

The Power of the Gospel

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Exposing the Lie

The Gospel is God's strategy to deal with the critical issues of human life. But God is not the only player on the world scene. Satan is also an active participant in human affairs.

We need to understand that God has set the pace in the conflict over human lives. In the Garden of Eden, Satan snatched the initiative by tempting man away from God. But in the coming of Jesus, God took back the initiative. Ever since the Cross, Satan has been on the defensive. But this does not mean that he is not active. He has vested his forces in aggressive opposition to the Gospel.

Read Ephesians 6:10-12

Despite his many direct assaults against believers, his most powerful weapon is a blinding of people's eyes to the reality of the Gospel.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:4

This blinding action is his principal activity, both in the Church and in the world. As long as he can dim the spiritual sight of a person, he is able to take them captive to his will (note **2 Timothy 2:25-26**). It's no wonder that this is the point that God targets first. He shines the light of his Gospel into a person's heart, bringing a revelation of himself and of the power of the Gospel.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:6

The Master Liar

Read John 8:44

In this passage, Jesus identifies the very nature of Satan and his action in the world. The *New International Version* translates the original words of Jesus with these words:

“...the devil...was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

In this passage, we learn two important things about Satan:

- He is a *liar* – this identifies his nature (who he is)
- He is the *father of lies* – this identifies his strategy in seeking to thwart the purposes of God (what he does)

The Message also eloquently pinpoints these two aspects:

“...the Devil...couldn’t stand the truth because there wasn’t a shred of truth in him. When the Liar speaks, he makes it up *out of his lying nature* and *fills the world with lies.*”

From the beginning, Satan was a murderer and a liar. In fact, the very first words of Satan that are ever recorded are a lie. Let’s take a look, then, at this very first lie, for we will see in it the nature of the Great Lie that has been perpetrated ever since.

The First Lie

Read Genesis 3:1-6

Just six verses in the Bible, but upon these six verses hinged the entire future history of mankind. And in Satan’s first lie we see the root of the Lie that has ensnared mankind ever since.

- **Satan twisted God’s words.** He asked Eve, “Did God *really* say, ‘You must not eat from *any* tree in the garden?’” Of course God had never said this, and Satan knew it. There was only one tree in the garden that God has specifically instructed them not to eat (see **Genesis 2:16-17**). Satan’s Lie has just enough truth to make it sound true. But beware! There’s poison in the honey!
- **Satan called God a liar.** In his original instructions to Adam, God had warned them, “...you must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will *surely* die” (**Genesis 2:17**). Yet Satan blatantly challenges the truth of God’s word to Adam. “You will *not* surely die,” he says (**Genesis 3:4**). Now the Bible says that God does not lie (see **Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18**). Yet the very nature of Satan’s Lie is it turns truth upside down – good is called evil and darkness is called light (see **Isaiah 5:20**).
- **Satan challenged God’s motives.** He didn’t just twist God’s words; he twisted God’s intentions (see **Genesis 3:5**). “Read between the lines,” he says. “The reason he seeks to keep you from anything is because he wants to deprive you of that thing.”
- **Satan introduced a new ideal.** He replaced the ideal that God had for mankind (the ideal of becoming like himself through an intimate partaking of the divine nature – **Romans 8:29; 2 Peter 1:4**) with another ideal (the

ideal of becoming like God *independently from God* – **Genesis 3:5**).

This is both the subtlety and the repugnance of the Lie. God always intended for you to become like himself in character (see **Ephesians 4:24; 2 Corinthians 3:18**). In his Great Lie, Satan turned this goal upside down and leveraged it to bring separation between you and God. “Look,” says Satan. “If you follow the pattern of life I offer you, you will become just like God!”

The Nature of the Lie

Read 2 Corinthians 11:3

The first thing we need to understand about the Lie is that it is seductive. It actually sounds great. Any experienced liar will tell you that the best lies are the ones that are easy to believe. The most successful lies are the ones that the hearer wants to hear.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

Satan has been masquerading as an angel of light ever since his first entry on the scene of history. And he has had thousands of years to perfect his repertoire. Yet although he has refined his Lie, he has not changed it in its core nature. The essence of the Lie, stripped of all the tinsel and sparkle, comes down to one simple statement:

“You can live your life apart from God.”

There has only ever been one Lie. But that one Lie has two main prongs, which in turn branch into many different expressions of the Lie. The two prongs are:

The Lie About God

There are many different lies that Satan has spread about God himself. Some of these include:

- God doesn't exist
- God is a distant God who doesn't care about you personally
- God is a mean vicious God bent on persecuting you
- God is so loving he smiles benignly on whatever you do
- God can be anything you want him to be
- God's sole purpose is to help you achieve your best
- There are many gods
- There are many ways to God
- God is everything and in everything
- You are God

The Lie About Me

The second prong of the Great Lie is about you.

- You are the most important person

- You have unlimited power and potential
- Your happiness should be your first concern
- There is no such thing as sin; there is only personal fulfilment
- You must discover and pursue your own personal truth

Each and every one of the lies listed above are just a re-phrasing of the original Great Lie:

“For God knows that when you [redefine the terms of your relationship with God] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil [for yourself, without the need of God].”

Satan is an expert at re-packaging the Lie for different people. He knows just the right psychological and cultural buttons to push. He is the consummate expert at marketing his Lie.

The Darkening of the Mind

We know from [2 Corinthians 4:4](#) that Satan “has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” But how does this happen?

Read Romans 1:25

The moment we “exchanged the truth of God for a lie,” we set down a path dominated by that Lie. We became captives to the Lie that we embraced.

Read Romans 1:18-27

Notice the progression that happens on the downward slide caused by the “exchang[ing] of God’s truth for a lie.”

- Men suppressed the truth.
- Their minds became darkened and futile.
- God gave them over to a Lie-twisted lifestyle

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12

The Lie has been there all along. But in embracing the Lie in all its shame, God finally sends “a powerful delusion” to seal the Lie that mankind has embraced.*

Read John 8:43-47

Jesus identifies the cause of the hardness of heart. “You belong,” he says bluntly, “to your father, the devil.” Then he says:

“He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.”

This issue of ownership lies at the core of the differentiation between the Truth of

* At the time of the return of Christ, this delusion will be personified in the rise of “the lawless one” or “the man of sin,” who will drive all those who have rejected the truth to war against the Lamb and thus meet their ultimate judgment ([2 Thessalonians 2:8](#); [Revelation 17:14](#)).

God and the Lie of Satan (see also [1 John 4:6](#)).

We've already seen how Satan's principal strategy is to blind the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the Gospel for what it is. But this does not mean that when a person becomes a believer in Christ that this blinding strategy immediately ceases. Satan may have lost you to God's kingdom, but he will continue to try to make you ineffective in your walk and in your witness. And to do this, he uses the same strategy: he tries to blind you to the *whole* truth of the Gospel.

In this lesson, we are particularly interested in how the Lie can affect your walk with God. Since walking in the Spirit is God's answer to overcoming sin and pleasing God, the critical question we should ask ourselves is: What is it that can hinder me from walking in the Spirit? What is it that can cripple my walk or cause me to stumble?

The Focus of the Lie

Satan uses various tactics to lure you out of the dynamic of God's grace and into a fleshly, carnal* walk. These tactics include:

- Temptation
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Depression
- Condemnation
- Comfort
- Affluence

This list is far from exhaustive. But all these tactics have one point in common: they distract your focus away from God to yourself. This is the nature of the Lie. It is self-focused rather than God-focused (note again [Romans 11:36](#)).

In your walk with God, your primary concern should be maintaining your focus on him. This is the purpose of your daily devotions. This is purpose of reading your Bible. This is the purpose of your times of prayer with the Lord.

Anything – anything – that distracts your focus from the Lord needs to be addressed quickly. In many ways, this simplifies your walk with the Lord. Should I go and see that movie? What about that television program? Is that music OK to listen to? All of these questions, and more, can be condensed down to one simple question:

“Does it distract my focus off the Lord?”

The “old way of the written code” worked on the basis of a list of rules and regulations by which you needed to live your life. But the problem was that the list was never comprehensive enough to enable you to live a truly godly life.

* Carnal means “worldly, fleshly, of an unspiritual nature.”

The “new way of the Spirit,” however, has condensed your requirements down to just one: Keep close to God. It is out of this life in the Spirit that the fruit of the Spirit are expressed. As long as you have your eyes fixed on Jesus and obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit, the dynamic of grace will empower you to live a life pleasing to God.

Read Hebrews 12:2

The Narrow Path

Read Matthew 7:13-14

In this parable, Jesus describes the way of the world as a “wide gate” and a “broad road,” but he calls the way of salvation a “small gate” and a “narrow road.”

The Lie is a multi-lane highway. There is enough room for everybody’s philosophy and creed. But its destination, Jesus says, is destruction.

The Truth, however, is entirely different. Its gate is *small* because there are no other options. The Cross is the *only* entrance point into the salvation of God. There is no back door. There are no side entrances. In fact, it’s just one person at a time, individually receiving the gift that God has made available through the Cross.

Likewise, the path that you walk on once you pass through the gate is also described as *narrow*. This is because it is a focused path. Again, there are no lanes to switch between. There are no divergent paths or quiet cul-de-sacs where you can take a picnic if the journey gets too much. The path is narrow because it is defined by a focus on Jesus. The road is straight because it is defined by your walk in the Spirit.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13

This narrow path is called, by the Bible, “sanctification.” Sanctification is the act of being made “separate” or “set apart” from the corruption of the world. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, who is the agent for sanctification in your life. It begins with “a knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness” (**Titus 1:1**) and ends in being fully conformed to the likeness of Christ. This work of sanctification is a product of the transforming power of God’s truth. As Paul wrote, in his letter to the Thessalonians, our salvation is “through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and *through belief in the truth.*”

Read John 16:13-14

The Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of truth.” He gives us a revelation of the Truth of the Gospel, exposing the Lie of Satan to be the fraud that it is.

It is vitally important to expose the Lie for what it is. The corruption of the world comes gift-wrapped in a Lie. And all too often we, as Christians, have fallen for the Lie. We have flirted with the Lie. We have mixed the Lie with the Truth. How, then, does God go about dealing with this problem?

Renewing the Mind

Read Romans 12:2

A quick look at how different translations and paraphrases render this verse provides unique insight into Paul's instructions to the Roman Christians:

The New International Version: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will."

The New Century Version: "Do not change yourselves to be like the people of this world, but be changed within by a new way of thinking. Then you will be able to decide what God wants for you; you will know what is good and pleasing to him and what is perfect."

The New Living Translation: "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person *by changing the way you think*. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is."

The Message: "Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out."

The New Testament in Modern English: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity."

The Amplified Bible: "Do not be conformed to this world – this age, fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs. But be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind – by its new ideals and its new attitude – so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you]."

The Bible places a strong emphasis on the "renewing of your mind" (see also **Ephesians 4:23; Colossians 3:9-10**). This is because the world has brainwashed its citizens with different variations of the original Lie. The light of God's Truth has penetrated the darkness of the Lie, bringing you to Christ. But God wants every last vestige of the Lie purged from your life.

But it is vital to understand *how* God goes about purging the Lie from your life. He does *not* want you to become Lie-focused. We are not to put a spiritual magnifying glass to our minds with the objective of locating those places where the Lie still has a hold on our lives. If we do, we are simply falling into another subtle trap of the Enemy, who will use even this to distract you from the simplicity of your walk with the Lord.

No, rather than being Lie-focused, we must be Truth-focused. It is the Truth that counteracts the Lie. And what is the Truth? The Bible tells us that “the truth” is expressed in two interlinked ways:

- Jesus Christ is the truth *personified* (**John 14:6**)
- God’s Word is the truth *transcribed* (**John 17:17**)

In the first Biblical Studies module we established that you cannot separate God from his Word. The attributes of God often carry over into the attributes of his Word. This is because the Word of God is an extension of God himself – his words, his plans, his heart.

Thus God’s solution to the Lie is to expose you to the Truth – the person of Jesus Christ as revealed in his Word. It is by spending time with the Lord in his Word and allowing the Holy Spirit to wash your mind with his truth that your minds are being renewed *on a daily basis*. Any time your thinking is shown to be not aligned with the truth of God’s Word, *that* is the point where the Holy Spirit seeks to renew your mind. This means that it is in your *openness* to God’s Word, *not* in your personal efforts to identify error, that the process of the renewing of your mind moves forward.

Read Ephesians 5:25-27

Read John 15:3

The Gospel is God’s answer to the Lie. For in the Gospel, Satan’s Lie is exposed for what it is. And in the Gospel, God’s Truth is brought to bear on your heart and on your mind.

Let the truth of the Gospel wash over you. Let it cleanse your mind from any last traces of the Lie. Let it become the foundation upon which you build a solid and lasting relationship with God, the path upon which you walk in the Spirit.