

#245 "Satan's Tallest Tales"

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The other day, I was teaching my five-year-old daughter about the story of Job, and one of the topics that came up was Satan. We talked about how he used to be an angel but then got jealous of God and was forced out of heaven. We talked about how he hates God and how he wants to make people do bad things. But I told her that she didn't have to be afraid of Satan because God is bigger and stronger than Satan. In fact, I explained from Job's experience how Satan is accountable to God and how he cannot do anything unless God grants him permission. I also referenced how Satan lies all of the time because he is the father of lies (John 8:44). Satan told God in Job 1:7 in answer to God's question of "Where did you come from?" that he was just walking around on the earth going to and fro. Interestingly, upon hearing Satan's answer, my daughter blurted out that he was lying. Honestly, I didn't even think about that fact as I was telling the story. But she was right, for Satan cannot tell the truth unless he uses part of it and twists it, thereby negating it altogether. God knew that Satan was not just "ho, hum" hanging out and talking a walk from here to there. Satan was lying, for he was busy tempting and working evil. Even in response to simple questions, Satan lies. Though this example might not seem like a lie of all that much consequence, it actually is, for Satan would love to convince all of us that all he does is walk around and do nothing. But he is not the devil who doesn't do anything, for he is highly irked at God and working feverishly to oppose His will until his time is up (1 Peter 5:8). What are some of Satan's other tall tales?

Satan enjoys lying to man about his identity. He wants man to believe that he is basically good. Then, he doesn't really need to worry about God's commands, hell, and all of that old-school church stuff like repentance, sin, and the like. If he is basically good, there is no accountability factor, no ultimate heavenly authority, and no need for the cross. Jesus as Savior and Lord thus becomes totally irrelevant, and the gospel becomes pointless good news that nobody needs. Most people believe that they are mostly good, and they need to be confronted with God's holy standards so that they see just how severely they have fallen short. They need a wake-up call, for God is the Judge, not they, and His standards are impossible to keep without His help. Thus, a truth that most people accept as a given is actually a devastatingly serious lie with major eternal ramifications. The intent of the unsaved heart is evil continually (Genesis 6:5), and man plots wickedness even on his bed (Psalm 36:4). The total depravity of man is a tough pill to swallow but necessary, and Satan would prefer people avoid taking that medicine.

Satan enjoys lying to man about hell. He is content for people to deny hell's existence. He is happy to try to convince them that hell is more fun than singing boring songs in heaven. He wants them to think that they can indulge the pleasures of sin forever, but the reality is that they are passing pleasures. There will be no pleasure in hell, for sin has consequences. Furthermore, the devil will not be playing around in hell, for hell is not his. It is God's, and Satan will suffer there as well (Revelation 1:18). Others don't worry about hell because they think that they are good enough. So one lie leads to another.

Satan enjoys lying to people about his identity. If people refuse to believe in him, that will suit him just fine. By convincing people that he isn't real, it gives them less concern that they might be getting tricked. They are thus more vulnerable. For those who do believe that he exists, he is happy to make them believe that he is irrelevant to their existence. Again, any way that he can fly under the radar will work just fine for him because it allows him to slip in deceptive thoughts unnoticed and undetected. Others believe that he is a better friend than God, and they make an allegiance with him. Satan is happy to make such a bargain, for he loses nothing and gains another soul in the lost column.

Satan enjoys lying about the character of God. The one he used right from the beginning with Adam and Eve was the lie that God was holding something back from them. If he can get people, even Christians, to believe that God has even an ounce of evil or cruelty in Him, then he can get his claws into us and do some real damage. He has gotten some to believe that God doesn't exist, but, in most cases, he has been able to take what they believe about God and make it a far cry from what the Bible reveals about God. Many people worship "God," only it is not really the God of the Bible. This works really well for him because it is really tough to help these people see the truth when they are so convinced that they know God already.

Satan enjoys lying to people about what makes them happy. "Just one more _____ and you'll be happy" has to be one of his major bait hooks. True happiness can be found only through holiness through Christ's power, and this is something most people miss. Frankly, we are easy prey given that we are born selfish and worship happiness. There is a smorgasbord of sin to choose from, and Satan will cater temptations to each of us according to what we are most vulnerable to. Sadly, many follow sin to its destructive and deadly ends and never come to find true and lasting satisfaction in Christ. Our protection as believers is as we continue to believe that God is the only source of happiness (John 10:10, Psalm 16:11), and when we resist Satan's lies, he will flee (James 4:7).

Satan wants people to hold tightly to pride as if their human worth and dignity depends upon it. It is the pride of life that makes people choose the easy, popular road full of Satan's choicest pseudo-delicacies, but, once they begin to feel the destructive effects of sin and want out, he is quick to tell them that God (Who he has previously said is irrelevant or non-existent) will never forgive them. Thus, his lies keep changing based upon circumstance and convenience, but the end game in all of them is to make people choose sin and hate God. When they are desperate to be released from his custody, he is quick to tell people that God's forgiving willingness and power is limited and that they cannot qualify. This is a blatant assault of the work of Christ on the cross, but what else should we expect from the devil? Even people broken by sin's effects can still be tricked into a position of pride and arrogance, refusing to fall upon the cleansing blood of Christ. Pride, whether in a false belief of self-sufficiency or in a refusal to turn to God for internal regeneration, is always Satan's go-to strategy.

If a person does come to know the Lord, he wants him to believe that living for Christ is too hard and that sin is so much more fun. Well, sin is easy pleasure, but it is empty pleasure. Only obedience yields the fruit of joy and eternal rewards. Only faith fulfills the heart. Sin is the easy way out, but God will teach those who want to grow endurance, character, and hope. With Jesus, we will be sanctified, continuing to improve unto the likeness of our Savior, imitating His character and doing His will. This is

the only hope humanity has. Sadly, the world system marches on to Satan's drumbeat, and they are happy to do so. But the wise know better, they will resist, and Satan will flee. He cannot win against the truth, but he can take a lot down with him. Many choose the losing side willingly, and they are accountable. Perhaps that is Satan's tallest tale of all, convincing the world that they are eternally in the right when they are desperately and infinitely wrong.