

MOODY DISTANCE LEARNING

The Basic Plan of Satan

Greg Wheatley:

Welcome to Radio School of the Bible, a ministry of the External Studies department at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. My name is Greg Wheatley, and this quarter we're studying the topic, God's will for your life. Now if I think correctly, I think that even that title has probably drawn a lot of you in, because who of us hasn't thought about what is God's will for our lives, and how in the world can we know it?

Well, we're finding out with our instructor, Dr. Bill Thrasher, that that's important but it goes deeper than that, because it has to do with getting to know the person of God. Dr. Thrasher is professor of Bible and Theology at the Graduate School at Moody Bible Institute, and we'll get to today's study in just a moment.

Well, yesterday, Dr. Thrasher, we had a very helpful discussion about God's will, and I think we're starting to see that maybe we get it a little bit backwards when we try to see what God wants us to do six months, one year down the road, rather than setting our mind to get to know him as a person.

Dr. Thrasher:

That's exactly right. God's way is that if we seek the primary thing, we'll get the secondary thing. Seek first his kingdom, and all these other things will be added unto you. And certainly the primary thing, God has shown us, is to get to know him. A byproduct of that will be the disclosing of his will to us.

We started out last time by saying that a person who wants to understand God's will and wants to know God's will needs to be able to understand God's purpose for their life. We said that there are five key questions that they'll need to come to grips with and be able to answer.

The first question we looked at last time. That was: What is the basic message of the Bible? And we said the basic message of the Bible is the disclosure of who God is. It is answering the question what is God like? And certainly we're saying the same thing when we say the basic theme of the Bible is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ because Jesus is the radiance of God's glory; the exact representation of his nature. He could turn to Philip and say, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." So the climactic revelation of God was in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we wanna look at a second question today. The first question was: What is the basic message of the Bible? It is a disclosure of who God is. Second question is: What is the basic plan of Satan? We know that we're all in a battle. Wherever you are this morning, whatever you're doing as you listen to this broadcast, there's a battle around your life and in your life.

And Scripture would say that we're in battle ultimately against a person and his army. As I read here in Ephesians 6, "Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood." Your ultimate struggle is not against another human being. Now you may be in conflict with another human being, but there's an ultimate struggle that's not human.

"But against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." So our ultimate battle is not on the physical plane, but it's on the spiritual plane. And Scripture tells us that we're not to be ignorant of Satan's schemes. That's what Paul told the Corinthian church. We're not to be ignorant of his schemes. 2 Corinthians 2:11.

Now what we wanna look at today – okay, he has many schemes. He has many schemes that he uses against each one of us. And we're not here to honor him or to pay any tribute to him. But we are, do want to know our enemy in a way that leads us to knowledge of Jesus.

Now what is the basic scheme? The basic scheme is this: it is to distort your understanding of God's character and His ways in such a way that he makes his way of rebellion appear attractive. I'll just state that one more time. His basic plan is to distort your understanding of God and His ways in such a way that his way of rebellion appears attractive.

Now that would make sense, because remember we've said the basic message of the Bible is a disclosure of what God is like. The basic strategy of Satan is to distort our understanding of God. That brings us back just to the name "Satan." Satan means – he has many names, that being one of them. And Satan means what?

Greg Wheatley:

Well, I think it means "deceiver." I'm not quite right. I can tell by the look on your face.

Dr. Thrasher: He is called deceiver. He is called deceiver – “the one who deceives the nations” in the book of Revelation. But the word Satan means adversary. And so we would expect his plan to be adversarial to God’s plan. So if God is trying to disclose to me what He is like, there’s an enemy that seeks to what? Distort my understanding of God.

And so out of all the battles in my life, the most basic battle in my life or in anybody’s life is in regard to my understanding of who God is.

Greg Wheatley: That really goes to the core of it, doesn’t it? Because a lot of our problems we get into, I think even as Christians, is when we misunderstand who God is. We have sort of a distorted view of what He wants out of us. And it can go either way – it can go to be a permissive God, or maybe for a lot of Christians it goes into the realm of being a very strict, hold-a-stick-over-your-head kind of God. Sometimes that can be a distortion too, can’t it?

Dr. Thrasher: That’s very true. It can go both ways. There’s no question about it. I know it was a real illumination to me when I began to see that Satan – and he works in the realm of our thoughts and the realm of our minds. It’s not a mystery how he works. And when I began to see that Satan can exaggerate God’s demands for your life.

Now that thought can sound so spiritual it’s hard to believe that comes from what – from the pit of hell. I remember a student coming to me one time and saying, “You know I just don’t wanna ride public transportation any more.” I said, “Why wouldn’t you wanna ride public transportation? It’s a help to you, isn’t it?”

He says, “Yes, but every time I sit down on that bus and I don’t witness to this person next to me, I walk away feeling so guilty.” Well, certainly we know that none of us are the witnesses that God wants us to be. And would Satan be putting in that mind that he needs to witness to everybody?

Well, Satan doesn’t want you to witness, but he what? He can put a demand upon you that’s so oppressive that it just totally bottled that person up, and it destroyed their freedom to love that person next to them. So you’re right when it says it can go either way.

Now we live in a very permissive society in a sense where we’ve forgotten the holiness of God. So certainly it is both ways. But he’s seeking to distort our understanding of Him. In fact, the word “devil” or the term “devil,” it means slanderer. He’s seeking to slander God’s name.

Now I guess it is something of a bold statement when we say, “This is the basic scheme of Satan,” because there’s so many. But I believe that’s true. It is foundational to every other scheme, distorting our understanding of God.

Now if it is the basic scheme – if that’s really true – we would expect to see it the first time we see him in operation against man. And so you may not have a Bible where you sit. You may be driving a car, or you may not be able to get to a Bible at this particular time. But I’m gonna be turning to Genesis chapter 3, and I’ll read that so you can follow along as I read it.

Here we see the first temptation of Satan to man through the serpent. And we read in the book of Revelation that Satan was a serpent of old. “Now the serpent was more crafty” – as I read from Genesis chapter 3 – “than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman” –

Now as I read this, and I’m gonna continue reading it. But what I want you to see is what are ways that he slanders God’s name? What are ways that he seeks to put distortions of the character of God into Eve’s mind? “And he said to the woman, ‘Indeed, has God said you shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’

“And the woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat. But from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.’” And the serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely shall not die, for God knows in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and it was a delight to the eyes, and the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate. And she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.”

Well, as I read that, Greg, did you see any way that he seeks to distort Eve’s understanding of God?

Greg Wheatley: Well, yeah. The first, right off the bat he said, “Look, God didn’t really say this, did he?”

Dr. Thrasher: Okay.

Greg Wheatley: And that was something God had clearly said, and so that's a pretty blatant one. It seems to me the more subtle one is that he tries to say that God is some kind of celestial bad guy or meanie. It's almost as if Satan is saying, "Oh, look, he knows that if you do this it's gonna have this result. That's why he doesn't want you to do it." So he's questioning God's good motives towards his people.

Dr. Thrasher: That's very well said. Certainly the first is, you're absolutely right, that God's not truthful. God's not faithful. You can't depend on God. Now maybe you have a burden on your heart at this moment, and is God trustworthy? See, Scripture says that we're to cast our cares upon him because he cares for us, but if I doubt what God says, that he really does care for me, I just carry the burden myself.

You may be doing that. I've done that many times, to my shame and to – is God really truthful? You know that's the day in which we live. You know God is faithful. God is absolutely faithful, and to our shame – I could maybe quote a Scripture verse to you that would say God has said this.

Or I could also say, "You know there's a psychological study that statistically proves this point." And there's almost a greater confidence in the spirit of our day in that psychological study than what – what God has said from his Bible. God is absolutely faithful, as well as God is good. Certainly we'll explore that later on another broadcast down the line, the idea of the goodness of God.

But certainly, you and I would never sin unless we thought something good was gonna come out of it. We're deceived at that point. And so he deceived Eve thinking, look, if you really wanna take care of yourself, if you really wanna get what you really want in life, you need to – what? Rebel against God and go after it. And so we're encouraged to live that self-willed life.

Greg Wheatley: Well, we're gonna get more into this as we continue in further sessions on Radio School of the Bible. But I hope that it's true of you, as it is of me, that this is helping to clarify your thoughts. And I know that Dr. Thrasher's desire is that when we get done we have a better view of who our God is. That's a great, great goal of this study.

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