

Ephesians: What's God Saying to You? What are You Going to Do About It?

Ricardo Campos, Pastor Grace Chapel, Orange, CA April 19, 2020

I. Introduction

Since God's given you a brand new life through His Son Jesus Christ, He's urging you to live that life instead of the one you had before He found you, where you were constantly and unwittingly following Satan's voice. So instead of thinking and acting the way you used to, the Lord wants you to follow His voice which is constantly speaking to you.

II. Ephesians: What is God Saying to You and What are You Going to Do About It?

God speaks, but so does Satan, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a brutal reminder that when difficult times come, we'll either stand or fall. We'll either listen to Satan's voice or the Lord's. The reality of life is this: there are always two voices speaking to us: Satan's and the Lord's. Notice what God says about Satan's constant attacks: Ephesians 6:11-12, the forces we face every day of our lives are not made of flesh and blood; those forces are Satan and his minions. All the evil done in this world is done by humans. But the one behind our wicked deeds; the one pulling our strings is Satan, Ephesians 2:2.

Satan is real but his attacks are cunningly subtle, some think that Satan doesn't exist, others believe he does; but they think that when Satan's at work his work is clearly evident, like in a serial killer named Jeffrey Dahmer who ate his victims. Our culture has contributed to this notion through films like *The Exorcist*. However, most of the time, this is not how Satan works; he's more subtle. That's not to say he doesn't do such things. There was another film in 2011 starring Anthony Hopkins called *The Rite*. It was loosely based on Father Thomas' life, who's an exorcist for the Catholic Church. He confirmed in interviews that the exorcisms in the film were accurate. But how does Satan normally attack? His method is as old as time; he first employed it with Adam and Eve. After a 5 minute conversation with Satan, Adam and Eve were in the bushes covered with guilt, fear, and shame (Genesis 3). That's how he gets all of us, believer and unbeliever alike. He's behind the harsh words we speak, and every feeling of rage that comes over us when we feel disrespected or unloved. He's lurking behind ever negative emotion we feel—anger, frustration, jealousy, bitterness, disappointment, shame, guilt, stress, anxiety, depression, etc.—waiting to pounce (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan's ALWAYS talking to you in order to steal, kill, and destroy, Satan's always talking, waiting to attack (1 Peter 5:8, cf. Ephesians 6:18). Does this sound unbelievable? Ever notice how often you talk to yourself? We have millions of conversations with ourselves. But it's not just us talking to ourselves; Satan's helping us. His goal, as Jesus said is to steal, kill and destroy us and everything and everyone around us (John 10:10). And often we don't even realize it. That's how subtle and cunning he is. He's the best salesman that you will ever know. He can make you believe that up is down and down is up. He'll make you believe that you suck, your life sucks, and God's not coming to help you, "In fact, He's angry with you! Don't you see that?! Why do you think all these bad things are happening to you? He's punishing you because you keep falling short of His standards. You're such a failure!"

A personal example: I've never recorded myself and posted it online for all to see. And because of my lifelong struggle with self-awareness, how people see me, what they think of me, how dumb I look, etc., Satan's had a ball with me these past few weeks. These are the kind of thoughts that have run through my head ever since I started this online adventure: "Is that what I look like on camera?" "Is there a way to record this and use someone else's face?" "What's with all the weird noises and moving around; I can't seem to stand still?" I tend to notice the smallest detail, but in the hands of my constant self-awareness it becomes a curse. I turn into a horrible perfectionist. When I noticed that I had left the door open in the last video, I thought, "Oh, no I left the door open and my bandana is hanging on the doorknob! That looks so unprofessional." If I listen to Satan's voice through the constant negative introspection, he'll take me down and I'll fail to do what God is calling me to do online.

We're meant to notice our flaws, but not to destroy ourselves, we constantly beat ourselves up through those internal conversations and we do this 24/7. Why? Are we masochists? No one would ever let someone else speak to them so negatively, constantly pointing out everything that's wrong. We would never put up with this yet we do this to ourselves all the time. It's not that we're not supposed to notice our flaws. We are. It was always God's designed for us to be self-aware, but not with Satan by our side. When we get introspective with Satan as our guide, we end up just like Adam and Eve, covered with guilt, fear, and shame. God wants us to notice everything that's wrong with us, but not so that He can beat us up with it. The purpose is for us to bring those things to Him so that Him can free us from all the lies Satan keeps telling us (1 John 1—God wants us to walk in His light so that He can remove all our flaws, cf. John 8:32).

Chapter 4

4:17-19, when our series was interrupted by the pandemic, we were explaining what Ephesians 4:14 meant in light of the culture around us. What does it mean not to fall for Satan's lies through crafty and deceitful men? We looked at the lies we learn about love and commitment through films like *The Notebook*, the lies about providing for the needy through programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Welfare. Ultimately God wants us to bring every idea no matter the source (family, friends, Oprah, Dr. Phil, the New York Times, FOX News, CNN, MSNBC, etc.) to Christ and ask, "Is this right?" (2 Corinthians 10:5). We'll come back to these issues. For now, we'll continue where we left off: Ephesians 4:17. Here's a quick review of what God has said thus far in the first 4 ½ chapters:

Chapter 1: God the Father has placed us in Christ, which means several things: we've been adopted into His family (1:5), all our sins are forgiven (1:7), when Christ returns to reign, we'll reign with Him (1:11), and we get access to God's power, the one He used to resurrect Jesus from the dead and seat Him far above ALL powers (1:19-21).

Chapter 2: when we were dead in our sin, completely separated from God and living by Satan's spirit, God united us to His Son (2:5-6). This made us part of Christ's Body and gave us permanent access to God the Father through His Spirit which now dwells in us (2:14-18). He resides in us and we reside in Him. And all we had to do is simply believe in Jesus (2:8-9).

Chapter 3: God wants to strengthen us with unimaginable inner strength (3:16); He wants His Son to fully reside in us, for us to fully know, sense, and understand something that is beyond comprehension: Christ's love (3:17-19a). In a word, God wants us to be completely filled with His being 24/7 (3:19b).

Chapter 4: in light of everything God's done for us, the new life He's given us in Jesus with access to His Spirit, power, tremendous strength, and love, God urges us to live like it, to remain unified by being patient and forgiving (4:1-6). He wants us to use the gift He's given us, the role He gave us to play in His Body so that we'll reach Christ's maturity and wisdom and not be fooled by Satan's lies. He wants us to live by His truth so that we can help each other grow and mature in Christ (4:7-16).

4:17-19, having said all this, God says, "This I say, therefore, ..." He's pointing back, He's saying, "In light of this, ..." In light of the fact that we now have a brand new life, we're now alive in Christ instead of dead following after Satan, we're one with Him and each other, part of His body being matured by His truth, in light of all this, we "should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, ..."

God is basically saying, "You're not supposed to go back to your former life, that person is gone. Instead, you're supposed to live based on the position and truth My Son has given you." What happens if we fail to live our real identity, our new life in Christ? We'll fall for Satan's lies once again and go back to blind ignorance that results in twisted thinking and twisted living.

If you don't yet know God this way, perhaps you're not a churchgoer. Maybe you read the Bible once or twice but it seemed weird and hard to understand. You've heard about Jesus and His death on the Cross, but you're not sure what it all means. If this is you, God's not here to ask you for anything. He doesn't need you to go to church, to sing, to pray, or to study your Bible. He would love it if you did all these things, but the first thing He wants you to do is listen. He's not here to ask; He's here to give you a gift that will change your life forever. The Goodnews God has for you is this: Jesus has already done all the work for you; He paid the cost. When He died on the Cross, He forgave all your sins, Ephesians 1:7. Through that sacrifice, you get a brand new life. The second you simply believe in Jesus as your Savior, no matter how sinful and wicked you used to be, you are permanently united to Jesus' everlasting life. You get a brand new life in and through Him, Ephesians 2:4-6. And what does it cost you? Nothing! because it's a gift, Ephesians 2:8-9. You have a new identity in Him which means you never have to wonder who you are or what to do. He will give you all the guidance you need and more. You have access to Him, His Father, and the rest of your brothers and sisters in Christ who will all help you succeed in this difficult thing called life, Ephesians 1:19; 2:18; 3:12, 20; 4:6, 13, 16.

III. Conclusion

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.