

Overcome Satan's Lies with the Belt of Truth

Andreas - July 9, 2017

Last week, we started looking at Ephesians 6:10-18, which calls every follower of Christ to put on the armour of God in order to protect the treasure that we have in Christ.

Through the connection we have with God through Jesus Christ, we are richer than we realize. We are loved without condition and without limit. We have a future that's out of this world. Already now, we have a place in God's plan to redeem all creation to Himself.

Imagine how we would live if we lived in light of these realities every second of every day. Because of God's love for us, we would live with courage and without fear. Because of our future, we would live with hope and optimism. Because of our place in God's plan, we would live with purpose and direction.

You and I are richer than we realize; but wherever there's a treasure there's also a thief.

Last week, we saw that, in our battle to live a victorious Christian life, the real enemies are not the people who seem to stand in our way as we seek to live the good life in Christ. If anything, those people are pawns of the real enemy, who is Satan. His life's

mission is to deprive you and me of the abundant life our Creator wants to share with us.

Satan may not be able to change the fact that our heavenly Father loves us; but, if we let him he will replace our sense of the Father's love with fear. Satan may not be able to rob the inheritance that's waiting for us in heaven; but if we let him he will exchange our sense of hope with despair. Our enemy may not be able to steal our place in God's plan; but he will do everything in his power to stop us from finding our place in God's plan.

Satan loves the fact that our world has turned him into a cartoon character. He also likes it when we Christians forget about him or when we become cocky and start to think that he can't touch us. It's true that Jesus Christ disarmed Satan through his death and resurrection; but he did not destroy Satan.

Satan is like the wounded lion we saw in the video. He is mortally wounded; his time is limited, but make no mistake he is still dangerous. 1 Peter 5:9 tells us, *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

Do you ever wonder why God didn't destroy Satan right at the beginning? After all, God is all-powerful.

Why does he tolerate the devil? If you've ever asked that question, you are not alone.

The Bible doesn't give a direct answer to that question; but if you know the BIG story of the Bible you know that Satan plays an important role in God's plan and in our preparation for an eternal life with God.

Remember, God's goal is to populate his eternal kingdom, not with people who are there just because they have nowhere else to go, but with people who really want to be there and deliberately choose to be there. Without the existence of the Tempter, you and I would have no real choice but to love and obey God.

Without that kind of choice we would be little more than robots in our relationship with God. Our desire to be with him would never be tested. Because he wants us to choose him freely and deliberately, God lets Satan go on scheming against us.

Satan has been around for a very long time; and he has a well-worn strategy for depriving us of the life God wants to share with us. Last week, we saw that the first step of his strategy is to deceive us with lies.

The first time Satan steps onto the biblical stage is right at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis 3. We're

not going to take the time to read those verses right now; but I encourage you to do it on your own; and as you do you will notice the half-truths and lies the serpent used to deceive our first parents. Essentially, he told them that God cannot be trusted and that they would become like God if they did the one thing God told them not to do.

The serpent replied to the woman, *“God knows that your eyes will be opened ... and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”*

The fact is that they were already more like God than any other creature. God had created them in his own image. The only thing God wanted to hold on to was the right to judge between good and evil, between right and wrong. Why did he want to hold on to that right? Because he was stingy? No, because he knew that only he could exercise that right without causing all the collateral damage we see in the world today.

God wanted to hold on to that right; he wanted to be humanity’s moral compass. Yet, God made that right available to Adam and Eve through the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As long as they did not eat of that tree, they let God be God and left the judgement of good and evil to him; but the moment they ate from the tree, they acted autonomously; they seized the right to judge for themselves; they started

to play God; and they instigated the homicidal mess we see in the world today.

Still today, Satan's first line of attack is to speak lies into our minds in order to deceive us. By deceiving us, he deprives us of the life God intends for us and gets us to contribute to the mess our first parents started.

Now chances are that Satan is not going to speak to us through a serpent. If he did, we would be on to him, because we know the story of our first parents. So how does Satan get his lies into our heads? Does he have the ability to speak directly to us? I believe he does, but only when we consciously allow him to; and we do that when we get involved in the wrong kinds of activities.

I'm talking about occult activities, séances, Ouija boards and the like. I'm also talking about forms of meditation that open our minds to voices other than the voice of God. As Christians, we don't need to be afraid of meditation. The Bible encourages it. Moses encouraged Joshua to meditate day and night on the Book of the Law. God wants us to listen for his voice as we meditate on his Word; but meditation that merely empties our minds makes room for any voice looking for an open mind.

So, yes, Satan can place thoughts and ideas directly into our minds if we let him. But here's the thing: he doesn't need to gain direct access to our minds in order to get his lies into our heads. He can do it through people who have given him access and through the culture they create.

Listen again to Ephesians 6:11-12,

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

Who are these rulers and authorities, these powers and spiritual forces? No doubt, they include demonic beings; but they also include human beings who are under their direct influence. These people shape and control the world in which we live.

Now, whatever you hear me saying this morning, I'm not saying that our elected offices in Edmonton or Ottawa are under Satan's direct influence; I have no interest in conspiracy theories; and I'm not going to start naming people or institutions.

At the same time, I believe there are people at work within the political and cultural structures of our world who are under Satan's direct influence. These people – some of them died long ago – are the architects and pioneers of the godless and self-centered culture that is developing all around us; and because we live and move in that culture we are all vulnerable to it and to the lies on which it is based.

So what are these lies? And how do we overcome them? We could be here all day talking about the lies that Satan feeds us through our culture.

Perhaps the biggest and most prevalent lie that comes through our secular culture is that God cannot be trusted and that we can live a full and meaningful life without reference to the Creator. That's what secularism is. It's all about doing life, getting along and making love without regard for God.

That's exactly what Satan deceived Adam and Eve into believing and doing. By getting them to distrust God and seize the right to judge for themselves, he got them to act and eat without regard for God and what he said. At that moment, secular culture was born and the consequences of secularism got started.

Preachers of secularism say that religion has done more harm than good. Just look at all the religious

wars and witch hunts done in the name of God. Unfortunately, religious people from all religions, including Christianity, have fueled their argument; but the problem is not with God; the problem is with people's interpretations of God.

Not only that, secularism promises way more than it delivers. It promises freedom; but it delivers addiction. It promises equality; but it delivers broken families and lives. It promises the stars to people who believe in themselves; but it's producing a generation of people who are confused, depressed and think suicide.

In our culture, the secular message doesn't come through the things that get said as much as the things that don't get said. Turn on the TV or read the news and, once in a while, you will see some raging atheist chanting, "There is no God. There is no God. There is no God." But that's the exception, not the norm. Far more often, you will just see nice people doing life, getting along and making love with no reference to God whatsoever.

Our kids grew up watching CBC Kids. They watched Blue's Clues, Zoboofoo, Dora the Explorer, Franklin and a bunch of other shows. Sometimes I sat down and watched with them. I never found anything that

was morally or religiously offensive. In fact, I saw a lot of positive human values being promoted.

One day I noticed, though, that these shows were teaching my kids how to do life without any reference to their Creator. Zaboomafoo, which was all about God's creatures, never referred to the Creator. Dora the Explorer never prayed before she went on an adventure. Franklin never talked about God's Word or God's ways.

Right then and there I realized that, if all the teaching and modelling my kids get comes from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation or from most other media outlets or even from the public education system, they are going to grow up believing the secular lie without even thinking about it.

Once I made that realization, we didn't ban CBC Kids from our home. Instead, Kirsten and I recommitted ourselves to what we were already doing. We found a new reason to keep giving thanks before we eat. Our supper time prayers aren't profound or long; but they actively acknowledge God as the source of everything we have and eat.

Something else we do is make church and Christian fellowship a priority. You might be thinking, "You have to do that. It's your job." True, but even if it

wasn't my job we would have made it a priority. Why? Because we wanted our kids to grow up around people who acknowledge God. In fact, we want to grow up around people who acknowledge God.

I understand that making church and Christian fellowship a priority isn't always easy. There are so many other good things we could be doing with our time and with our kids; but the choices we make reflect our values and our real values shape our lives.

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

Of course, one of the most important things we do as parents is take responsibility for teaching our children, both through our words and through our examples, which brings us to the first part of the armour mentioned in Ephesians 6:14, “Stand firm then, with the belt of truth bucked around your waist.”

The way to defend ourselves against Satan's lies is to live in God's truth. So, where do we find this truth?

The first place we go to find God's truth is His written Word, the Bible. The Bible tells us what God has done

throughout history to create a community of people who will live in fellowship with Him forever. The Bible also tells us how to live as those people in this world.

As we read and understand the Bible, we begin to see the world and our lives the way God sees them; and we learn what it takes to live life with reference to Him; but there's got to be more.

You see, by itself, the Bible cannot lead you to the life God intends for you. Reading, memorizing and studying Scripture, by themselves, will not protect you against the enemy's lies.

The religious people of Jesus' day knew their Bibles inside and out, backward and forward; but it did them no good. In John 5:39, Jesus said to them, *"You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life."*

By reading the Bible, you might learn the truth that God loves you; but it's only when the Spirit of Jesus Christ invades your life that God's love becomes your reality, even in the valley of the shadow of death.

By getting our kids to memorize Bible verses, they might grasp the concept of heaven and God's eternal kingdom; but it's only through an encounter with

Jesus Christ that this concept will make any kind of difference in their lives, especially when the going gets tough.

By studying the Bible, we might understand of our place in God's plan; but it's only when we walk with the Spirit that we will take our place in God's plan and stay in that place when life gets difficult.

When it comes to God's truth, the Bible points us away from itself to Jesus. That's because truth, in the fullest sense of the word, is not found in words written on a page. God's full truth wasn't found in the words God carved into the stone tablets and gave to Moses. Truth, in the fullest sense, is not even found in the words God's Spirit inspired the biblical authors to write.

No, truth is found in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the *truth* and the life." He alone is able to take the truths we read and make them our reality. He alone is able to take the promises of Scripture and make them our experience.

So, to protect yourself against the lies of the enemy, put on the belt of truth. Yes, that means getting God's written word into your mind; but there's got to be more. If all we do is get God's written Word into our

minds, we just become susceptible to another lie. We become vulnerable to the lie our own intellectual and moral efforts will lead us to abundant life.

That's the lie that underlies most religion in the world today; and when you really think about it it's no different than the secular lie. I can do what's right on my own.

The only way to overcome the enemy's lies and live a victorious life is to live in fellowship with Jesus Christ. That relationship, along with God's written Word, is your belt of truth and mine.

Do you have a relationship with Jesus Christ? I'm not asking if you've prayed the sinner's prayer or if you've asked Jesus into your heart. I'm asking if you have an ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ.

The day you prayed the sinner's prayer or asked Jesus into your heart was like your wedding day. It was the day you got connected; but getting connected doesn't mean you have a relationship. Just because I got connected to Kirsten doesn't mean I have a meaningful relationship with her.

To have a relationship is to spend time, to interact, to give your word and to trust their word. Without that kind of relationship, no matter how many verses

you've memorized, no matter how well you know the book, you're not protected against the devil's lies.

Like I said earlier, we could spend the whole day talking about the lies Satan feeds us through our culture; but I'm going to leave you with a personal challenge in addition to memorizing Ephesians 6:10-18. I challenge you to take some time this week to walk with Jesus and ask his Spirit to reveal to you which lies you are most vulnerable to believing.

I took this challenge last week. As I was preparing for this morning, I realized that it's super easy to point out the lies of our secular culture; and I realized that it's super easy to identify all the lies other people believe; but the important thing is that I recognize the lies I believe and find protection from them.

So, I took some time and I asked God's Spirit to show me one or two lies I am most vulnerable to. I only asked for one or two because I didn't think I could handle more; and by his grace he only showed me one or two.

One of the lies I'm most vulnerable to is that my worth and my security, including my financial security, depends on people. Sunday after Sunday, I stand up here and declare that, in Christ, we can know true meaning and security.

I started off by saying it this morning. Because of our connection with God through Jesus Christ, we are richer than we think; but few things give me more anxiety than people's disapproval and the thought that I might run out of money before the month is out.

On the one hand, that anxiety disables me. On the other hand, it makes me want to take things into my own hands and secure my own future; but, whenever I start making plans, the Holy Spirit brings a number of Bible stories to mind.

(That's how the Spirit of Christ uses the truth of Scripture in our lives. Unless we have them in our minds, he can't impress them on our hearts.)

One of the stories that haunts me at times like that is the story of Abraham and Ishmael. Abraham had every promise in the book. God had promised him wealth and fame, protection and a family that would become a great nation; and when times were good it was easy for Abraham to believe those promises; but when times got tough it wasn't so easy.

The promises God made to Abraham and Sarah depended on them having a son; but in Genesis 16 they are both past the mid-point of life – in other words they were over fifty – and hadn't produced a single child. So, Sarah had an idea: "Abraham," she

said, “Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.” So, Abraham complied, slept with Hagar and, nine months later, she gave birth to Ishmael.

Good plan, wasn't it? Maybe not. You see, Ishmael was the result of Abraham's and Sarah's impatience. Because God wasn't delivering on his promise in the way they expected, they started to believe the lie that God cannot be trusted and seized the right to judge for themselves.

Well, a few years later, God did deliver on his promise. Sarah gave birth to Isaac; but Ishmael was still around and became a thorn in his side. In fact, Ishmael's descendants have been a thorn in the side of Isaac's descendants ever since.

The point is that, when Abraham and Sarah acted on their own, when they tried to secure their own future, they produced Ishmael. In our efforts to secure our own futures, you and I may not sleep with a slave and produce a child; but the actions we take and the realities those actions conceive grow up to become our Ishmaels.

So, a lie I am vulnerable to is that my worth and security depends on people; and that lie tempts me to act on my own without reference to God. It tempts

me to create a place where I am liked and financially secure; but whenever I start moving in that direction the Spirit of Christ speaks the truth of God's Word to me, which saves me from the lie.

So, what lie are you vulnerable to? It's easy to spot all the lies other people are believing; I'm sure you could help the Holy Spirit and identify a few more lies I believe; but it's not so easy to spot the lies of ourselves. Unless we do, though, we will never experience the protection that comes from God's truth and the abundant life that God wants to share with us.

God's Spirit wants to lead you into an abundant, victorious life. Your enemy, the devil, is doing everything in his power to keep you from following. The first step of his strategy is to deceive you into believing his lies. Make your first response putting on the belt of truth. Get into God's Word and start walking with Jesus.