

Why Such Lack and Evil?

By Bobby Schuller

Today we're going to be tackling a very heavy topic and I forgot to mention this in the first sermon. We're going to be talking about actually Satan today, and no I'm not joking. I know we're a very positive church, and joyful church, but we're going to be taking on this very heavy, dark topic of evil in particular, because as we talk about lack, we have to talk about where that lack comes from.

One of the things I notice often when I speak on spiritual warfare is that very often people get distracted; like a cloud comes over. People start to feel tired, start to feel like they're thinking about other things, start to feel worried.

And so first I just even just out loud take authority over that, and I can see that in the first service, even as I was speaking, that there's just a heaviness to the topic that can make us feel sort of like napish. You're like oh your sermons are boring. I do not preach boring sermons. I do a lot of things, but boring is not one of them. Trust me, I want you to pay attention and to guard your heart and mind as we speak on this, because I believe that I want to speak specifically about something that is affecting your life directly, your thought life. And I don't want you to be afraid of Satan, and that's why we want to teach on him, and I want you

to understand the authority and power that you have over the kingdom of darkness as a baptized Christian.

But before we get into all of that, let's talk about the good stuff, first. The good news is this: the kingdom of God is among us. Jesus paved the way, your sins are forgiven, you are seen as justified and righteous in God's eyes. He who had no sin became sin that you could be called, not a dirty, filthy, rotten sinner, but that you would be called the righteousness of God. And you are, not because of your good works, because of the work of Jesus Christ crucified, amen? And we can depend on that. We can count that the blood of the Lamb is better than any animal sacrifice or anything else that could have happened. It is final.

When Jesus said "it is finished," it was. God's work in you is complete. You are protected, you are safe, you are anointed, you are called, you are blessed, you are above and not beneath, you are the head and not the tail, you have authority over this world, even when you've sinned or when you make mistakes, you still have God's authority and that authority comes from the word of God. So walk in that authority, walk in that power. We're a Reformed church. He does the work, right? It's God's power and so we trust in that.

And in that vein, we're talking about this idea of Psalm 23, which says the Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing. Wow. I just want to affirm that that's also true that God's word is true in your life. You lack nothing. Like a sheep who's laying down in green pasture, you have

everything you need. Everything is being made available to you right when you need it. You don't have enough, you have more than enough. You are not just a conqueror, you are more than a conqueror and these are the things that God calls us to be. That we can live every day in a life without lack. Your thirst will be quenched, your needs will be met, you will be healed, you'll be restored, you'll be called, and we can trust that no matter what's happening in life, we can trust in the Lord. Can I get an amen? All right.

So then why is there so much lack and evil? And I want to tell you that we believe that the lack and evil in this world is done, yes, through the agency of people, but ultimately the root cause is from the angelic world; it's from Satan. It's from Satan and the fallen angels who chose him. And whenever we talk about Satan in a modern world and satanic influences, it's easy for educated folks to put their guard up. I think that the enemy really doesn't want us to know him. It's kind of like Kevin Spacey's character at the end of *Usual Suspects*. He says 'the greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world that he didn't exist.'

And this is what we want to see, not only that Satan does exist, that not only that he is working in the world against the kingdom of God, but that he's also lost and that his goal is just to make more losers before he goes down. He wants people to join him in his loss by paying later instead of paying now.

So let's talk about that. You know my grandfather Robert Schuller, some of you are familiar with.. many of you are familiar with him, some people aren't though, actually, believe it or not. I have to mention him now. He didn't preach on Satan very often, but behind the scenes he actually talked about him on a regular basis, and talked about the Holy Spirit, and talked about angels.

And I remember this one interesting encounter. My grandpa, when I was in college, he was getting a little older but he sometimes needed help with his things. And I remember this was like at a pretty pivotal point in my life. My heart was on fire for the Lord, and I really did appreciate listening to my grandpa, but I think he was talking to my dad or someone else, and I was behind kind of carrying the bags, walking a few steps behind, and we were walking to the car. We were going to go somewhere, I forget where. And he was, I think talking to my dad, I can't remember who it was, but he was talking to this person about this or that, and mid sentence, he just sort of stops. And it was very dramatic. And he turns around and he looks at me, and I'm standing a far off, I have no idea what he was talking about. And he walks over to me and he puts his hands on my shoulder and he says, "Bobby," he goes, "Oral Roberts said I am a prophet." Oh, okay. And he says I'm like why are you saying that? And he says "I want you to know that Satan is not omnipresent. God is omnipresent. He's everywhere at the same time, but Satan can only be here or there. He's not everywhere. And Satan chooses

certain people.” And he looks at me and he goes, “Satan has his eye on you.” And I remember being like.. okay. No, I was more like, okay. I was really very curious, and this is a true story. And he looks at me and he says, “But you can take that as a compliment.” He said, “God will have His way in your life and it will be grand.” It was a good word.

This was an interesting encounter for me because it was one of the first times I think as I was becoming an adult, that I began to talk to my granddad and other men and ministers and women about spiritual warfare, about the affect of Satan or angels or fallen angels on the life of people.

What I want to talk about today is first of all this Satan and red tights and horns is not Satan. And the Satan of the exorcist in Hollywood is probably not a great depiction of what Satan is really like, either. Satan is actually beautiful, very attractive, very seductive in his ways, and always attacks the thoughts; the thought life of a person. This is again why when you talk about spiritual warfare it’s so easy for a blanket of distraction to sort of just fall over an audience or a congregation.

C.S. Lewis, of course, talks about Satan a lot, particularly in his book Screwtape Letters. I remember just as a teenager, when we went to our cabin in Big Bear, I found an original print of Screwtape Letters that I kept for many years. I lost it later in life, I was very sad, but I read it over and over to the point the binding was coming loose. Very short, easy read, but it’s from C.S. Lewis’ imagination. And he talks about these two

demons, Screwtape and Wormwood. And Wormwood is sort of the young novice demon, and Screwtape is this sort of big arch demon. And Screwtape is sort of.. it's kind of funny, actually. He's sort of is mentoring this young demon on how to distract this young British man to get him onto the road of perdition, and to steer him away from faith in God. And it's one of my favorite quotes is this one. Screwtape is telling this to his young novice, apprentice nephew. He says "The fact that devils are predominantly comic figures in the modern imagination will help you. Any faint suspicion of your existence begins to arise in his mind, suggest to him a picture of something in red tights and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that, it is an old textbook method of confusing him, of course, he therefore cannot believe in you."

Now in the scriptures, we see in the Old Testament, Satan the early years, that he was actually a good guy. He was created by God to do good and he might have been one of God's most amazing creations. Maybe he was too good. And it was so good, and he was so beautiful, and so attractive, and such a dynamic leader or whatever, that he was able to convince, tradition says, a third of the angels of heaven to fall with him. We see in Isaiah 2 that he was also sort of maybe over the earth in some manner, that he was called the morning star, and in Isaiah chapter 14 verse 12, it says "how you are fallen from heaven, oh Lucifer, son of the morning. How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations. For you have said in your heart I will ascend into heaven, I will

exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the most high.” Who does that sound like? That’s like the serpent in the garden. And this is Satan’s aim is to ascend himself above God. And this is what he wants us to do is put ourselves above God; for us to order God around; for us to be the ones who sit on the thrones of our life.

So Satan, in his charge, is really all about getting us to serve our needs and our wants, to fulfill our needs when we want to do it so that we can be our own god’s in our own lives.

And so in this way, Satan fell, he was struck down, and he has been put under the Lord’s foot, he’s been put under your foot. You have authority over Satan if you exercise it.

Ephesians chapter 6, verse 10. This is when Paul is talking about the armor of God. “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against” what? The devil’s schemes. It’s not against people, it’s not against institutions. The devil uses these things, but first and foremost its Satan working on my heart. Not to become satanic, but to become a Bobby-ist. To become a Hannah-ist. To make it all about me.

And this is how the enemy works. He works to get us to fall into the trap where it’s all about me and no one else. And it is at this heart that the kingdom of God is founded on. It is founded on deception. Fear

that I won't have enough, fear that everything's going to go wrong, fear that everything's going to be a disaster, fear that I won't live a life that's fulfilled, fear that I'll never be wanted by others, fear that I'll never connect, fear that I don't belong, fear that I haven't achieved anything. It's all lies!

And the irony is when we let go of worrying about such things is when we have more than enough. We stop worrying about our daily bread, our daily bread comes. When we stop worrying about looking good, we look good. When we stop worrying about power, God gives us godly power.

It's interesting, and this is really what I want you to catch here. Satan, when he attacks, he attacks always the same way. He attacks the mind, and he attacks with three main weapons. Now anybody here like chess? Chess? Nobody, great. I'm a nerd. Okay. I like chess, I love chess, actually. And one of the things you learn in chess is every chess player pretty much has the same opening 15 moves or so. And if you can study that players moves you have a good chance to beat them. If they change their opening, they become much weakened player.

And so anyway, Satan always has the same opening move and the scripture teaches us this. He always does the same three things. First John 2:15 tells us that he tricks the world through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. And this is the way the enemy gets at us.

Now I decided to change the word lust to desire or obsessive desire, like you obsess over things because in the modern world when we think of lust, we always think of one thing, don't we. We think of sex. And it can be that, but it's not really that. Lust means to just want something so bad that nothing can stop you from going after it.

So it's these three ways and usually together or in order that Satan will attack you, and in so doing, destroy families, destroy schools, destroy churches. The first is the lust of the flesh which can mean wanting to gratify my body's desires at the cost of my morality or what's good for my soul. It can be adultery, but it also can be drugs or alcohol or food or whatever. It can be any manner of things that is pleasing to the body.

By the way, all those things I just mentioned can be good for you, right, if they're in the kingdom of God. Sex is good for you, if it's right. Good for you. I'm sure there's some science, but you get what I mean. Sex is a good thing. It's a gift from God within marriage. It is. And drugs are good for you, if they're for treating illness. And alcohol is good for you if it's a glass of wine and pasta and you're in Vienna or something. Food is good for you, a great meal with a friend, right? But any of those things can be turned into something that utterly destroys your life and it happens when you become obsessive about it. When you become obsessive about it. And this is what the enemy does, obsess about these things. Only think about those things. When is it going to come? They're

always things that we think are going to satiate us, but like scratching a mosquito bite, it only makes it worse!

So the first is the desire of the flesh. The second is the desire of the eyes. So that's mainly like for men, there is nothing wrong with driving a Lamborghini, okay? But desiring the next hot car, looking amazing for everybody, amazing clothes, money, gold, wealth, again, those are all good things, right? If you want to donate a Lamborghini to the church for the youth ministry or just for my own personal collection, no problem. There's nothing wrong with fine cars. There's nothing wrong with looking terrific, with having nice clothes, being wealthy is something that is very often blessed by God. But it's the obsession of those things: I need to have this, I need to have the next great thing, I need to have more, more, more. I need to look better, obsessing over how you look to everyone, reputation management, needing to always look perfect, always be perfect. Like on the outside, you may be gorgeous, but on the inside thinking I'm ugly, I'm fat, I'm not attractive, and that obsession of the eyes also destroys the inner life, doesn't it. It lies. Or maybe we could say I am what I have. I am what I do. I am what people say about me, etc.

And then the third is the pride of life, which is often times wrapped up with thinking one is wise. So thinking I am wise above all, thinking I'm the smartest guy here, that I'm the winner, I'm the succeder, who do they think they are talking to me like that. So the pride of life has to do with wisdom and mainly power. So again, another thing, is power a bad

thing? I hope not. We have a television show called the Hour of Power. Power is a good thing when it comes from God, when it's in the kingdom of God, but when we obsess over power, obsess over control, when our desire is to be seen as wise and smart, when our egos get in the way, when we start fighting with people, not because we seek the truth but it's a sport and we want to be right. I know that never happens in politics or religion, but from time to time.. it does all the time! It's the worst it's ever been! The worst it's ever been in politics and religion. This I am right, you are wrong, right?

So the pride of life, the ego it happens in our work, happens in marriage, it happens in friendships. Nobody wants to listen, nobody wants to dialogue, everybody wants to be I'm right, you're wrong. So again, so power is a good thing, but when it falls out of the kingdom of God, it becomes ego and that evolves into fighting, bitterness, war.

So there it is. The three. The desire of the flesh: more, more, more, more. Desire of the eyes: I have to be amazing, I have to be beautiful, I have to have more of this and that. And the pride of life: I am wise. Who do you think you are? And these are the three opening moves of the chess game that Satan always plays in our mind. This is Bobby Schuller all the time. I don't know about you, but I'm speaking not only from experience, but the scriptures are true. John tells us that this is Satan's opening move. It's cardinal. It's at the root of war, evil, everything that you think is bad in the world, it has its roots in these three things. It

takes place through the narrative scripture constantly, too. I mean just think about the Garden of Eden, you remember? Remember what the serpent says to Eve? The first thing? Look at that fruit. What does he say? The first thing that it's good food to eat. Was it good to eat? No, it brought on death! It was a poison apple! Okay, so that it's good to eat. It's pleasing to the eyes. Right? So that's the lust of the eyes. And third, that it's desirable to make one wise. There it is, the pride of life. And then to just put the cherry on top, God doesn't want you to because He knows if you eat it, you'll what? You'll be like Him.

So there it is, right there in order. And you know what happens when people fall in this? They think that their desire will be satiated, but it's not. It makes the desire greater, and this is how addictions for power, addictions for drugs or alcohol or whatever, addictions to vanity and things like that, and reputation management, this is how it takes its root. And then so much of our fear is about managing the outcomes of those things, and that's when you become in the grip of the kingdom of darkness: I don't have enough, even though you have plenty. I'll never be enough. I'll never be loved enough. Everybody's against me. The world is shrinking around me. And this is what happens in the kingdom of darkness.

I remember Rich Mouw spoke once about going to a Rolling Stones concert, and the Rolling Stones are great. I mean who doesn't enjoy the Rolling Stones. But he said there's this amazing moment where

thousands and thousands of people in this outdoor arena type thing where almost a cappella like a worship service thrumming over and over: “I can’t get no satisfaction. I can’t get no satisfaction.” And that is the song of the modern generation. All the desires of your flesh are available to you. All the desires of your eyes are available to you. All your pride and ego and everything, all the beauty, everything, it’s all available. And the more and more and deeper you get into that, the more you’re trapped; the more thirsty you become.

And Jesus promises the opposite. I give a water that once you drink of it, you will never thirst again. This is how Satan tricks us: me first, then anyone else. This is how God teaches us: put the kingdom first and everything will be fine.

The same temptation went to Jesus, by the way. Remember the three temptations of Jesus? Turn this stone into bread. That’s the desire of the flesh. And what does Jesus say? It is written. And then it’s well jump off this pinnacle and angels will catch you and everybody will clap and see that you’re from God. It’ll be amazing. You’ll be spectacular. That’s actually what Henri Nouwen called it, the temptation to be spectacular. And what does Jesus say? It is written. That’s the lust of the eyes right there. And then finally, Satan says oh, this will all belong to you, just bow down and worship me and I’ll give you the whole earth. It’ll be yours. Just worship me this one time and I’ll give it to you. Its pride of life.

And in every case, Jesus responds with the same opening. What is it? It is written. And you know what's amazing about that is Satan never disagrees with Him. Satan's always like okay, you got me there. All right, you got me there. I find that interesting that at least they both know that when the word of God is planted in your heart, there is no debate or talking out of-ness. That when it's in your blood, there's something that aligns with your body and your mind. It's like this is wrong. This is wrong. It looks good, it looks good on paper, but there's something about this. This is wrong. I know this is bad for me, or I know this is bad for my family. I'm going to trust the Lord's ways, even if it means waiting a little longer.

In short, the main way the enemy attacks us is not through demonic possession and all those things. We have authority over all of that. Jesus broke the bondage of demonic powers physically in your life two thousand years ago. It's the influence that Satan has on our thinking, not to be evil, but to be selfish. To pursue our ends before God's ends. To trust that I can do it not that God can do it.

You cannot have a neutral mind. A person is a mind, you know. We talked about that last week. And you cannot have a neutral mind and however you think will become habit in your life, and whatever that habit is will crystallize into circumstances. So focus on what you think about. Jesus tells it so plainly – “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these other things will be added to you.”

But Satan does it the other way. And it sounds so innocent, doesn't it. Seek first all these things, and then do your spiritual stuff. That is the message of the enemy! It's not go out there and kill a bunch of people, it's not go out there and sacrifice a goat. Its take care of your stuff first, then go seek the kingdom, then go do your religious stuff, then go read your Bible, and then go to church, and go hang out with your friends, but first make sure the bills are paid, make sure everything's taken care of. That is not the reality God invites us to. He invites us to seek first His kingdom and to trust that when our minds are fixed on Him, a whole universe of resources, power, life and goodness is made available to us but only when our minds are fixed on Him.

Or we can say like Psalm 23 says: Lord I fear no evil, I fear no lack, I fear no harm for you are with me. All that is good in this world will come to me if I merely have faith and trust in you. And that's it. That's it, guys. Don't let the enemy rob your life of sufficiency by tilting everything out of balance. That's what he wants to accomplish. Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. Then if you're the wealthiest person in the world, and you have a Lamborghini, it's all blessed by the Lord! I'm not saying that's for everybody, Irene, all right? She had this look in her eye like I kind of want a Lamborghini. It's for some people, and not others.

The main thing is that we just live in the sufficiency and joy with the most joyful person in the universe, Jesus Christ. That we're in that

party every day. That nothing can touch us, nothing can harm us and we're going to trust in that, amen?

Lord, I just, in Jesus' name, take authority over Satan, and I cast him down. All of his thoughts are lies and we will see that clearly. It is not about our desires, it's about your desire for us. Lord, as a child trusts a loving father, so do we trust you. That everything you have planned for us is good and only good, is rich and only rich, full of life, full of power, full of joy, but Lord, we're not going to seek those things, we're going to seek you and your kingdom and trust that everything will come in its own time. We love you, God, and it's in Jesus' name we pray and believe, amen.