

All too often today I see where people have lost their faith. They either don't believe at all, have never heard nor understood the word of God or something has happened in their lives to take them away His Word.

As we have talked about many times here at our Church, we know what this and, deep inside us all, we know how to prevent this from happening to us, but we sometimes forget.

I'd like to talk a little more this morning about the things of this world that take away from us... draw us from God and make us question our own faith.

It is so important to any believer that we not let the Devil's tools eat away at us and cause us to go in a direction, down a path, that is far from God.

### Deception, Distraction & Lies

How many distractions are there in this world? How many times have you had your sights on God but something in this world, something you may not have expected, has taken your focus off the things you have learned and drew you away from God?

There is so much deception in the world today. How many times have you seen an ad on TV, a post on Facebook or maybe a simple radio announcement that has drawn you in?

I'm sure you've heard it all...

- Invest in our product and become rich!
- Use our magic moisturizing cream and take years off your appearance!
- Take these vitamin supplements and become the man or woman you were thirty years ago!

Wow! If all of these deceptions were actually true, I suspect I'd have a lot more merchandise at my home that I could probably afford.

Are any of these really true? I think probably not but, wanting to be rich; retain our youth; and ignoring the inevitability of what growing older might do to us... we may believe these deceptions and become distracted from our relationship with God.

God warned us about these distractions back in the Old Testament...

Jeremiah 9:6 – “You live in the midst of deception; in their deceit they refuse to acknowledge me,” declares the LORD.”

Yes, we live in a world full of deception, distractions and out-and-out lies! We hear all of these “miracle cures” for what ails us and the “fool-proof” plans to make us richer yet we still try.

Deceit, distraction and lies are tools of the Devil. From the very beginning of the scripture we hear of the Devil's lies.

In Genesis 3, where the serpent was tempting Eve to eat from the tree in the middle of the garden, where she knew she mustn't, he said to her...

Genesis 3:4-5 - "'You will not certainly die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"

Again, an obvious tool of the Devil!

Ultimately, what do these lies and deceptions nearly always bring us to... disappointment! And what do we do when they all fail... blame God?

Our Bible tells us to be content...

Philippians 4:11-13 - "I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

So, what is this verse saying to us? It's simple really, learn to be content with whatever circumstances. Understand that all we've been through has only made us stronger.

Proverbs 4:25 - "Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you."

Yep, that's the easiest solution for us... Stay focused on God. Understand that, despite how you feel about yourself, God Loves you and is perfectly fine with you the way you are!

Stress

Okay, now here's a big one! How many here today are stressed-out? How many of you have problems at work; problems at home; financial difficulties; or simply just disappointed with the way your life is going?

Once again, another tool of the Devil! He wants you to be stressed out! He can't stand you... he hates you and wants you to blame all of your stress, as well as all of your problems, on God.

Before we let that happen to us, stay focused and again remember what Christ has taught us...

John 14:27 - "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

We should all rest easier understanding this fact. He left His peace with us! He is there beside us always and we should never let the ways of this world trouble us or cause us to be afraid as He is with us.

Sickness and Disease

We have seen a lot of sickness around us. We have many Brothers and Sisters in great pain and living in great fear of their illnesses. Is it God's fault? Did He give us these diseases and cause our afflictions? The Devil would like you to think so.

Let's look around us for a moment. Let's look at what this world has put before us and caused us to endure.

- Electric/Power lines separate our houses and line our streets!
- Radio towers spread across the horizons!
- Cell phones fill our pockets and purses with BlueTooth ear pieces and car adapters!
- TVs, stereos and a regular cornucopia of electronic devices fill our homes!
- Our foods are laced with so many chemical ingredients we can't even pronounce their names or even understand what their purpose is in our foods!
- We drink beverages claiming to be "super-energizing" yet can ramp-up our heart rates so high we're in danger of a heart attack!

Why do we need all of these things? Hasn't God provided for us just as Christ taught us?

Matthew 6:25-27 – "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"

God WILL provide for us. He's made that promise to us over and over in the Scriptures but, being human beings and wanting more in life, we choose to believe the Devil's lies... and this, I believe, is where our sickness comes.

Why do I call sickness a tool of the Devil? It's quite simple really. Here what Christ said to His Disciples...

Matthew 10:1 – "Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness."

He gave them authority to "drive out impure spirits!" Spirits of, and from, the Devil himself!

Fear

This, to me, is one of the Devil's greatest tools. There are so many things in this life that we fear:

- Fear of failure.
- Fear of losing your job,
- Fear of losing your partner.

- Fear of losing your friends.
- Fear of challenges – I simply can't do it!
- Fear of being alone.

Why do we fear? Don't we realize that it's the Devil telling us we're not going to make it... we're going to fail... we're going to lose everything we have? Why do you believe Him?!

I haven't physically counted how many times the Scriptures tell us not to fear but here are just a few examples:

Isaiah 41:10 - "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

1 Peter 5:6-7 - "Humble yourselves, then, under God's mighty hand, so that he will lift you up in his own good time. Leave all your worries with him, because he cares for you."

...and one of my favorites:

Deuteronomy 31:6 - "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

I know there are over 300 Bible verses that tell us we shouldn't be afraid. I actually believe the number is 365 times, one for every day of your life.

So why do we fear so much? Don't we realize it's the Devil whispering in our ear? Can't we see how the closer we get to God, the more the Devil will tell us "we can't do it" or "you're not worth it?"

We've already established and talked about how the Devil lies to us. Where is our faith? Hasn't Jesus taught us over and over in His lessons how great our faith can be?

So, I ask you all this morning, rely on your faith. Believe in what God has promised. Know and understand that He is with us. Don't think that just because whatever it is you need hasn't happened yet, that it's not coming to you.

Believe in God's words! Believe in the lessons of Christ! Believe in yourself as He believes in you!

The next time fear comes knocking on your door... send faith to answer it and, I guarantee, there will be nobody there!

Death and Sorrow

When someone we love passes from this earth, sorrow, most certainly ensues. Of course it does! We're only human and tend to forget the promises of God because we miss them.

Again, from Proverbs 4:25 – “Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you.”

Understand and remember the promises of our God.

John 14:1-4 – “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

In Conclusion

- Don’t believe the lies, deception and learn to ignore the distractions.
- When you feel stressed, stay focused on God. Ask Him for peace. Know and understand He stands with you and will take the stress from you.
- Stop blaming God for our illnesses. He doesn’t cause our sickness but, if you believe, He will help you get through them.
- Cast your fears behind you. Remember how many times God has told us not to be afraid.
- Grieve for those we’ve lost. Let your tears fall to cleanse your sorrows but, when you finally realize where our Loved ones have gone and understand that we will see them again.

At the end of every day... through all the trials and tribulations this world puts you through... stay focused, not on your cell phones; not on the TV; not on any one person around you but, instead, realize that you have an Almighty God in your corner... How can you fail?!

Go with God; be good to one another; always stay humble; always be kind... God Bless (Amen)!