

# What does the Bible say about the devil?

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 05 March 2017

Preacher: Rupert Evans

[0:00] Genesis chapter 3 verses 1 to 15. Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, did God actually say you shall not eat any tree in the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, we may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said you shall not eat the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it lest you die. But the serpent said to the woman, you will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate and she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate.

Then the eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

[1:20] And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, where are you?

And he said, I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself. He said, who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?

The man said, the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree and I ate. Then the Lord God said to the woman, what is this that you have done?

The woman said, the serpent deceived me and I ate. The Lord God said to the serpent, because you have done this, curse to you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field.

On your belly you shall go and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring.

[2:24] He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. Good morning everyone. I think you'll find it helpful to have the handout, which I hope you got on the way in, with you as we think about this subject together.

It's worth saying, I think there's two ways of tackling a kind of doctrinal issue like this, where we're looking at what the Bible teaches about a particular thing. One is to focus on one particular passage, if there's a passage which sort of says most of what the Bible says on something. And that's helpful because it means that you can see that what I'm saying, hopefully, or the preacher is saying, is what the Bible passage says. The other approach, which is more what we're doing this morning, is to try and get a broad sweep of what the Bible as a whole is saying about a particular topic, which has the advantage that hopefully we're not missing anything out and I'm not just picking and choosing certain bits.

The disadvantage is it's much harder for you to see that I'm not fucking versed out of context. And therefore, we're not going to look at every verse in this handout. You might want to trace up some of the references afterwards and look at them for yourself.

Should I lead us in prayer as we begin? Thank you. Father, we know that Satan loves to cause us to doubt your word or to deny it.

[3:47] And so we pray this morning that as we hear what you have to say to us about him, that you would cause us to believe it and then to be equipped to resist him.

And we ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, in July 2014, the General Synod of the Church of England agreed a new alternative liturgy for baptism services, which removed all reference to the devil.

Instead of parents and godparents vowing to reject the devil and all rebellion against God, they would now be required only to reject evil. I guess believing in the devil had become embarrassing and even ridiculous for some Anglican leaders.

Indeed, in the eyes of many in the West, the devil is no more than a slightly naughty fictional creature to dress your children up as for Halloween parties, complete with a cute red tail and horns. And yet, of course, in other parts of the world, the devil is very real and an object of daily terror. Millions live in fear of witch doctors putting curses on them in this life and of an eternity being punished by Satan in the next.

[ 5 : 11 ] Well, this morning I wanted to see that neither of those extremes are biblical because the Bible is clear that Satan does exist and is dangerous. Now, I want to say at the outset that the Bible doesn't answer every question we might have about the devil.

For instance, why God created him or exactly what the demonic world is like. Because the Bible is a book primarily about God, the devil only appears when he's relevant in relation to God and his purposes for the world.

Indeed, the Bible more assumes than explains the devil's existence. And we would do well, therefore, not to speculate about the devil or become distracted by an unhealthy interest in him or to go beyond what the Bible actually says.

But the Bible does tell us what we need to know about Satan. And I want us to consider the Bible's teaching about him this morning together under four headings, four questions.

Here's the first. Who is the devil? Who is he? You see, the Bible is clear that Satan isn't simply an ancient myth to explain away evil or a mere personification of evil for literary purposes.

[ 6 : 34 ] But he really exists. We first meet him, of course, as we saw in our reading in the third chapter of the Bible in the Garden of Eden. And he appears at regular intervals all the way through the Bible right up until the final chapters of Revelation.

We're not told much about his origins, but there seem to be hints that he's the chief among the fallen angels who Jude describes in verse 6 of his letter. So Jesus says in Luke 10, 18, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

Seems to be some kind of reference to Satan also in verses 12 to 15 of Isaiah 14, which describe his pride in attempting to usurp God and his fate in being thrown out of heaven as a consequence. Despite the privileges that came with being an angelic being, like us, he rebelled against God. And this desire to usurp or be like God makes Satan a formidable adversary whom we need to take seriously.

Indeed, God has allowed him to exercise considerable power. He's powerful. So just think of some of the names the New Testament uses for him.

[ 7 : 56 ] So John 12, 31 describes him as the prince or ruler of this world. Ephesians 2, 2, as the ruler of the kingdom of the air.

And 2 Corinthians 4, 4, as the God of this age or this world. Behind the scenes, the devil exercises enormous influence over this world and its people.

In fact, by nature, we're all under his influence. Maybe an uncomfortable thing to hear, but that's what the Bible teaches us.

It tells us that we all naturally follow his ways in Ephesians 2, where he's described as being at work in those who are disobedient, those who don't know Jesus. In John chapter 8, Jesus implies that naturally we're his children.

So the popular view of Satan as being a slightly comic figure with horns and a pitchfork is to make light of someone very serious and very real.

[ 8 : 58 ] We're foolish to take Satan lightly. He is a formidable, if subtle, enemy. And yet we also mustn't run to the opposite extreme and give him more authority and respect than he deserves.

He is, after all, only a creature. That may be one of the reasons he's personified as a serpent in Genesis 3. He's part of the creation God made in Genesis 1.

Indeed, when Genesis 1 tells us at the beginning that God created the heavens and the earth, is telling us that he created the spiritual world as well as the physical world.

Satan's power is limited under God. Remember how God allowed Satan to afflict Job and tempt him into unbelief.

But he also placed a limit on what Satan was allowed to do. So there's no dualism in Christian theology, no great unresolved cosmic battle between good and evil.

[10:06] God and Satan aren't two rival deities where Satan sometimes gets the upper hand and the end result is in doubt. No, God is sovereign, as we've been thinking in this service, over Satan. In fact, the common idea that God is in charge of heaven and Satan of hell is complete nonsense. Hell will be a place under God's control and far from punishing others there, Satan himself will be punished in hell one day.

Indeed, while he's a dangerous enemy, it's important to remember that Satan is also a defeated enemy. Just have a look down at verse 15 of Genesis 3, if you've still got that passage open. You'll remember how God forewarned Satan of his final defeat. He says, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring.

He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. God promises that a descendant of Eve would crush his head, would defeat him. And the New Testament tells us that at the cross, Jesus fulfilled that promise and defeated Satan because by bearing the punishment of sin, he dealt with the one weapon that Satan had against us, the accusation of our guilt before a holy God.

[11:33] Paul, therefore, was able to write in Colossians 2.15 that at the cross, Jesus disarmed the rulers and authorities, a reference to Satan and his forces, and put them to open shame by triumphing over them.

1 John 3, verse 8, similarly tells us that the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. So the devil has been dealt a mortal blow at the cross.

Now at the moment, he's like a wounded animal. He's dangerous precisely because he knows he's on borrowed time. But we can take great comfort from the fact that he will one day be finally defeated and face judgment.

If you like, the cross was a moment of his defeat, but he still awaits sentencing and is temporarily allowed out on parole or bail under certain conditions until that day comes.

But that day will come. In Matthew 25, Jesus speaks of the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Well, let's move on to our second main heading, which is what does the devil do?

[12:49] What does the devil do? In other words, what is his agenda in the limited time that he has left? How does he seek to wreak havoc? Well, I guess many people might assume that the devil is basically behind all that's evil in the world and that his chief priority is simply to cause as much devastation and suffering as possible.

Now there is some truth in that. In John 8, 44, Jesus describes Satan as being a murderer from the beginning. And that incident in Mark 5, do you remember, where the demons who'd been driven out of legion, then leads the pigs they enter down into a steep bank into the sea to be drowned, is very sobering, showing us how Satan loves to bring death and misery.

But actually, we can't attribute all evil to Satan. Satan is only one of three influences in the Bible that lead us to sin.

The world and the flesh are the other two, which remind us that we can't blame Satan tempting us for every sin that we commit. And as wicked as Satan is, he actually has a far more subtle agenda than simply causing human suffering.

Indeed, he's often quite content for many people to prosper and to enjoy pleasure in this world if it furthers his agenda. So turn with me, please, from the first book of the Bible to the last to Revelation chapter 12.

[14:24] Revelation chapter 12, which I think you'll find on page 1243 of the church Bibles. Revelation 12.

And you'll notice that in verse 3 we're introduced to a dragon. And that dragon, a great red dragon, he's called in verse 3, if you look on to verse 9, is identified as being Satan.

We're told verse 9, the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent. So again, we're told, or here we're told that the serpent in Genesis 3 is Satan, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.

so we're introduced to this dragon. But look on to verse 17, which tells us what Satan is up to in this period between his defeat at the cross and his final judgment when Jesus returns.

Verse 17, we're told this, then the dragon, the devil, became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

[15:39] So Satan is in the business of making war against Christians. His great longing is to lead God's people astray, to make them ineffective and to destroy their faith.

If we're here this morning and we're Christians, then we are Satan's number one target, his most wanted. He's far more interested in deceiving and distracting and demoralizing us and therefore making us ineffective than he is actually in many of the things which are far more commonly associated with him.

While he works in such subtle, unseen ways so often, he hates Christians because he hates Jesus and the gospel through which he's defeated.

He's a very subtle enemy because like a good football team, Satan has a number of different tactics that he uses to wage war on God's people. And we need to be on our guard because he will search out our particular weakness and then seek to exploit it.

I want us to consider three particular tactics of his. First, there is what we might call spiritualism or the occult, what we often associate perhaps with the devil.

[17:01] And we need to be clear that the devil does still operate through such means today. It's difficult to take the Bible or Jesus seriously and to deny that.

Of course, we see demon possession and the like in Jesus' own ministry. Maybe that there are reasons why we shouldn't expect it to be quite so common today. Perhaps, I don't know, Satan particularly focused his energies on the time when Jesus was on earth and he has now been dealt a mortal blow at the cross since then.

It may also be that Satan uses other tactics more commonly in the West today. But nonetheless, Satan is able to work through frightening, supernatural means. And it may well be the case that some of what passes off as extreme mental illness today is in certain cases actually a form of satanic bondage.

Now, we need to be very careful here. Some Christians cause great distress and damage when they attribute every sinful pattern of behavior and every problem in a person's life to some kind of satanic oppression.

Don't think the Bible teaches that at all. But equally, we mustn't go too far the other way as if Satan is never active in such ways today. Now, I have little personal experience of this kind of thing, but I do remember one occasion when I was a student when I think I probably was confronted by someone under a very real satanic influence.

[18:26] I was serving at the time as president of the University Christian Union and I was walking from my college to the building where a Christian union talk was about to happen and a man who looked like he was homeless started following me down the street rather aggressively.

He started running after me in a busy street and hurling abuse at me, repeatedly shouting in front of me, in front of lots of people, you're a Christian, aren't you? I hate Christians.

I hate Jesus and the like. And he continues to do that for several minutes chasing me down the street. Now, I never met him and there was no way he could have known that I was a Christian, but for some reason he latched onto me and wanted to express a hatred of Jesus.

It was extremely unsettling and I've heard similar stories of very obvious and sometimes far more frightening satanic attacks. Jesus warns his disciples in Mark 13 that false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, the elect.

You see, Satan is able to do supernatural things. Terrifying spiritualist practices or as we'll see later, counterfeit miracles that look like they're of God are in his armory.

[19:41] We mustn't be naive about spiritualism and I think the occult is on the rise in this country. I guess this is a reminder to us of the danger of things like the occult or perhaps dabbling in areas which may be related such as horoscopes or hypnosis sometimes or pre-masonry.

There is a real spiritual world out there and things such as Ouija boards can cause lasting and serious damage and it seems open the door for demon possession.

Worth saying though that Christians can't be demon possessed. In Mark 3, Jesus says that he is the stronger man who will not share his home with the devil and so while we may be tempted by Satan and attacked by him in great ways, we can't be possessed by him if we're Christians.

So Satan sometimes works through spiritualism. If we spoke to Christian brothers and sisters in other parts of the world, that would be something that they would just take for granted and would be very normal for them. But he also works through materialism and perhaps that's one of the reasons we see fewer signs of spiritualist activity in the West than we do elsewhere.

It's often said that the greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist and by being unaware of his existence, people are, I guess, more vulnerable than they would be in a society very aware of spiritual powers as most cultures in human history have been.

[ 21 : 17 ] And there's no doubt Satan has been very successful in blinding people to his existence. The YouGov poll in 2013 found that while over 50% of Americans believe in the devil, only 18% of Britons do so and only 25% even among those who profess to be Christians.

You see, we're so blinded by what we can see, the material universe, that we fail to recognize the unseen spiritual realities behind it.

Materialism is a great tactic of Satan. He has blinded the eyes of unbelievers, Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4, so that they fail to grasp the gospel or spiritual realities.

If you've read C.S. Lewis' The Screwtape Letters, you may remember Screwtape grilling the junior devils about how to be most effective in their labors. One of them, Wormwood, eventually asks him, Screwtape, I give up.

We can't tell them there is no God and we can't tell them there is no hell. What lie should we tell them? And Screwtape replied, My dear Wormwood, just tell them there is no hurry.

[ 22 : 32 ] No hurry. You see, the comfort that we experience all around us or the busyness with which we fill our diaries means that for many people thinking about Christian things just isn't a priority and so we're lulled into a false sense of security that everything is okay, that we don't need God, that there are no significant spiritual realities, that there's no hurry to think about Christian things.

I think there's much wisdom therefore when C.S. Lewis' assertion elsewhere that the long, dull, monotonous years of middle-aged prosperity or middle-aged adversity are excellent campaigning weather for the devil.

It's a warning, those of us in affluent dullage would be advised to take seriously. Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of this world and we can expect him to use materialism to tempt us also.

So Satan uses spiritualism, he uses materialism and then he also uses secularism. Just turn on with me over the page in the handouts as well but just turn on with me to Revelation chapter 13.

Revelation chapter 13, the chapter after the one we were looking at a moment ago and let me read from verse 1. We're told this, And I saw a beast rising out of the sea with ten horns and seven heads with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.

[ 24 : 02 ] And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's and its mouth was like a lion's mouth and to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.

Now these are tricky verses because Revelation deals in picture language but we've already seen that the dragon is Satan and notice here that he gives his power and throne to a beast who seems to represent secular human powers and ideologies.

In other words, Satan works out his purposes through powerful human rulers and ideas which in verse 7 are allowed to make war on the saints.

It often amazes me how naive some Christians can be about the prevailing ideas of the world around us, the progressive isms that dominate fashionable thought and the increasingly totalitarian way in which the state and the media insist on conformity to such ideologies.

The announcement this week that parents will no longer be able to withdraw children from compulsory relationships education in primary schools is a good example as is the court case this week that found two Christian street preachers I think in Bristol guilty of criminal offences for reading out parts of the King James Bible.

[ 25 : 27 ] And we need to be aware that Satan will try to silence or crush the church through a combination of state power and the ungodly ideologies of the culture which the state then seeks to impose.

We saw this of course in the Soviet Union and we must have our eyes open to the fact that Satan will very often be behind the ungodly ideas that society insists upon whether in the guise of hedonism secularism Islamism pluralism relativism or most recently perhaps transgenderism and extreme feminism.

it's interesting that in Revelation 2 verse 10 the church in Smyrna is warned that the devil is about to throw some of you into prison and so therefore to be faithful unto death.

Satan will use the persecution of the state to silence and even kill God's people where he can.

Mercifully we're a long way from that at the moment in this country but this is normal Christian experience all over the world and it shouldn't surprise us that the heat is rising in our nation.

Well let's move on and given that Satan wants to wage war against Christians we do well to consider our next main question which is how does the devil operate? How does he operate?

[ 26 : 54 ] Again there's much that we could say but I want to flag up two particular emphases of the Bible. first Satan attacks the word of God again and again that seems to be his primary target his modus operandi.

Satan is actually an excellent theologian and that's precisely what makes him so dangerous. A.W. Tozer was right when he warned that the devil is a better theologian than any of us and is a devil still.

Remember how Satan quotes the Bible when he tempts Jesus. He knows his Bible or James 2 tells us that even the demons believe God exists. You see Satan understands very well what the Bible teaches and how God works.

Reminds us that just knowing what the Bible says is not enough to be a follower of Jesus. And Satan understands what sadly far too few Christians understand that the way God builds and grows his church is through the preaching of his word.

It's one of the reasons why I'm so sure that word ministry is authentic Christian ministry because it's the ministry that Satan attacks. Just think about it.

[ 28 : 13 ] So he tries to stop people hearing the word in the first place. Remember how in the parable of the sower Jesus tells us of the seed sown on the path that the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts as soon as that seed is sown.

So sadly I guess we can expect Satan to be at work this week at the week of talks and we must pray for Jesus to restrain him because Satan will seek to cause people to not listen to or to forget or to reject the word as soon as they hear it.

But then he also leads people to distort the word when it is taught. Turn back with me if you would to that passage that we read earlier at the beginning Genesis chapter 3 right at the start of the Bible where we see Satan's methodology laid bare.

Genesis 3 on page 3. And just notice here how Satan both adds to and distracts from what God has spoken. So verse 1 he asks Eve did God actually say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden doubting God's word but also adding extra rules to the one rule God had given to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

All other trees were in play. So Satan had added to God's word saying that he'd said that Adam and Eve weren't to eat from any tree in the garden. But then in verse 4 he subtracts from God's word also saying you will not surely die.

[ 29 : 46 ] thereby contradicting and denying what God had clearly said. And Satan still uses the same tactics today.

Sometimes adding to the Bible whether it's through the supposedly infallible words of the Pope or the mind of the church on the one hand or claims of contemporary fresh revelation on the other. Or he subtracts from God's word as we see so often among liberal Christians who deny for example God's teaching about sin and judgment human sexuality or the cost of following Jesus.

As with Satan here in Genesis 3 while such people sound so reasonable the end result is devastating. So Satan denies and distorts God's good word.

It's no wonder that the first word used to describe him in the Bible in Genesis 3 1 is crafty and that Jesus calls him a liar and the father of lies. Satan is very cunning and he loves to deceive and to distort and to do so by twisting scripture.

[ 30 : 56 ] William Shakespeare in his play The Merchant of Venice reminds us that the devil can cite scripture for his purpose. And Satan's use of scripture in the temptations of Jesus I think ought to put us on our guard because we can expect false teachers in the church to do the same quoting Bible verses about God's love or the equality of all human beings but in such a way that takes them out of context or distorts them or denies other truths that the Bible teaches just as clearly elsewhere.

So Satan attacks God's word. But notice also that he is also an expert imposter an imposter and that's the other thing I want us to consider about his methods.

In other words he not only acts through external secular forces which seek to target the church but also through internal agents within the church.

Just turn on with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 11 sorry we're flicking around a fair bit. 2 Corinthians chapter 11 page 1167 page 1167 and look on with me to verse 13 2 Corinthians 11 13 Paul is talking about the false teachers who'd caused him so much trouble and he says this in verse 13 for such men are false apostles deceitful workmen disguising themselves as apostles of Christ and no

wonder for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light so it is no surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.

See once again Satan is very clever. Martin Luther described him as God's ape and warned that where God built a church there the devil would also build a chapel.

[ 32 : 57 ] Satan tries to look like the genuine article. He seeks to infiltrate the church from within because he's likely to be able to do far more damage that way. He works through those who look like God's people or like Christian leaders.

It's interesting that there's a second beast in Revelation 13 who we're told had two horns like a lamb but spoke like a dragon. In other words one who looks like Jesus but actually speaks the devil's words.

Wolves in sheep's clothing. So Satan's favourite tactic perhaps involves false teaching from within the church. We've touched on this already but on the handout you can see a few examples of verses which tell us that Satan is behind false teaching.

If you look at those verses in context it's interesting that they include areas such as sex, the different gender roles within family life, and the pattern of suffering now glory later in the Christian life rather than the promise of health and prosperity now.

A reminder that far from seeing such areas as unimportant, Satan wages his war against the church precisely on these battle grounds. Most significantly though, it's striking how Satan in particular opposes the gospel of the cross.

[ 34 : 21 ] Remember Peter trying to tell Jesus that he didn't need to go to the cross in Mark 8 and Jesus replies, get behind me Satan. The view of Jesus' ministry that leaves out the need for him to die is satanic because Satan knows the cross is how he is defeated and the means through which God saves people from his clutches.

Of course, Satan himself tempted Jesus to bypass the cross at his temptation when he offered him all the kingdoms of the world without having first to suffer and die. So when we meet Christian leaders today, whatever their position, who suggest that the atoning death of Jesus on the cross is unnecessary or somehow immoral, then we can be sure that their words, albeit usually unconsciously, are coming straight from the evil one.

Similarly, Satan loves it when churches move their focus away from the cross to something else.

Such churches cause him no headaches whatsoever.

So Satan is an imposter disguising himself as an angel of light. Indeed, as we said earlier, we see several places in the Bible where he's even able to do miracles. Remember, for example, Pharaoh's magicians who performed miracles in Egypt.

Even supernatural activity is not a guarantee of authentic Christianity. Well, we're very nearly done, but one final question remains in light of all this, which we'll think about briefly in our last couple of minutes.

[ 35 : 53 ] How can I resist the devil? How can I resist the devil? C.S. Lewis remarked that there are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils.

One is to disbelieve in their existence, the other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. And we need to make sure that we don't fall into either trap, either to underestimate or to overestimate Satan.

The Apostle Peter warns us in 1 Peter 5, be sober-minded, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of sufferings are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. Satan's on the lookout this morning, trying to devour vulnerable Christians, and we're to resist him.

But the good news is that we have all the resources we need to do so, because the secret to resisting Satan doesn't lie in exorcisms or the like, but in the gospel.

[ 37 : 08 ] So turn with me, please, if you would, to the final passage that we're going to look at, which is Ephesians chapter 6, just a few pages further on, on page 1178.

Page 1178. You may know that the second half of Ephesians 6 deals with spiritual warfare, and if you went to a Christian bookshop, you'd find all kinds of weird and wacky books about spiritual warfare, and what it looks like, and how we'd practice it.

Ephesians 6 gives us a rather different emphasis, I think. Have a look down with me at verse 11.

Paul writes this, he says, put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the

schemes of the devil.

And he then lists what that armor is, the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the readiness of the gospel of peace as shoes on our feet, and the helmet of salvation.

All those phrases, truth, righteousness, peace, and salvation, are used earlier in Ephesians as descriptions of the gospel. So Paul is saying we arm ourselves against the devil by remembering the gospel, the truth of the gospel, the righteousness before God and peace with God that are ours in the gospel, the salvation Jesus has won for us.

[ 38 : 30 ] Similar to what Peter said in 1 Peter 5, that we resist the devil firm in our faith. It's the gospel that protects us. And notice too that as our offensive weapon, we're to take up the word of God, which is the sword of the spirit.

So what will this mean in practice? Well, let's think of a couple of examples. One of Satan's chief tactics is to try to accuse Christians. In fact, the name Satan means accuser.

Satan loves to remind us of our sin. So to make us feel guilty, to accuse us before God. But if we're putting Ephesians 6 into practice, we'll remember the gospel, that we've been forgiven, that our sins are paid for, and so Satan has nothing left to throw at us.

When he whispers to us that we're too sinful for God to accept us, the gospel tells us otherwise. God will tempt us.

As he did Adam and Eve in the garden and Jesus in the wilderness. There are a number of verses on the handout which show how he still loves to tempt us today. But if we're putting Ephesians 6 into practice, we'll wield the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, to resist Satan.

[ 39 : 48 ] We'll remember what God said in his word and his promises to us and draw on their strength to say no to sin. While as we saw the other week, the account of Jesus' temptation in Luke 4 isn't there primarily to teach us about how to resist temptation, it's nonetheless no surprise that that's how we see Jesus responding to Satan's temptations to him, by using the Bible in response to Satan's misuse of scripture.

Why we need to know our Bibles to help us fight sin. So wonderfully, while we're to be on our guard, we need not fear Satan.

In the Gospel and in the Bible, we have all the resources we need to resist him. And as Ephesians 6 goes on to say, we're also to pray for God's help in the battle too.

So let's do that now as we close. Let me lead us in prayer. James gives us this promise in the New Testament. He says, resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Father, we thank you for that promise. We thank you that the devil is defeated, that Jesus is more powerful than him, and therefore we can be sure that we will ultimately win victory over him, but that he will also flee from us in this world if we resist him.

[ 41 : 17 ] we pray therefore that you would make the most of the weapons that you have given to us, that we would pray, praying as we're told to do in the Lord's Prayer, deliver us from evil or from the evil one, that we would remember the gospel and the good news of Jesus being defeated at the cross, and that we would also know our Bibles, that we would be protected from being deceived by false teaching, even false teaching that sounds credible and uses the Bible to back it up, and that we would also use your word to protect ourselves in moments of temptation.

We pray therefore that we would know that promise to be true in our own lives, and that as we resist the devil, he would flee from us, and we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.