

Satan's Sifting of the Saints

by Jim Van Gelderen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding Satan's devices and the need to lift the shield of faith to confront doubt and navigate life's challenges.

Duration: 53:14

Scripture: Luke 22:31-32, Romans 6:23

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the negative consequences of indulging in sinful behaviors and embracing doubt and error. He uses the example of Peter, who initially denied the Lord but later became a powerful preacher. The speaker encourages the audience not to interpret scripture through their lack of experience but to expect God's word to be true. He also highlights the importance of sharing the gospel and emphasizes that it is God's desire for all people to be saved.

Transcript

Luke 22, if you take your Bibles, the book of Luke and chapter number 22. And I think we've got a few more children that are leaving the room, so we'll let them get out here. But while they're leaving, let me just simply say that, again, I just want to say a big thank you to many of you for your faithfulness and for all of you for being here tonight.

And we're so grateful for just those decisions to be here. And I'm interested, I know I asked it earlier in the week, but I just am interested. How many of you have been able to be here at every service? Can I see your hands, please? Every service, that would include the nursery.

If you got caught in there and you can put your hands down. I shouldn't say got caught in there. There's one benefit of doing nursery duty.

Is that right? There's one benefit of doing nursery duty. Get that out there, right? That is your purgatory won't be as long. So that'll be a very good benefit for some of you.

But how many have been here in every service except for one? Can I see you, please? Every service but one. Okay, wonderful. And I just am so grateful and just want you to know it's been a blessing to be here.

And I'll express appreciation to your pastor and your associate pastor and others who've just been a blessing to fellowship with and to catch their heart and just an encouragement to be here and to see what

God is doing and to catch a little bit of the heartbeat and burden of this assembly and what you believe God has called you for to do. And it certainly is just a blessing to be a part of it and see the unity of vision of burden that I've been able to have with you folks for these days. It's been a great encouragement.

I just want to say thank you. Luke chapter 22, and we're going to be looking at verses 31 and 32. Luke chapter 22.

We're looking at verses 31 and 32. You know, folks, when God does a great work in our hearts, there's one thing we can always anticipate. When God does a work, we can always anticipate that Satan will try to stop it.

I've learned early in my ministry that often preceding great works of God is satanic opposition and many times what comes after a real move of God is also a satanic opposition. In fact, as you read about revival, you will find anybody who writes on the theology of revival, there's one thing you can always expect when there is a move of God, and that is persecution. You can always expect a counterattack.

And so let's look, if we could please, in light of that. The Bible says we're not ignorant of Satan's devices. Now, I'm afraid many Christians are, but we don't need to be because the Bible certainly exposes them.

So we're going to just do a very simple message tonight, and I've entitled the message tonight, Satan's Sifting of Saints. Satan's Sifting of Saints. Let's begin in verse number 31.

We'll read two verses of Scripture and we'll begin the message tonight. It says, Tonight, for a few moments, would you put yourself in, I should say, sandals, put yourself in Peter's sandals for a moment and think like Peter would think. Now, one of the problems we have in trying to think like Peter thinks is that we're Americans and he was a Jew.

You say, what do you mean by that? You see, Peter lived in an occupied land. Roman soldiers walked his streets. Roman garrisons or military installations were on Jewish soil.

They had a puppet government in Jerusalem. They were really ruled from Rome. And I'm sure Peter, as any red-blooded Jew, wanted nothing more than to throw off the yoke of Roman rule and once again rule themselves.

Folks, we cannot relate with that. It's unthinkable for we Americans to even think of foreign soldiers walking our streets. It's unthinkable for us to think of foreign military installations on American soil.

It's unthinkable for us to think of a puppet government in Washington, D.C., literally being run from a foreign capital. It is unthinkable. But for Peter, it was a reality.

Now, it's helpful for us to understand that Peter also had an Old Testament that promised there was coming a Messiah who would set up his kingdom. So religious Jews were not just looking for the Romans to be thrown out. They were looking for this Messiah to do it, to throw off the yoke of Roman rule and set up a kingdom.

And just like the Old Testament talks about, and so when the Lord Jesus came along, do not miss this, Peter was absolutely convinced that he was Messiah. He said, Thou art the Christ. And the Lord Jesus' response tells us that that was revealed to Peter supernaturally.

So it was not just him wishing for the Lord Jesus. God worked in his heart. He came to faith.

This Jesus Christ is Christ. He is the Messiah. He is the anointed one.

Okay, now there was one problem. Peter's conception of a Messiah did not include a cross. You see, Peter was looking for a Messiah who would set up a kingdom.

Now, don't get me wrong. The Lord Jesus is going to set up his kingdom. But what Peter missed is that before the Lord would ever be a reigning Messiah, he would be a suffering Messiah.

Before he would ever deliver the people from the Romans, he would deliver his people from their sins. See, Peter missed that. So that when the Lord Jesus began to talk about dying, it really messed up Peter's thinking.

From this time forth began Jesus to say unto his disciples how that he must needs go into Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders, chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord. This shall not be unto thee.

But he turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me. Thou art an offence unto me, for thou savest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Folks, do you see what Peter was in? Peter was in what we might call a paradox.

He was looking for a Messiah who was going to come, throw off the yoke of the Romans, set up his kingdom. That's what he clearly saw in the Old Testament. What he missed was Isaiah 53.

And so when the Lord Jesus started talking about fulfilling Isaiah 53, Peter could not comprehend that. And I'm convinced, it says, Get thee behind me, Satan. I'm convinced that Satan was already beginning that process of sifting, and we're going to get to that in just a moment.

Now, let's leave Peter right now in that paradox. And let's go to the text and let's investigate the text for a moment, folks. There's something here that's outstanding.

It says, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat. Now, of course, this is moments. This is really just an hour, a few hours before Peter's denial of the Lord Jesus.

So he's predicting this is coming. And I'm trying to set the scene that Peter was in a paradox. We're going to see how that fits into this passage of Scripture.

Now, the key is the words Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you. And notice that little word as. This is a metaphor.

This is figure to which. OK, so what does it mean to sift? Now, I've got a confession to make. I am not an agricultural guy.

I grew up in the concrete jungle of Chicago. I think I learned milk came from cows about the sixth grade. But anyway, I thought it came from the grocery store.

But anyway, so I'm not an agricultural type guy at all. I've never seen a wheat harvested at all. And I don't understand a lot about it.

But fortunately, we're not dealing with literal sifting here. We are dealing with figurative. When I began to study the word sift, I came across Strong's Concordance.

And it said here it had a figurative definition. It said figuratively. Don't miss this.

Sifting means here it is to riddle. To riddle. We say, boy, that is that's strange.

What does that mean to riddle? Now, let's think for a moment, folks. This is a dumb illustration. I even hate to give it.

But it will help us get this down. It was either 1964. It could have been 1965, maybe 1966.

But it was probably in that three-year window. I remember as a little boy going into the den. And I remember our family sitting down.

And we had an old black and white television. And you had to kind of hold the rabbit ears a certain way in order to get the picture. And I remember sitting down and watching the very first episode of Batman and Robin, black and white.

I mean, we were transfixed. We thought this was unbelievably high tech. And it came to the very end.

They'd have this fight scene. We had no idea there was a fight scene on every program. But there was this fight scene.

And it said poof, you know, and kabow, and bam. Oh, we thought that was big stuff, you know. And so I still remember turning it off, you know, when I think about Batman and Robin and all that kind of stuff, you know.

That was brand new stuff. And I will tell you, the next week, same bat time, same bat channel, we were back watching the Caped Crusader crusade for justice. Now, I know some of you are looking at me like, Preacher, I have no clue what you're talking about.

But I soon learned as a little kid that they always had a villain. There was always a villain on the program. There was the Mr. Freeze.

And there was Catwoman. And there was Joker. And then there was a guy.

He was my favorite one. There was a guy. His name was the Riddler.

Now, I had no idea years later, because it was black and white, that his outfit was actually green. I thought it was gray. But anyway, he had this green outfit on.

And all over his green outfit was what? Tell me. See, you did watch it. I set you up, OK? You didn't want to admit it, but you did, OK? Years back.

But now, my whole point is to riddle. So what does it mean to riddle? Folks, don't miss this. You know what to riddle, I'm convinced, is? It's when Satan takes those question marks and he throws them into our hearts.

Now, think about this for a moment. What does the Bible say in Ephesians chapter 6? It says, Above all, taking the shield of faith, that you may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Talking about the

wicked one.

Could it be that those fiery darts are darts of doubt? Since the shield of faith quenches them, that's a real good possibility, isn't it? So Satan loves taking fiery darts and he throws them into our hearts to get us to question God's character, God's word, God's promises. Bottom line, God. Satan is constantly taking question marks and throwing them.

And obviously, if we put the shield of faith down, they find their mark. If we lift the shield of faith, those darts are quenched by the shield of faith. That makes all the sense in the world.

Now, let's see whether or not what we have just done exegetically bears up under the context of the passage. So go back to verse 31. Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.

But I have prayed for thee, and here it is, that thy, what's that next word? Faith fail not. So whatever sifting is, we see it very clearly. It was an attack on Peter's what? Attack on his faith.

So this bears up very clearly that what is sifting? Sifting is when Satan riddles us. He puts question marks. He throws question marks into our heart and mind to get us to question God's character, to question God's word.

Now, let's just think about this for a moment. Let's take what we just learned about Peter, and that's what we just learned exegetically from the passage. Now, we left Peter in what I called a paradox.

Here's Peter expecting the Lord Jesus to come and set up his kingdom, and now the Lord's talking about dying. That had no room in his picture of what the Old Testament taught about the Lord Jesus. Now, friends, he was in what we might call a paradox.

A paradox is not two medical doctors. No, no, a paradox is a seeming contradiction. Okay, a seeming contradiction.

Now, all of us understand a paradox. A paradox would be a conservative Democrat. Okay, that's a paradox.

You have one, by the way, here in Georgia. His name is Zell. But anyway, a conservative Democrat.

At first glance, it doesn't seem to match up. But in further investigation, there are cases which we just mentioned where it does match up. Okay, we understand.

That's a paradox. Paradox would be putting World Series and Cubs in the same sentence. That would be a paradox.

We discussed that last night. We'll not revisit that open wound. But anyway, so, you know, paradox is a seeming contradiction.

We all understand that. Folks, don't miss this. Satan used a paradox in Peter's life that left an opening for fiery darts of doubt.

Why do you think hours later after the Lord says this and Peter says, No, I won't deny. I'll die with you. We find Peter denying the Lord.

Why? Somewhere along the line, it was in that paradox, that seeming contradiction, that Peter just could not resolve and Satan took that window of opportunity and began to take those fiery darts and began to throw them in Peter's heart so that he did something he never thought he would do. It was deny the Lord. Now, that teaches us something, friends.

And that teaches us that we, when we are in paradoxes, we are in a very vulnerable time. Now, tonight, the balance of the message, I want to deal with paradoxes. I can't deal with them all.

But I'd like to introduce to you some paradoxes that I have seen Satan use very effectively in absolutely neutralizing believers' effectiveness. Folks, we ought not be ignorant of his devices. We ought be ready to lift that shield of faith so when those darts of doubt come, we confront them with confidence in the Word of God and they are quenched instead of finding their mark and rendering us ineffective as they did with Peter.

Now, we're going to see in a moment, at the very end of the message, we'll come back to Peter and we will revisit the fact that his sifting was not permanent. And he came out with the victory, and we'll see that in a moment. But first, let's talk about paradox.

There are several paradoxes we can visit tonight, but let's start with what we might call the paradox of suffering. The paradox of suffering. Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh, you tell me.

Patience. You know, when our faith is tried, folks, it's when we can't figure it out. When we're going through difficulty and hardship and we can figure it out, then our faith is not being tried.

Our faith is only being tried when the circumstances we're going through don't make sense with the verse, all things work together for good. Now, without doing damage to the more serious trials of life, could we talk about the more, the little trials of life? And sometimes how difficult even those are to reconcile with the verse, all things work together for good. Let me start with a hypothetical.

How many of you have ever had a bad day? Don't raise your hand. You know, bad days always begin. You do not get up when you know you needed to.

That's how they always begin. And so you're a little bit late, you get up, oh, I'm not going to make it to work on time. So you go running down the kitchen and you really don't relish your stomach growling at 10 o'clock, so you say, I better grab a bowl of cereal.

So you grab the cereal, you grab your Captain Cavity, you know, you put it in the bowl and you go over and you grab the milk and you fill the bowl up with milk and you start pouring it in your mouth, all of a sudden you realize, the milk spilled. Oh, you say, oh, this is terrible. You get up and you're so frustrated, you knock the bowl, the milk goes all over the floor.

You come back on your socks, you hit the milk, you slip, and you come back on the cat, it's the last meow. You're thinking, oh, great, now the cat's dead, you know. So you think, well, let's just forget it, let me get to work, and so you go and you throw the cat in the garbage can, cover him up, you know, and so you get in the car, you know, you turn the car on, you put it in reverse, oh, you forgot to put the garage door up.

Just one of those days, you know. On the way to work, you know, it's raining, it's 40 degrees, you have a flat tire, and then you remember that your spare tire, you blew that last week and you haven't got it fixed yet. Two hours later, you get into work, your boss is upset, your wife calls and says the roof's leaking, you

know.

Hot water heater went out. You look down and you got a blue sock and a green sock on. Just one of those days.

Finally, you're coming home and you got the doves and your dog senses that and he comes up to greet you, you go right over the dog, you know, I mean. First the cat, now the dog, two funerals, you know. And, of course, it's Wednesday night church, what other day could it be? You know, it's Wednesday night church and so you come to church and maybe it leaks out among some of your dear brothers and sisters in Christ here at Calvary and you've had a rough day.

And so I want you to imagine a dear brother or sister in Christ comes up wanting to comfort you. They throw their arm around you glibly and they say, well, brother, well, sister, after all, hallelujah, all things work together for good. Now I want to ask you an honest question.

What do you want to do to that dear brother or sister in Christ? Well, we won't go into what we want to do. We'll just leave that alone for the moment. But, folks, you know what I'm describing? I'm describing paradox.

Do we believe that all things are going to work together? Sure we do. We're just figuring how in the world is this day going to reconcile with all things work together for good. Doesn't seem like it's going to work, does it? You know what happens at that moment? Your faith's being tried.

When you can see what God is doing, that he's going to work it all together for good, there's no faith there because the Bible says we walk by faith, not by sight. See, when we can see it, it's not faith. Our faith is tried when we can't figure it out.

And by the way, it says, knowing this, let the trying of your faith. You know what the trying of your faith is? That's the paradox. That's the Bible words for paradox.

What does the trying of your faith do? It works patience. What does that mean? It means the paradox is going to last longer than you want it to last. That's what it means.

And you know what, friends about paradoxes, don't miss this. The trying of your faith works patience. That word patience obviously has the idea we think of in patience, but it is absolutely a word that is impregnated with a lot of other meaning as well.

It's the idea of staying in the frying pan and abiding in Christ. It's hupomeno. In other words, abiding under.

It's staying in the trial, walking with God in the fiery furnace because you know that's the will of God. See, knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience. In other words, it teaches us to walk with God under duress.

And God says, let patience have its perfect work. Why? That you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. You know, folks, this is not a nice thought, but the only way to Christian maturity is through paradox.

It's the only way. And obviously when we can figure it out, there's no paradoxes. When we can't figure it out, and there's a seeming contradiction, and it seems like what we're going through does not mesh up with all things work together for good.

And it's at that moment, is it not, when Satan picks up those darts and saying, does God really know what he's doing? Is this really going to work together for good? Is God really good? And my friend, all of us who have lived the Christian like any length of time know what it is for Satan to fire those question marks into our heart. The paradox of suffering. Now again, folks, the same circumstances that God wants to use to bring you to Christian maturity are the same circumstances Satan wants to use to destroy your life.

You've seen two people, I'm sure, two families go through the similar trial. One family comes out like gold. The other family is shipwrecked.

Same circumstances. Brought one family to Christian maturity are the same circumstances another family can be shipwrecked on, and it all determines whether or not we got the shield up. See, so the paradox of suffering.

More could be said there, but for time we'll move on. Okay, now let's go to a second paradox. It's what I'm going to call the paradox of a subscriptural experience.

Now hang on. The paradox of a subscriptural experience. Now I'm going to warn you ahead of time, I'm setting you up.

That way you won't get upset with me. I'm going to set you up here. I'm going to ask you if you believe something.

You tell me. I guess if you believe it, say amen. Okay, here it is.

How many of you believe that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation? Say amen. Amen. Fairly weak except for Brother Gary, but okay, now.

That's all right, brother. I appreciate it. Okay, here we go.

Number two. How many of you believe that the fields are whiter than the harvest? Amen. Okay, number three.

How many of you believe that God's grace is more than enough? It's sufficient to do the will of God. Amen. Okay, now you're doing better.

That's great. Now, you know where I'm going, don't you? We all know we're getting set up here. If we believe the fields are white, think about this.

Can you imagine a Kansas farmer going out and saying to his coworkers, Hey, listen, the fields are white. We're going to harvest tomorrow. I sure hope we get some grain.

Don't you think he ought to expect harvest? Well, the fields are white. Sure, we expect harvest. Now, folks, it's like this.

If the fields are white and the gospel is the power of God and God's grace is more than enough, then we ought to be able to go expecting harvest. Sure, sometimes we water. Sure, sometimes we plant.

But we also should harvest. You know, it's amazing. Everywhere I go, people have excuses why it's tough there.

You go to the Pacific Northwest. Now, brother, did you know only 3% of the population goes to church in the Pacific Northwest? It's tough out here in the Pacific Northwest. Did you know that the Pacific Northwest is white already into harvest? You say, how do you know that? Because Jesus said the fields are white.

California. Oh, brother, this is California, brother. There are free thinkers out here.

This is the land of the fruits and the nuts out here. And, hey, brother, it's tough in California. Is it? Well, folks, we recognize Satan's fighting everywhere.

He blinds minds. We recognize that. But God is also working to whiten harvest.

New England. Brother, this is New England, cold, formal New England. You know, everybody's got their religious heritage.

It's tough in New England. See, everybody's got the excuse. You say, well, preacher, what about the Bible Belt? Yeah, they've got excuses down here too.

Well, brother, this is the Bible Belt. You know, you knock on the door. They say, yeah, I'm saved.

I go to St. John's Baptist Church. You know, what's the preacher's name? I don't know. I haven't been there in 20 years, you know.

Did you know the Bible Belt's white already on the harvest? See, what I'm simply saying is God is constantly whitening harvest. He's getting people ready to be saved. You say, well, preacher, if that's true, why don't I see very many people saved? It's because you really don't believe it.

Now, let me illustrate it this way. There's a gentleman who was a medical doctor in my home church. Name is Tom.

Tom Johnson. We call him Dr. Tom. I observed Dr. Tom, and he's got an unusual personality.

And I observed him for years. He was a very ineffective soul winner, and yet he tried hard. He's the kind of guy you're kind of thinking he's going to turn people off or he's just not going to do it, and he's got a lot of nervous energy, and he's not the medical doctor type at all.

And so one day, Dr. Tom got ahold of two truths. Number one, well, actually three truths. The three truths were mentioned.

The fields are white. The gospel is the power of God. God's grace is sufficient, so we ought to go and expect God's word to be true.

See, we blame the Charismatics and Welsh, we should, for interpreting Scripture through their experience. But do you know what we do? We interpret Scripture through our lack of experience. See, we get defeated.

And so we just kind of push off these things, and these things impact the Dr. Tom, and I will tell you, he is one of the best soul winners I know. You know what? He has simple faith. He just believes God.

He got his deputation, his support, in less than a year. Because just about every church he went in, you just see people saved. I mean, he is a constant challenger of rebuke.

In fact, some of his stories are absolutely unbelievable. One time, Dr. Tom was driving down the road, you know, and as he's driving down the road, something begins to malfunction in his car, and he thinks, you know, I've got to pull off and get it fixed. It wasn't a long fix, but he was going to have to pull it off.

And you know what his first thought was? I wonder who God wants me to talk to. I'm going to be dead honest with you. You know what my first thought would have been? Stupid car.

He pulls off the car. You know, he goes into this parking lot. He parks.

A 71-year-old lady was walking across the parking lot. She must be it. Walks up to her, gives her the gospel, and she gets saved.

And then she says to him, young man, you're not going to believe this. She said, I got up this morning, and I said to myself, I've got to know how I can know when I'm going to heaven. She said, I called all my friends.

They couldn't tell me. Called my Catholic priest. He couldn't tell me.

And now you come along and tell me. You know, friends, that's pretty white. That's white into harvest.

Another time, Dr. Tom walks up a guy in a store. This is typical Dr. Tom. Doesn't matter where he is.

He walks up to this guy and holds out a track. It said, are you 100% sure if you die tonight you go to heaven? Just holds it up right in front of the guy's face. The guy looks at it.

It's like he saw a ghost. Dr. Tom looks at him and says, you want to talk about it? Guy nods. So they went outside to the front of the grocery stores.

You know where those benches are outside? I bet you didn't know that. They put them there for soul winning. But anyway, they got those benches outside.

And so he sat down and he opened his Bible. Leads the guy to Christ. The guy says, you're not going to believe this.

Dr. Tom hears that a lot. You're not going to believe this. He said, I just came to the grocery store from the cemetery.

He said, one of my parents just died a day or so ago. And the other parent had died a few months ago. And he said, I just threw myself on the fresh grave of the parent who just passed away.

And he said, I cried out to God. And I said, God, would you please show me how I could be 100% sure if I die tonight I'm going to heaven? That's white friends. Friends, that's white and harvest.

You say, well, Richard, why does Dr. Tom see these kind of things all the time? And why don't I ever see him? It's because he believes it and you don't. See, see friends, it's like this. When we get defeated in our outreach, you know what happens? Satan comes along and he picks up those darts and he throws them into our heart.

Now, we'd never admit it out loud, but we begin to believe him. Maybe the gospel isn't so powerful after all. Maybe the fields aren't really that white.

Maybe God's grace isn't sufficient for me. It might be for others, but not for me. Aren't those subtle forms of rank unbelief? And folks, it is in the paradox of a sub-scriptural experience.

When we have a defeated Christian experience, we have a tendency to believe our experience and allow Satan to throw darts into our heart, getting us to question clear statements of Scripture. It's so subtle, isn't it? Now, let me give you another example. This relates to our message on Romans 6. We mentioned on that message, there's a verse that says, Thanks be unto God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ.

As we pointed out, friends, there's always a provision of victory. You know, every time you and I sin, every time we fail a provision of victory, there's always a way of escape. Now, obviously we realize the Bible does not teach sinless perfectionism.

They used to call that living above sin. I remember when I was in Bible college, someone in Bible conference said this, The only way to live above sin is to rent a room above a pool hall. I thought that was interesting.

But anyway, some of you old timers will get that one. So, we recognize we're never going to live above sin. And sometimes we so emphasize that doctrine, which we do believe, that we diminish the other doctrine, and that is, there's always a provision of victory.

And every time we sin, we have no excuse. See, sometimes what happens is, we get so defeated and so discouraged, we kind of think, well, that's just the way it is. After all, you can't reach perfection on this side of the grave, so I just guess I'm going to have to live with this defeat in my life.

I'm going to have to live with this problem with pornography. I'm going to have to live with this anger problem. Or I'm going to have to live just being a frustrated, irritated person.

No, no, friends. There is a provision of victory in Christ, and there can be progress. There can be deliverance.

And the triumph is in Christ. And the question we have to ask ourselves, are we going to believe what God says when he says, God always causes us to triumph in Christ. Are we going to believe that? Or are we going to believe our defeated experience? Friends, it does not matter tonight what sinful habit is absolutely strangling you.

There is a provision of victory in Christ. There is hope. And any doubt of that certainly does not come from God.

And it's Satan making up those doubts and saying, Oh, I just got to live with it the rest of your life. You'll never get victory over that one. I want to tell you, friends, there are lies from the pit of hell.

You do not have to be addicted to pornography. There is victory in Christ. You do not have to be addicted to tobacco.

There's victory in Christ. You do not have to be addicted to making wrong media choices. There's victory in Christ.

You do not have to be addicted to sensual fleshly music. There is victory in Christ. Hallelujah.

So the other paradox, the second paradox that Satan gets us with, is this paradox of sub-scriptural living. Our experience is lower than the word, and Satan picks up the darts and gets us to doubt clear statements of Scripture. Okay, that brings us to a third paradox.

Number one, the paradox of suffering. Number two, the paradox of sub-scriptural experience. Number three, and I hang on with this one, the paradox of supralogic.

The paradox of supralogic. Now, don't get scared off on this one. It is the paradox of logic, as supra means above, it is the paradox of logic that is above finiteness.

Now, we touched on this in one of the messages, and I'll review it just briefly, but you know, friends, that God's infinite and we're finite. And certainly, if I were talking tonight about the sovereignty of God, do you believe in the sovereignty of God? I do. I do.

I'll tell you on September 11th, I was glad God was sovereign, weren't you? Glad God was in control. I believe that nothing takes God by surprise. But I also believe that the Bible teaches us that you and I are not robots, and we can make bad choices, and we often do, don't we? We are what we might call free moral agents.

Now, you say, Preacher, how do you reconcile the sovereignty of God and free moral agents? I will be honest with you, my brain is too small to reconcile them, but I figure that God's smarter than I am. I don't know about you, I'd love to have a God that is bigger than my tiny little brain. I believe I said it the other night, Romans chapter 9 talks about God's sovereignty, Romans chapter 10 talks about human responsibility, and Romans chapter 11 says His ways are past finding out.

And I'll tell you, friend, if you figured out how sovereignty and free will go together, you haven't figured it out because His ways are past finding out. God is bigger than the smartest man's brain on this planet. Doesn't matter how many doctor's degrees he's got behind his name, I will tell you, friends, if he's figured it out, he ain't figured it out.

Okay, it might not be good English, but it's good theology. See, so, now, you say, what's the practical why? I heard one story, and this is of a Bible college president who said that one of his seniors, they had a stealth professor who came in and taught some of these theological aberrations where they take scriptural statements and logically work away from them until they get into error. They figured out, in other words.

And by the way, you know what you always find out about these professors? They always work in the corner. They're never up front about who they are and what they believe. And I will tell you, you can mark it down, that is never of God.

God is light, and Him is no darkness at all. You don't have to hide truth from the administration of a college. You do that, you mark it down, that professor's not working for God.

So this professor had snuck in, started teaching some of these theological aberrations, and the senior said to this college president, grieved the college president's heart. Of course, he dealt with the situation. But the senior said, when I was a freshman, I was out on the strip trying to win people to Jesus Christ that God didn't want to save anyway.

You hear me, friends, that is theology gone awry. See, what Satan has done is he's taken this paradox, and he's taken it through some professor's teaching, and he's allowed those darts of doubt. Darts that

make you doubt simple statements like this.

God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Verses like, God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. You can mark it down.

At 6.5 billion people on this planet, it is the heart of the Savior to see them won. And I don't know about you, I don't understand how it all works. It's bigger than I am, but I can tell you this.

I can walk up to any old sinner in Atlanta and say, God wants to save you right now. Today is the day of salvation. See, now let me show you another thing this super logic has done.

So now we're spawning off, it's just going wildfire through the ministerial ranks, and you got this thinking, well, you know, if God wants to send revival, he'll send it. It's just an arbitrary act. We really don't have anything to do with it.

Now there's one huge problem with that, folks. Verses like Isaiah 57.15. For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabited the eternity, whose name is holy. I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is a contrite and humble spirit.

To revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Sounds like a promise to me. I don't deny there's sovereign elements in revival.

We all recognize that. But you mark it down. Just like there's sovereign elements in sanctification, there's sovereign elements in salvation.

But that does not minimize the human responsibility to take the promises and believe them. See, in order for a man to get saved, he's got to take the promises of salvation and believe them. In order for a man to see deliverance in his Christian life, Romans chapter 6, he's got to take Romans chapter 6 and believe it.

See, so it is with the promises of revival. And friends, that passage of Scripture tells us that revival begins with humility and contrition. Revival begins when we pull the mask off and we say, I've got some needs, I'm going to be dead honest about where I am.

That's where it begins. And I'll tell you, friends, we'll never see revival until we come to recognize our need. I love Psalm 13 because it is a prayer for revival.

How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, forever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall my enemy be victorious over me? He's crying out, he's saying, Lord, I'm defeated, I'm miserable. You're so far from me, Your manifest presence. He says, consider and hear me, O Lord my God.

Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death. This is a man who is aware of his need. And he comes before the Lord and he cries out for that reviving, that lightening of the eyes, which, by the way, is the same verb that says, cause thy face to shine.

And what he's saying is, shine upon me, Lord. I'm sleeping the sleep of death. I need life.

And revival, friends, is simply life again. See, revival is simply coming back to normalcy. Sometimes we have the idea that revival is a bunch of super spiritual Christians.

No, revival is Christians doing what is normal, what we should do as Christians. Normal Christian life, as Walshman Neese so well put it with the title of that famous book. You know, if some guy's out here and he falls over, you know, and he's having a heart attack, and the CPR unit comes in and, you know, they do all that, and they give him mouth-to-mouth, and his heart starts beating and he comes back to life, what do they say? The victim has been revived.

Does that mean he's superhuman? No, it means he's back to normal. And, folks, I want to tell you, our subnormal condition has become so normal that revival has now become abnormal when it really should be normal. Did you get that? I'm not sure I could say it again, so you better get it.

That's out of the notes. But, you know, here's the point. If we just think revival is some arbitrary thing that God, nobody's going to be seeking it.

But you see all throughout the Bible, prayers for revival. Will thou not revive us again? I want to tell you the paradox of super logic. And I'm telling you, we have a lot of young men.

I've bought into that, and even older men. It's kind of a move today. And in doing so, I believe that it is diminishing that heart cry for revival, saying, oh, God, it's me, it's me, it's me, oh, Lord, stand in the need of prayer.

Oh, God, do a work in my life. Bring me back to that Christian life, that normal Christian life. I need to be revived.

Life again. And revival is simply one belief. It starts, obviously, in one believer coming back to normal spiritual life.

So we've got the paradox of super logic. That brings me to a fourth paradox. The paradox of satanic deception.

The paradox of satanic deception. I've alluded to this throughout the week, and so let me just try, I may repeat myself some to kind of pull loose ends together. The Bible, we all know, in 2 Corinthians 11, it says, And no marvel, for even Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

So we know that Satan likes to masquerade as a messenger from God, when he's clearly not. We all know that. But you know one of the reasons he does that? He loves to hurt people's faith.

See, when you start, when you get revived, when you enter into the realm of the spiritual, and you begin to recognize that the Spirit of God can lead you, He can empower you. When God's Holy Spirit becomes a reality to you, you have to recognize there's another spirit out there. His name is Satan, and he's a counterfeiter.

And what he wants to do is come along and discredit the Holy Spirit. For instance, it reminds me of a story in Victory in Christ by Trumbull. He deals with this, and he tells the story of a man who felt strangely led to go knock on the door.

He knocks on the door, and the house is vacated. Well, it's possible. It certainly is possible.

Here's a guy who's sensitive to the Holy Spirit. It's possible that Satan comes along, masquerades as the Holy Spirit, gets him to knock on the door, and then he's puzzled. His faith is kind of hurt.

Lord, why would you want me to knock on the door? Nobody's here. This is an empty house. See, so my whole point is, you've got a counterfeiter.

And I'll tell you one thing, he's really good at counterfeiting. That is, I'm convinced he is a counterfeiter when it comes to Christian music. We see very clearly that Satan was made as a being that music ability was in him.

You see in Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, you see very clearly that when God created him, before he was Satan, when he was the anointed cherub, that he was created with musical ability. And he fell, and he became a deceiver. Isn't it not possible, yea probable, that Satan is a counterfeiter when it comes to Christian music? And there are a lot of people who buy into the contemporary Christian music scene, and they have no idea, they may be sincere, they may love the Lord, they may have a heart for God, but they bought into that which is counterfeit.

And by the way, it's really not that hard. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in? And in? I don't have time to go into it all, but I'll tell you one, the truth test really works. Just a quick illustration.

Have you ever had, I've had this, you know, kids will come to me and say, hey preacher, how can it be wrong, man? You know, we go to these concerts, we come out, and we feel so close to God. I think I mentioned this the other day, all you've got to do is start asking them if they are close to God. You know, how do you treat your parents? Well, not very well, you know.

How about this? What about this? Pretty soon you find out they're not right with God. And I'll tell you, anybody who goes to a concert and feels close to God without getting right with God is deceived. See, the counterfeiter comes along.

I mentioned the other day, again, I'm just trying to pull these, even though I mentioned them loose ends together, but Satan is the accuser. You know what that is? It's a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit conviction. I said it the other day, I'll say it for anyone who was not here, Holy Spirit conviction always leads you to the blood, always leads you to the answer, and Satan always leads you to despair.

And some of you out here know what I'm talking about. Satan comes along, God will never use you. You're worthless.

You'll never be used of God again. I will tell you that is not the Holy Spirit. It never will be.

It's the counterfeiter. It's the accuser. Sometimes people buy into his counterfeiting, and in doing so, Satan is at that moment of paradox when they think it's the Holy Spirit, but it's a satanic counterfeiter.

And what does Satan come along? And he throws darts of doubt. You know what they're doubting when they say, you know, Satan comes along, God will never use you. You've blown it this time, you're on a shelf.

You know what they're doubting? First John 1, 9, that's what they're doubting. They're doubting His mercy is everlasting. Certainly, friends, there are things we can all do that disqualify us from certain areas of service, but I'll tell you, friend, nothing disqualifies us from service.

There's always someplace God has for you. You may not be able to do some things because of past sins. We all recognize that, but every believer out here can serve.

When Satan comes along and says, God can't use you, he's lying to you. When Satan comes along and says that, God wants to use you. His mercy is everlasting.

See? So Satan comes along, he tries to get you to doubt clear statements of Scripture. See that? I don't have time to develop fully, but nonetheless, hopefully for you to recognize that in the supernatural realm, not everything that is supernatural is God. Some of it, the Bible says, try the spirits to see whether there are of God.

See whether it is the Holy Spirit leading. For instance, it's like this, people who are exclusively right, if someone comes along and they are the only ones who have the truth, you can mark it down, it's not of God. Try the spirits.

See, somebody who comes along and they are not teachable, not correctable, they're not teachable, you can mark it down, it's not of God. Try the spirits. See, not everything is supernatural that we need to expect, just accept.

What we need to do is do what God said to do, try it. See whether it's of God or see whether it's not. You see, what is of God always lifts up and exalts Jesus Christ.

So, much more could be said there, but we throw it out for your thinking, the paradox of satanic counterfeit, and that brings me to the final point. The paradox of sinful deception. You know, it's like this, friends, every time we're tempted, Satan is selling us a lie.

Every time you and I sin, we must doubt God somewhere. Satan paints this picture so that we think our sinful action is something that we ought to do, and Satan's lie is in contradiction to Bible truth. And at that moment, he picks up those darts and he throws them at us, and what do we do? We push away the truth and we embrace the error, we embrace the lie.

I want to give you a quote from George Mueller, and I'm going to tell you right now, if you do not enjoy healthy conviction, do not remember it. If you don't mind good healthy conviction, remember it. Here it is.

When anxiety begins, faith ends. When faith begins, anxiety ends. You know, you can put anything in, any sinful activity, anxiety, how about this one? When griping begins, faith ends.

When faith begins, griping ends. That one will get you. Every time we gripe and complain, you know what we're saying? God, you're not going to work this together for good.

This couldn't be good, aren't we? When frustration begins, faith ends. When faith begins, frustration ends. When irritation begins, faith ends.

When faith begins, irritation ends. See that? Down the line. When lust begins, faith ends.

When faith begins, lust ends. And friends, it does not matter. Every time we come out, our flesh, the world of the devil, comes after us with temptation.

They paint a lie, they paint a picture, an illusion like we talked about a couple of nights ago, and in order for us to sin, we must reject the truth, and we must allow Satan to pick up those darts of doubt, and to

question clear statements in the Word of God that clearly expose the deception of that temptation. And so often it's so easy to do that. And friends, I am convinced in our Christian experience, bottom line, the question comes right down at those moments.

It is not experience. You may seem overwhelmed, like we talked about a couple of nights ago. The real issue is, will you decide to believe God? The issue is not your emotions.

The issue is not the experience. The issue is your will. Not willpower.

Your will. Will you choose to believe, or will you choose to doubt? Which you will choose. And Satan comes along and he starts throwing those darts of doubt.

Every time we sin, every time we sin, we drop the shield of faith. The dart finds its place. And we believe deception.

We believe the lie. We sin. We reckon error.

And we push off truth. Sinful deception. And friends, every time we watch something we shouldn't watch, listen to something we shouldn't listen to, we cave in to some lustful issue, every single time, bottom line, unbelief.

We have made a decision of the will to embrace doubt, error. We made a decision of the will to push off truth. Friends, it is indicting.

Now, let's conclude with this. We left Peter a moment ago denying the Lord. It looks like he's worthless.

It looks like he's devastated. It looks like he'll never be used. He goes out.

He senses it. He goes out and weeps bitterly. But you know what I love about the story of Peter? Just a few pages later, you find him preaching the first street meeting, standing on a soapbox empowered of God, and God greatly using him.

Now don't miss this, folks. This is what I absolutely love, and this is what we're going to close with. He dropped the shield of faith, and we all know Satan peppered him with darts of doubt.

And he was devastated with unbelief and despair. But a few pages later, you see him preaching, and don't miss this, when he preaches, I love this, he proves the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Old Testament. That's exactly what he was struggling with.

Remember that? The death, burial, and resurrection. He was struggling with that whole thing over here. He didn't see it in the Old Testament.

But in Acts 2, he not only saw it, he got up and proved it. You know what that means? He took faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by? The Word of God. He took the Word of God.

He took his confidence. He put it back in the Word of God. You know what he was doing? He was lifting that shield of faith, and as he put his confidence back in the Word of God, he quenched the fiery darts.

And he was reclaimed. The sifting did not end up shipwrecking Peter. Oh, it pushed him aside for a moment.

Long haul, no way, it did not. He lifted the shield of faith. He put his confidence in Psalm 16 that said, Thou wilt not suffer, Thou holy one, to see corruption.

And he saw the resurrection in the Old Testament. And he put his faith back in the book. The fiery darts were quenched.

And my friend, we know he was filled with the Spirit, which means he was filled with faith. When you're filled with power, you're always filled with faith. He lifted the shield of faith.

Friends tonight, what is it that Satan's got through? Have you gone through some difficult circumstances and you doubted God is good? You doubted he was going to work it together for good? You know what you need to do? Get on your knees and say, God, I believe you're going to work it together for good. And get that old shield of faith up there and let it quench the fiery darts. Have you gotten defeated in your Christian experience? Has there some sinful habit that's taken you to the cleaners and you've just said, I'm going to have to live with it to the day I die? You've let the fiery dart through.

Put the old shield of faith up and believe that thanks be to God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ. There is not a defeated Christian in this room who has any excuse. There is a provision of victory.

Put your faith in it. Depend on it. Lean on it.

Put confidence there. There's someone out here who's let some intellectualism that kind of gets you off and you think you're kind of smarter than everybody else and you figured out how this works and that works. As a result of that, you've doubted that God wants to win everybody, that God wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

Put your faith back in the book. See, that's the idea. You thought revival was just some arbitrary thing out there and God just sends it His whim.

Well, put your faith back in the book. Isaiah 57, 15, God, you promised. See? Or maybe you've been out here and you say, Preacher, I've fallen prey to a satanic counterfeit.

I see that. I've let the accuser come along and I've believed him and I was worthless, couldn't be used. I've blown it, I've sinned too much.

And I didn't realize it, but I was accepting darts of doubt that were doubting God's character. You impugned God's character, friend. He's a God who is good and His mercy is everlasting.

Hallelujah. And I want to tell you, the blood is cleansing us from all sin. Hallelujah, right now.

I'll tell you, you just plead the blood and you the blood. I'll tell you, it'll send the old devil running. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.

And by the word of their testimony, you heard it tonight, what can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Because there is power in the blood. Present tense power, friends.

And you maybe allowed the old devil to come along, throw darts of doubt in. The old accuser's come along. Or maybe he's come along and confused you.

Maybe in the area of contemporary music, you've embraced fleshly music with spiritual words and Satan's bought into his lie. But you see very clearly, it doesn't pass John 4.24, God's the Spirit, they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth. And you've been doubting a clear statement of Scripture.

It doesn't say you've got to worship Him in flesh and truth, it says spirit and truth. Spiritual words must have a spiritual message. It must have spiritual music.

Maybe Satan's gotten you to doubt clear statements of Scripture and you've seen very clearly, okay, I'm going to go back, lift the shield of faith, put my confidence back on the word of God. Maybe it may be some sinful habit. It's come along and you've bought into Satan's lie.

Well, griping, complaining, anger, blowing up, whatever it might be. Some issue in your life, lost, whatever. Perhaps tonight you recognize when that sin begins, faith ends.

But hallelujah, when faith begins, when you lift the shield of faith, you put your confidence back on the word, that's when that sin's done. So see it, friends, Satan's sifting of saints. I don't know about you, it's kind of encouraging to see a man of Peter's stature.

Sometimes I can relate with Peter, can't you? But you know what I think is encouraging about Peter? Here's a man who looked like it was all over, it was done. My friend, he put the shield of faith up, he lifted his confidence, put his confidence back in the book, the old shield. The shield of faith got raised and the old fiery darts got quenched and he was remarkably used of God.

And so will you be. Satan's sifting of saints.

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