

Strategies of the Enemy: Accusation

The Hebrew word 'satan,' which later comes to be the proper name for the main opposer of God in the bible, literally means *accuser, opponent, or adversary*. Now, in some cases, this may refer to a position within a courtroom, like a prosecutor, whose job it is to reveal the injustice. In these passages, this word appears and functions like a role rather than a proper name. That's not to say it *isn't* Satan in those passages, but the passages are more ambiguous than our translations imply because in the Old Testament, the word is treated like a *role* and not a proper name.

So instead of focusing on whether the accuser in these passages is or isn't Satan, consider the following passages as if we had no idea who the prosecutor is.

Job 1:8-11, 42:7-8

And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." [...]

After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."

Who declares Job blameless initially? What is the accusation leveled? Is Job guilty or not?

Zechariah 3:1-5

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?” Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” And to him he said, “Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.” And I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD was standing by.

What is similar between the passage from Zechariah and the passage from Job?

How is the accuser treated differently in Zechariah?

Is Joshua guilty or not? Why?

Revelation 12:9-10

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

Satan’s accusations are ceaseless; this is something he does so much that he becomes named for it. Who is he accusing? What is God’s response to the accuser?

Accusation Against Ourselves

We cannot stop Satan from accusing us before God. That's God's domain to handle. But there are two main ways in which we participate in the enemy's design when it comes to accusation, and the first is bearing accusations against ourselves.

Identity Attacks

- You're a bad Christian
- You're a fraud
- If people really knew you...

Conditional Salvation

- A real Christian doesn't doubt
- If you were closer with God, this wouldn't be happening
- If you were really saved, you wouldn't struggle with this

Reminders of Failure

- You'll never actually change
- You've messed up too many times
- You should know better

Accusation takes our own sins, weaknesses, or failures and pins them to us.

Satan's design here is **condemnation** and **shame** that drives us away from God. Satan would have us wallow, isolating ourselves by turning us inward and confronting us with our own corruption, while God would have us focus on him and trust that his grace is already a permanent answer for the decay.

Romans 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

1 John 3:19-20

By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.

Now, receiving an accusation and bearing an accusation are not the same thing. We may hear and understand when we have been accused, but if we allow that accusation to become rooted, we let it deny the gift that God has given us.

1 John 3:21

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;

Accusation Against Others

The second way the enemy gets us to participate in his designs of accusation is when we become accusers of others. James warns against this.

James 4:11-12

Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

Now, the word judge is a bit of a fuzzy word in English, with a spectrum of meanings. It can mean something as simple as forming an opinion. Or it can mean something as harsh as condemning someone to death. What James is talking about here is not forming an opinion or *discerning* if something is sinful. What James is forbidding is *slandering* and *condemning* other Christians.

Assumption of the Heart

- They just want to look spiritual
- She's only serving because she wants attention

Defining Identity by Sin

- He's nothing but a liar
- She's a hypocrite

Spiritual Condemnation

- God must be disciplining them
- They aren't really saved

Permanence

- He'll never grow out of that
- That's just how she is

Discernment identifies the sin; slander defines the sinner.

Satan's design here is **division** and **isolation**. When we pass judgment on everyone else, we isolate ourselves in pride, and we isolate others in shame. That's not to say we shouldn't hold each other accountable for our actions, or withhold consequences when appropriate. It's about defining one as if we know something only God could.

Matthew 7:1-2

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.

Romans 8:33-34

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

This Week's Takeaway

While our salvation is secure, what consequences might we face if we bear accusations?

In what practical ways do we hurt ourselves or others when we accuse fellow Christians?

What accusations do I bear, and what judgments do I pass on others?

Preparing for Next Week

To prepare for class next week, read the following passages and write down a few observations for each passage. This isn't about right answers or deep insight, just jot down what you notice and what stands out in each passage, or what questions you may have.

Genesis 3:8-10; Genesis 20; Matthew 8:26; Matthew 14:22-33; Matthew 25:14-30;

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