



# SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

August 16, 2015

"Satan and Grace" (WORTHY Sermon Series)

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**E**ph. 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

*Eph. 6:11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*

*Eph. 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

*Eph. 6:13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

*Eph. 6:14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,*

*Eph. 6:15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.*

*Eph. 6:16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.*

*Eph. 6:17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

*Eph. 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. TNIV*

Satan. Who is he? What does he do today? I had to laugh when I

heard last week that Pastor Tim said that it was the role of the associate pastor to get the hard Scripture passages to preach. And he preached on slaves and masters. So I return from vacation and see that I was given the topic of Satan! I think I would rather have slaves and masters.

But it is my privilege to teach you about Satan, and how he works and why we need to be aware of him. I'll be doing a two-part series on this passage and next week it will focus more on the spiritual body armor with special emphasis on sharing peace with others. If you are a parent who would rather not have your children hear today's topic on Satan, please take advantage of our great Sunday School Ministries down stairs.

## 1) Is there a Satan?

I realize we live in Western modern times. The secular society poops the thought that there is a Satan, although in the Asian, African, and Hispanic culture, the belief in the devil is not denied.

I like British theologian C. S. Lewis's thought who said there are "two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devil (and demons)." One error "is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them." Lewis concluded that the Evil One is "equally pleased by both errors...." That's from his book *Screwtape Letters*.

If we don't believe in Satan, he has won half the battle already. If we think there is a demon under every

pebble, that is not good either.

The Apostle Paul is writing this letter to the early church in the city of Ephesus, which is in the country of Turkey. He is saying while we do fight against things of flesh and blood there is a bigger battle – a spiritual battle that includes Satan, who the Bible says is a fallen angel. He used to be for God, but then he thought he should be God, and so he took about a third of the angels to fight against God the Father and the rest of the angels.

Here on earth, we're on enemy-occupied territory. The Bible says Satan is the prince of this world. The church is the base for the underground resistance fighters against him. We are the alliance fighting the Evil Empire, like in *Star Wars*. Satan is like Emperor Palpatine or Darth Vader, and the Storm troopers are like the demons. The Christians are the Rebel Alliance fighting the Dark Side. So is this all just myth? No.

Look at this world. There is so much heartache and war, sin, and environmental trouble. You might believe a doctrine of how sin and humankind are messing us up, but for the Christian, it goes one step further – there is a supernatural personal evil.

Satan is the Prince of this World, like the Evil Prince of Nottingham who wrongfully took the King Richard's England, and so we are like Robin Hood and his Merry Men and Maidens who fight back for the sake of the true King, Jesus, who we are waiting for to return. I don't have time to fully convince you that there is a deep seated evil in this world.

**B**ut I truly would suggest that you look at any newspaper and really read and study the headlines and see if there is not a personal supernatural evil that is greater than the evil of one person or one country. Look at ISIS and some of the corporate greed, and sex trafficking and violence in the world and see if it just is some bad guys going around or something more sinister, something more spiritually evil.

And it is not just that things go bump in the night, though I have shared with you how our staff has been called to homes and businesses to combat the spiritual forces who are not up to good. Rooms turn cold, beds shake, doors slam, footsteps heard at night, ghosts – ghouls and little persons appearing, people getting jumped on or scratched by an invisible being, or being pressed down upon at night.

I just talked this past week to Jim Miller who used to be an associate pastor here and is now the senior pastor in a large church in the sleepy suburban city of Glendora outside of Pasadena, CA. He said the same kind of evil stuff is happening there. But when he prays, the evil spirits leave. When we pray, the evil spirits leave too.

Who you gonna call? Ghost Busters? No, members like you can pray and have these evil spirits leave. We can train you in our prayer classes. You can be a ghost buster. You don't have to have a pastor to pray, though it might help in some cases.

But these examples are just spiritual irritations from the dark side. There is a lot worse from Satan in this world. Not believing in spiritual warfare would be like you being a commander who thinks you are fighting a squad or a platoon or a company of enemy soldiers and then discovering in battle that there are four divisions of the enemy army facing you. Outnumbered!

If we are to follow Jesus, then we need to follow everything about Him and His teaching. We can't pick and choose. We can't say, "Oh, I like it

when Jesus says 'love one another.'" That's good stuff. That's truth.

But when He says "I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning" or when the gospel writers say that Jesus met Satan in the wilderness, we can't say, "Oh, that's intellectually embarrassing, so I will discount that."

Here's the reality. If you see your problems as just flesh and blood, then you will always be defeated and confused in this world. You are missing out on half of reality. Is Jesus crazy, or is He lying, or is He the Lord telling us the truth when He talks about Satan? I say He speaks the truth.

Satan is working full time against us. He is trying to take over more people, more land all the time. He tries to sew confusion in our homes, business, families, and friendships. And if we don't take him seriously, we will lose.

There is a phrase in the military called *proportional response*. It means if your enemy attacks you, and let's say blows something up, then you need to come back with a response that's proportionate to that. So if he takes out a tank, then you take out a tank. If it's a bridge or a building, then you take out a bridge or a building.

But you see, when working against a real enemy like Satan, I think we can't be thinking of proportional responses. He hurt me A LITTLE, so I will pray just A LITTLE. We can't do a simple tit for tat. We need to GO ALL OUT in winning the war and try to save as many men, women, and children as possible.

As a metaphor, let me show a scene from the TV Show *The West Wing*. In this episode, an enemy has shot down one of our military jets. President Bartlett, played by Martin Sheen, is called into the Situation Room in the White House for a meeting with his National Security Council. His Chief-of-Staff Leo is there along with the Joint-Chief-of-Staff, played by John Amos, as well as the

Secretary of Defense and all of the other military leaders. Let's take a look at this scene. (A scene from season 1, episode 3 of *West Wing* was shown.)

When we fight evil, we need to go all out. We cannot be sending a proportional response but a disproportional response as we go all out. It's not that, oh one child died from starvation, so let's just help one child. No, it's when we know that children are being trafficked, kidnapped, or trapped in poverty, we GO ALL OUT to try to help them (and that is why there are more than 1,000 children we have sponsored through Compassion, many of whom have their pictures are on the wall).

We want to be part of a movement to go full speed ahead to save all of the children of world from poverty. Let the word go out that First Prez will do ALL IN ITS POWER and area of influence to help the weak, the downtrodden, the poor, the grieving, the lost, and all the children and women in need. That is why when people are beaten down by life, we GO ALL OUT to try to help them – through our support programs like GriefShare, DivorceCare, Facing Cancer with Hope, Celebrate Recovery. No one will be left behind.

The Message Bible paraphrases the 12th verse this way: "*This is no afternoon athletic contest that we'll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps, a LIFE-OR-DEATH to the finish against the Devil and all his angels.*"

Did it ever occur to you that one of the reasons we tithe and give money to the movement is to fight Satan and evil through our church? We in this room are the ones who are called to fund this base of the "Rebel Alliance" called First Prez to fight evil, to help those in need, to help marriages, parents, youth, businesses; to give people hope and tools.

The shocking realization is that there is no one out there who's supporting First Prez except you!

**N**o one cares about supporting this church except you in this room. Only the attenders and members of First Prez are supporting the endeavor. Don't think for a minute that there is some Bible study group out in Cleveland, Ohio thinking, we just feel called to financially support First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu in Ko'olau and give it a monthly gift. Not going to happen.

There's no group on Bishop Street saying, "I think today we will give a gift to First Prez." There is no group that's doing that out there. There is no foundation in New York City saying, "You know, I feel like helping First Prez out with a grant." **We** are the only ones called to fund the war from here. And if a local foundation helps us, it's because we requested for help.

Here's a thought in terms of spiritual warfare. My grandfather, Lee Lok, came to America in 1881 at the age of 12. Here's a replica of his Entry Certificate upon arriving in San Francisco. (Photo was shown.) Later he traveled to and lived in New York City. He started as a dishwasher, then joined and owned a general store known as Quong Yuen Shing, which today is known as 32 Mott Street General Store. My family no longer owns us because of what happened in 9/11, but here's a picture of the old store *Quong Yuen Shing* with my grandfather.

When World War I and World War II came around, what did my grandfather do in his store? He sold War Bonds. It was gung gung's way of supporting the war. The War Bonds were also called Liberty Bonds (photo was shown) that were sold in the U.S. to support the rebel alliance cause. It could be redeemed later for the original value plus interest.

During World War II, 85 million people bought these bonds. A total of \$185 billion worth of bonds were raised to fight evil and satanic people like Adolf Hitler—who killed Jews in ovens and in gas showers and who dominated much of Europe under oppressive rule.

My grandfather was considered a patriot for selling war bonds. He was later honored for all the money he helped raised. And that is basically what tithing and giving offerings to the church—war bonds against the Devil and in support of good.

Yes, tithing is in honor of God. It's a clear, practical way to fight the spiritual war on terror, and to help people who have been hurt by the evil one in a midst of ways; to protect our children, the future generation; to bring our friends and family to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. That is the war. We're battling for our friends and family, and this church is on the front lines.

## 2) What is Satan's impact on our lives?

Do you know what the word Satan means? It literally means "prosecutor" or "accuser." Satan is like a prosecuting lawyer who, at full-time, is always out to prove you are guilty, and often of crimes you didn't really commit. He wants you to endure penalties, suffering, and pain that are more than just or that you don't deserve at all.

I have a picture on my wall by local artist Debbie Nehmad. It's a collage, and part of it are these blocks (photo was shown), which represent the jails cells of all the people who have been wrongfully incarcerated in America. As you know, we are finding more and more people, who have been imprisoned for decades, are actually innocent of the crimes they were accused of, thanks to new DNA testing.

What Satan does is accuse and prosecute people, just as a lawyer does and puts them behind bars even though they are innocent. They are cells that confine you to lose hope and to emphasize how you are trapped in your inadequacy. He says to you, "You will never get over the pain of losing that loved one or the pain of an injury."

He has been saying since your childhood, "You are not smart enough, pretty enough, strong enough, faithful

enough, competent enough." He says, "You should have amounted to more by now. You should have been richer by now. Your apartment should have been a house by now. Your house should be bigger by now." And regarding the injustice you see in the world, he says, "Give up! You can't do anything about it."

Satan prosecutes us and wants us to never be content and to have regrets. The more regrets the better. And he wants you to be led into utter despair. He wants to convince you that you can't ever stop an addiction, that you must give into temptation, and you should leave your spouse, your friends, because it is hard to maintain a relationship; you'll never recover; that every day will always be like yesterday. And, by the way, yesterday was horrible because of you.

Satan is the Prosecutor, the Father of Lies, the Deceiver, and the Devil. Christian author and pastor Tim Keller says that Satan is behind all evil, but can use our evil tendencies to maximize anything we could ever think of on our own.

If there IS a supernatural evil prosecutor after you, then what do you need? You need a good defense attorney. You need an Advocate, and not anyone but a supernatural one.

*John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.*

*John 14:26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.*

*John 15:26 "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, He will testify on my behalf.*

You have heard us talk so much about why we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It's because He is our Advocate, our Defense Lawyer.

**T**he Bible says in other places that He is our Counselor. He is our Spiritual Counsel, an Almighty Advocate! Did you catch what it said in John 15:26? It said, "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, He will testify on my behalf."

The Advocate will testify on Jesus's behalf. He is our Defense Lawyer. And he is the Prime Witness to tell us that Jesus Christ loves us and covers all of our sin! But when I say Jesus covers our sin, the Holy Spirit is NOT saying we are not sinners because we are.

Humankind, you and me are far from the mark of how God wants us to be and live. So here comes the crux of the sermon. Don't miss what I am about to say. It's the final point.

### 3) How can we respond?

God says, "Listen. I love you completely. There is zero, zero condemnation. And yes, you are a sinner. But quit beating up yourself. All of the punishment of all of your sin has been put on Jesus! He took it all on Himself on the cross. He is the Defense Lawyer who went to jail for you."

Hence, you have no sin at all in Christ Jesus. God is saying, "I have nothing but tremendous love for you. I want the best for you." Yes, you are a sinner, but God has covered you with His grace. When we hear that we should be prettier or more talented or more accomplished by now, you have to know that the Bible doesn't say that anywhere. Nowhere.

If in terms of your sin you might say, "I have blown it. I have been pregnant outside of marriage. I cheated in my marriage. I have looked at porn. I am addicted to booze, or whatever, so I need to repent. I am so sorry for those things."

Know that your feeling sorry that you did those things will not give you freedom. Your real sin is not the sinful act you committed. The REAL SIN

is when we reject the grace of God. The real sin is when God's grace is not enough and we don't accept it. Freedom doesn't come with "I have sinned, I feel badly, I need to say I'm sorry." Freedom comes when we know we are sinful but we know that God's grace covers it, and so now we are free.

Karma means we get what we deserve. *What goes around comes around.* God's grace, on the other hand, means we don't get what we deserve. God gives us unconditional love and forgiveness, and we are free. (I pick Christ over karma any day!) And when we are free, we don't WANT to sin as opposed to we feel OBLIGATED not to sin.

Now, accepting grace doesn't mean we can sin purposely so that grace may abound. We don't want to sin because of what Jesus did for us. Yes, Jesus dying for me – His grace is enough. It's His grace that gets us through when we lose a spouse or a friend. It's His grace that helps us when we lose a job or are sick. It's His grace when we have difficulty in a relationship to not beat ourselves up.

The real sin is not accepting God's grace in rejecting Jesus's forgiveness and His dying on a cross for you and me. That's the real sin of the heart. And if we repent of not accepting God's grace the other sins fall into the right light and place.

There is no condemnation of you. Now it makes sense when we read the first verse from another book in the Bible called Romans where it says: "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*" (Romans 8:1)

With the Spirit, the Advocate, the Holy Counselor, defense lawyer in us, when we decide to follow Christ, we have acceptance and love and full power to fight Satan. We can walk not in the flesh but in the Spirit of our Advocate, the Holy Spirit. See the God's forgiveness, love and grace as a big bank account. But you need to

draw on that often and act accordingly.

Imagine if your father gave you \$10 million but you never ever drew on it. You stayed living your life as if you didn't have that money. You kept trying to make ends meet on your own strength and will power. That would not be smart. By grace, your father gave you that money.

In the same way, your Heavenly Father has given you the riches of His amazing Grace and that His son took on our sins and paid the price for them, fully paid the price! So draw on that. Don't feel your account is short and you are not enough.

When people imply or say or you think that you are not smart enough, accomplished enough, pretty enough, talented enough, know that such standards are not from Jesus but from an accuser and deceiver, a prosecutor named Satan. And then quickly in your heart and mind draw from the account of Jesus and say, "Ha! My Jesus, fully accepts me, and my past sins have been fully paid for. I access His account of Grace. I will live a life WORTHY of his dying for me. So you can't touch me. Say what you want, but I shall move and live as one fully accepted and loved."

Sometimes you hear people say, maybe I have done something wrong and that is why I am suffering. That is from a person who is not taking from his or her account of Grace. If one takes from the Grace account, you know that we never are given pain or suffering because we are bad.

On the other hand, we are not blessed because we are good either. We can't say I am rich today because I led a good life. You hear people say that, "Golly, he must have lived a good life and that is why he is blessed." No, it's all grace. We are not blessed or cursed because of how good or talented or sinful we are.

The sin account has been taken care of by God, and the blessings in our lives are due to God giving them and NOT because of our goodness. It's not based on works. So may we draw from the account of grace and don't listen to the voice of the accuser!

Let's pray.