that. It's not bad to hear. But it should never be absent from the Word of God.

[11 : 49] The Word is not just something that you tag on to a self-help talk that you came up with but needs something to tag on to it. That's not preaching the Word of God. Honestly, all of life will not be a blessing.

Okay? I don't care how much you give. I encourage you to give. Be faithful to the Lord. But I'm not going to lie to you. All of life's not going to be dandy for you.

We live in a sinful, fallen world and even if we didn't, we're sinners. We make our own messes if nobody else made it for us. But the combination of all that makes for a concoction where life can be very difficult.

Smiley preachers will tell you different. That's what you want to hear. But it's not true. 2 Timothy 4, verse 3-4.

I believe we're living in these days. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but have itching ears that they'll accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

[12:52] You know why? Because he darkens the mind. He'll also darken the unbeliever's mind to the truth of God's word. Jesus said in John 14, 6, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No man comes unto the Father except through me. And the devil will tell folks that is not the truth. That your salvation and your hope of eternity is somehow a balance, a scale.

And if you can get enough good right to outweigh the bad, you'll be okay. That smells of smoke and it's a lie.

He'll try to convince us of that. He'll try to make us think that we are all right with the man upstairs. When I hear somebody speak like that, you know the first thing I think? He's lost. You don't know the Lord if you talk about him like he's a crazy uncle in the attic.

[14:11] You're not all right with God if that's what you think. That it's all just going to weigh out at all. As a matter of fact, the first step to salvation is to acknowledge that we're not all right.

The first step is to say, I need help. I need the forgiveness of God. And I don't expect you to clean me up without me committing my life because it don't work that way.

I commit my life to follow him. Our only hope is in Christ, friend. And the gospel will enlighten the darkened mind. The gospel will enlighten the darkened mind.

So stick to the word of God because Satan does not want us in the word of God because it's living and breathing and active and it enlightens the mind. Fourth thing is doubt.

Satan loves to cause doubt. He'll cause doubt about the existence of God. He'll cause doubt about the reality of Christ. I mean, there'll be things that pop up in your mind just out of nowhere that don't make any sense at all.

[15:21] Pop up in your mind about the reality of Christ. Is Christ really who he says he is? And for the Christian, it's all to cause doubt about your salvation.

I mean, if you're a child of God, Satan does not want you feeling secure in that. He'll ask you, are you really saved? I mean, can somebody really be saved and think the things you think and say the things that you say?

Can somebody really be saved? I mean, if you doubt your salvation, does that even mean that you can't be saved? That's the kind of stuff he'll tell you. Very popular evangelist of yesteryear in Southern Baptist life used to say, I heard him say, if you've ever had a doubt, you're lost.

If you're 99% sure you're saved, you're 100% lost. Well, I'm telling you, that'll preach and that'll make people make decisions and do whatever they got to do to jump through the hoops as necessary to make sure that's taken care of.

But it's not scriptural. Read James. We're going to have doubts along the way. And if that was true, our salvation would be based on our feelings.

[16:36] And it's not. Our salvation is based on the cross of Christ. Our salvation is based on our response to the invitation of Christ. Now, I want you to understand something this morning. If you doubt your salvation, that is a huge red flag, a huge red flag that you need to pay attention to.

Do not dismiss that. When doubt comes, it is time to go back to the day and the place. How did you come to Christ?

What happened in your life? On what basis did you commit your life to Christ? Nail down that experience. I work hard with each child that I have part in leading to Christ to nail down that experience, to archive that experience.

And if a child comes down this morning and they're young and I don't know their story and I don't know what, and they say they want to give their heart and life, I will tell them, let's get together and let's talk about this. Because I don't want you to follow somebody else down the aisle and to do something that you don't know what you're doing and wonder about it for the rest of your life.

I don't want that to happen. I want us to know what we know. I want you to know that you know that you know that you know that you're saved and rest in that because the devil loves to cause doubt.

[18:00] That's why I believe when somebody gives their heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ, I've told you, we're going to baptize in the coming weeks and I've told you when we baptize, listen, when, about everybody won yesterday, I think, but, but, but man, when they, when they score, I

was giving it to them for a team that I don't even care about, but I love seeing somebody else get scored on, so I, I was giving it to them last night on the couch, excited.

We roar and carry on like it all makes a difference, like we're going to remember in two weeks what we just watched. When somebody gives their heart and life to the Lord Jesus and publicly proclaims that through baptism, we ought to celebrate, folks.

Those families ought to have a party at the house. They, they should. You can invite all of us, but they ought to have a party at the house. I, I think about when Joshua crossed the Jordan and God stopped him and said, take 12 stones and put them in the banks of this river as memorial stones to remember what, how God brought you through, to remember how God brought you across the desert, to remember how God's brought you through the promised land, to mark this time down. And when your children say, what do these stones mean? Tell them how God brought you through. We got to be laying memorial stones in our life for when God moves. There's no greater time when God moves than in salvation, when somebody's life is changed.

So if you doubt your salvation, let's talk about that. I'm serious. I got all day. Let's talk about it.

However, if you know you've surrendered your life to Christ, no one can snatch you out of the hand of the Father and don't you dare let the devil make you think you can fall out.

[19 : 51] That's a ploy of the evil one. He dogs Christians with doubt because doubtful Christians are miserable Christians and you're not going to share a faith that you doubt.

And so the best way to get you to be quiet about what God's doing in your life is to make you doubt. He wants to steal your zeal and destroy your joy. And he works overtime on it.

Not only that, but he causes division. It's a demoralizing device. He loves division. We serve a God that is a unifier. Nothing helps relationships like the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Nothing does. It is the gospel that unifies us with God and what once was separated by sin is now united when we're in Christ. God's also a multiplier.

He multiplies. When God gets in it, things grow. When you walk with the Lord, you grow. When two people walk with the Lord, they grow together. When a church faithfully seeks the face of God, God will grow in them.

[20 : 59] Whereas God multiplies, the evil one divides. The devil has a strategic plan to separate husbands and wives. Tear down the family.

You'll tear down the nation. He wants to divide parents from kids. In the workplace, he wants there to be disunity among coworkers.

You know why? Because you take that home with you. If you're mad at everybody, not speaking to anybody at work, you're not sharing your faith. You're not speaking of what God's doing in your life. You're not encouraging anybody to come worship with you.

You're not going to do those things if you don't like them. You can't get along with them. Not only that, but it is hard. We don't live life in a cafeteria-style plate where the meat's here and the taters are here and the peas are here and the fruit's here and they all got edges.

No, it all runs together. The gravy gets in the peas and the whole bit. And you come home, destroy your family because you work with a jerk. And so the devil will do it wherever he has to.

[22 : 11] He loves to divide. Jesus said, no house divided against itself will stand. And that is the plan of the evil one.

Good, godly friendships can fall victim to the division of the evil one. When we wander into pettiness. Pettiness. And pettiness. I don't even know if that's a word.

But anyway, pettiness. When things get flared, listen to me. This might be all you hear today. When things get flared, back off. Back off.

Back off. Just because you have the fastest tongue in the West don't mean you have to use it.

Amen. If you don't use it, use it right.

Take a breather. Ask God to show you what's really going on. Follow the advice of the psalmist.

Psalms 39 verse 1.

[23 : 13] He says, I will guard my ways that I might not sin with my tongue. I will guard my mouth with a muzzle so long as the wicked are in my presence.

Muzzle it. We got muzzles. We're going to give out at the end of worship. Take him home. Get one for you.

No, don't get one for somebody else. This is for you. We'll have to go back to division. Do I need to cover that again? Walk away. Walk away. Chill. Pause. Because the devil divides.

He divides. And it's amazing what a 10-second pause can do. It's amazing. Just swallow hard. And hold it for a moment. There will be a lot less division that the evil one thrives off of.

I'll tell you what else he does. Discouragement. He loves to discourage us. Loves to. I want you to hear the cry of a man who loved God's people and was struggling in his time away from them.

[24 : 20] In 1 Thessalonians 2, verse 17 and 18, the apostle Paul said, But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time in person, not in heart, we endeavored the more eager and with great desire to see you face to face.

Because we wanted to come to you. Listen to this. Listen to his passion. I, Paul, again and again. But Satan hindered us. Satan hindered us. He loves to hinder. Hinder. And hindrance can cause a great discouragement.

I spoke of Joshua crossing the Jordan River. Do you remember what God said to Joshua? As Joshua stood on the banks of the Jordan River, he was about to cross over into the promised land. God's people had been wandering in a desert that should have took a few weeks for 40 years. And now Moses is not able to go over and claim the promised land that he's been speaking of all this time.

[25 : 23] Joshua is put in an impossible position to fill the shoes of Moses. And he is standing on one side of the Jordan, ready to cross that Jordan and go in.

And when he gets across, it's not like they opened the gate at Disney or something. He's going to face battles. It's going to be war. He's going to have to fight for the land that God's already promised him.

But God will give it to him, but he's going to have to fight for it. And he's standing on the edge of that. And God tells him, be strong and courageous. Now I want you to notice something.

When I read this, I want you to notice how Joshua was to be strong and courageous. Joshua 1, verse 7 through 9 says this, Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses, my servant, commanded you.

Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left that you may have good success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.

[26 : 34] For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. And then as God needs to do in so many of our lives, he reiterated it.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened. Do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

What do you do when you get discouraged? Be strong and courageous, and do not depart from the word of God. Meditate on it day and night. What does that mean?

Chew on it. Like a cow chews its cud. Chew on God's word. Think through it. It's our hope. And the devil loves to get you discouraged, because then you'll talk discouragement with somebody else, and you'll discourage them.

Before long, we'll all be sad leaving this place. And that's what Satan loves to do. Be strong and courageous. Trust God's word. And in distraction, he uses distraction.

[27 : 40] The devil loves to distract us from what really matters. You know what really matters? Knowing the Lord Jesus. Jesus said in John 10, 10, the thief comes but for to steal, kill, and destroy.

There's no better way to steal the opportunity, kill the possibility, or destroy one's eternity, than keeping someone from Christ. And he does it a lot of ways.

But all of it is focused on keeping us distracted from seeing our need for Christ. If one dies without Christ, he or she will spend all of eternity apart from God in a devil's hell of agony.

That is not mythical. It's real. And Satan knows he'll be cast into the lake of fire, and he don't want to go alone. He wants to take all possible with him, and he does that by distractions.

He'll distract the lost by telling them there's more time. Not today. There's more time. He'll distract the lost by telling them that a life right with God is not that big a deal.

[28 : 48] You'll have time. He'll distract folks from salvation by making all of life seem more important. When in reality, none of it is. None of it is.

But he don't only distract those without Christ. He distracts those with Christ. Satan will distract the Christian. Do me a favor. Watch what catches your eye.

Watch what catches your eye. Watch. Watch what grabs your attention. Watch what takes up your time.

Even good things can come in the way of what God wants for our lives. And the devil would love to distract us any way he can from God's very best for our lives.

He loves to distract us from his word. J.I. Packer put it this way. He said, if I were the devil, one of my first aims would be to stop folk from digging into the Bible.

[29 : 54] Knowing that it's the word of God, teaching men to know and love and serve the God of the word, I should do all that I could to surround it with the spiritual equivalent of pits, thorn hedges, and man traps to frighten people off.

At all costs, I should want to keep them from using their minds in a disciplined way to get the measure of its message. And that's what he does. Among other things, he distracts.

So let me review and we'll go home. He deceives. He lies. He tries to color the bad in a good light to say what's wrong is right. He's a liar. He's a liar.

He destructs. He attempts to tear down and destroy every good thing that God has built up in your life. And if you're a child of God, he knows he can't take one's salvation, so he tries his best to tear down everything else around you.

He darkens. He darkens. Jesus told us in John 8, 12, Jesus said, I am the light of the world. And then in Matthew 5, verse 14, he told us to be the light of the world.

[31 : 07] And then in Matthew 5, verse 16, he said, in the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

But I want to be clear, Satan works overtime to try to darken. Don't you dare let him snuff you out. He causes doubts. He causes doubts.

Now, I want to be clear about something. Don't talk to Satan. Don't bargain with Satan. Don't argue with Satan. I have a large, goofy dog.

I inherited it from my daughter who got it from an ex-boyfriend that if I see him alone, for a couple of reasons.

But I got a big old, goofy dog, and my neighbor's got cats. And I take the dog out on a leash, and the cats come in the yard.

[32 : 11] And if there's a cat in the yard, I'm skiing across the yard because she wants to follow that trail. She wants to get to that cat.

When I learned that when dogs sniff around, somebody told me that when dogs sniff around, it's like they're on social media. I decided to take my time with my dog outside. I get my phone on social media.

The dog gets her nose in the grass, and we just enjoy seeing what's going on unless there's a cat in the yard, unless there's been a cat in the yard. So I don't want them in the yard.

I don't negotiate with them. I don't bargain with them. Now, before some cat lover gets after me, I don't hurt cats, okay? I just want to walk my dog.

So when I see one in the yard, I'll say, it's a cat! Get out! And don't leave a scent behind. Get out.

[33 : 17] I'm not trying to be hateful. I don't just... That's how you need to handle Satan. You don't need to bargain with him.

You don't need to discuss it with him. Just say, scat. Get out. More particularly, by the blood of the Lamb of God.

Get out! Check any doubt you have with the gospel.

And if you still have doubt, let's talk. He divides. If there's division in your life, I want you to recognize where it comes from. If there's a behavior or attitude that causes division in your life, I want you to recognize where it's come from.

Because I don't know what it is, but I got a stinking suspicion that Satan's lurking somewhere around that situation. I don't think we ought to give him credit for everything. I think we ought to give him credit for a bunch. Because he loves to divide.

[34 : 28] He discourages. Christian, be strong and courageous. Don't let the evil one drag you down. He'll knock down others. If he drags you down, he'll knock down others. It's kind of like bowling. If you can hit the head pin at the right angle, you can knock them all down.

And if he can discourage you enough and you can drag enough people down with you, he'll take down all of us in discouragement. And that's his strategy. That's what he wants to do. Don't fall for that mess.

He distracts. He distracts. He's done it during this worship hour. I don't know how, but I'm sure he has. And he'll do it when you're striving to grow in the Lord.

So hear me, do not fall for the shiny, flashy things that he throws in front of you. They are not what they appear to be. They are not. I like the way Adrian Rogers put it.

He said, Satan's like a hobo. He has no rights that we don't give him. We can demand that he leave. And after he's gone, we'll have to clean up the mess.

[35 : 38] We'll have to remove the trash. My friend, let's understand what we're dealing with. Let's recognize it and live in response to it.

And if you're here this morning and you've never surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, I want you to know Satan wants so bad to darken your mind, to distract you, to deceive you, oh, I could go through the list.

Surrender to the Lord Jesus. He'll change your life. And if you're here and you've done that privately but you've never done that publicly, he don't want you to do that publicly. You know why? Because you encourage other people.

Because they're going to cheer you on. Because it's going to help somebody else make a decision for the Lord. He'll use that. And so he'll love it. He'd love to just keep your faith private just between you and God.

That sounds wonderful but there's nothing scriptural about it. You come acknowledging publicly if you never have. Maybe you're here and God's drawing you to this church.

[36 : 43] He'd love for us all to be not committed to anything. Just to hang out. Check it out. I don't want to rush anything that God's working in your life.

But if God's leading you, you follow. Don't let the evil one be a distraction. We'll walk through it and guide you through the process. Or maybe you're here.

Probably all of us here. We've got the D's in our life that we're struggling with. We've given Satan too much space. And we need to take this time before we leave this room to just settle things with God.

You can do that where you stand when we sing in just a moment. You can do it at this altar. I'll be happy to pray with you. Let's live victorious for the Lord. Don't only recognize it, but live in response to it.

Lord Jesus, I love you. Thank you for your word. Thank you for the guidance that you give us. God, oh God, help us respond to it in obedience. In all of our lives, every day of our life, I pray.

[37 : 46] In Jesus' precious name. Amen. Amen.