

The Evolution of Satan: From Divine Prosecutor to Enemy of God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 October 2024

Preacher: Anthony Parrott

[0 : 00] All right, let's bring our attention back. I have a story about casting a demon out of a barn. Yeah, it's good morning. My name's Anthony. I'm one of the co-lead pastors here at the table.

We're in a series called Shadow Boxing, Confronting the Monsters That We Most Fear. We're talking about the spooky, the scary, the monsters, both our cultural monsters, what they represent in our lives, and, of course, the good news of how Jesus, the gospel, God, the spirit, helps us confront those monsters.

And, yeah, our easy, breezy question, if you can come too close to comfort to a malevolent spirit, when I was about 16, 17, I got involved with a sort of hyper-charismatic, super-spiritual Christian religious group, maybe a cult, maybe not, depends on your definition.

And, you know, I was, unfortunately, like, super at home there because I was super religious. I was super intelligent. I was super spiritual. And I could exceed in those sorts of environments in a way that was ultimately deeply unhealthy for me but felt really good at the time.

And I was at this, staying with some friends of my siblings. My siblings were in college, staying at some friends who had, like, an acreage and a barn. And we, I think, looking back, we were just a little hyped up on spirituality and the dark and being in the woods.

[1 : 27] But there was this barn that this friend claimed was haunted. And so part of our activities for our sleepover was, like, casting demons out of this barn.

And we were hearing voices. We were, you know, hearing some, like, malevolent sounds and things like that. But ultimately, we believed that through the power of the Holy Ghost, we could exercise the demons from this barn.

And that was, like, sort of typical for what would happen in these kind of religious gatherings where you'd gather together and then someone would come forward and they'd ask, pray for deliverance from a demon or a spirit of oppression, a spirit of poverty, a spirit of whatever.

And you'd lay your hands on and you'd say, you'd pray the prayer, you bind demons, you cast them out. And there'd be convulsions and foaming at the mouth and then they would go. And so that was part of my, like, spiritual upbringing for a while.

And then, you know, eventually got out of that. My parents sort of stopped making me go, which was ultimately a wise decision. And began to get some distance from that.

[2 : 34] And I swung very much the other direction to, like, oh, man, all of that supernatural, Holy Spirit, angel, demon stuff is crap. And now, as I've gotten older, I began to realize that paying attention to what's happening in our souls and in our spirits, paying attention to other voices, not just, like, the extreme voices in either way, in either side of this sort of debate, are there supernatural spiritual forces or not, but listening to voices who are on the reg, like, confronting evil.

And evil can be lots of things, but, you know, the evils of oppression, the evils of harm. And they can talk about the ways that, like, yeah, we've got to do this through policy.

We've got to do this through development. And there are sometimes there's just these other things going on that are hard to explain, and we need language for them. So today's topic is the devil.

The devil and demons. What scripture says about it. What we can take out of here today. Talking about the devil and demons. Now, I'm going to start with my main idea, just so, because we're going to get a little, like, little seminary, a little Bible classy.

So if you forget everything else, here's our main idea. This is 1 John 3, 8. God's Son appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. If you forget everything else I say, that's fine.

[3 : 58] Just remember that what we believe in, the Jesus, the God that we believe in, came to destroy the works of the devil. And so we don't have reason to fear. We don't have reason for anxiety.

We can trust, we can believe that Jesus' work is to destroy the works of the devil. Whatever those are, we'll define some later. That is the good news. But what I wanted to start with today is, like I said, a little seminary, a little Bible class of talking about the biblical, theological development of the idea of Satan.

So the biblical and theological development of Satan. Because the ideas, the notions of Satan didn't just sort of drop out of the sky, okay?

As a completed idea. Not everyone agreed what Satan was, who he was, what he was doing. In fact, that's true of the entire Bible. And this is sort of a reminder of how the Bible works and how we at the Table Church really use the Bible.

The Bible did not drop out of the sky as a completed work, as a completed project, the one thing that God had to say. No, the Bible was composed over hundreds of years, put together by many authors, many editors in different religious communities.

[5 : 11] And within the pages of Scripture, you've got to let it move and breathe because there's debate and there's development. And there's people with different ideas of, what did God mean when he said this? And what's happening here?

And how can God be just if this is true? And how can God be okay if this is true? And you see all of this debate within the pages of Scripture. The same thing is true as to, why is there evil in the world?

And what do we call that evil? And where is its source? And what do we do about it? And so the Bible, you can read it, sort of Genesis through Revelation. You could go out to like a bookstore, you get a chronological Bible, which is trying its best to say, this is the first thing that happened in history.

This is the last thing that happened in history. And there's also another way of reading Scripture, which is sort of the strata, like archaeological strata, of what was actually composed first. What are some of the earliest ideas?

And what was composed last? What are some of the later ideas? So that's what we're going to do with Satan right now, with the devil. So, I lost my place in my notes.

[6 : 10] Come back. Here we go. So, before even there was such a thing as Israel, before there was such a thing as the concepts of Abram and Moses and Sinai, you have these sort of pre-biblical ideas around good and evil, or around God or the gods and chaos.

And these sort of pre-biblical ideas, before Israel, before Abram, before Moses, you've got Babylonian ideas and Akkadian ideas and Sumerian ideas, all sort of floating out there in the ancient Near East, the ancient Middle East, that says there's God, there's sort of the source of the world, and then there's all that chaos and evil in the world.

And there is this competition between the two of them about who's going to win out, the sort of positive nature forces that seem to maybe want humanity to thrive, and then the evil chaotic forces that are bringing death and destruction.

And so, Genesis 1 is actually not so much the story about the origin of the universe or the origin of evil. It just assumes the universe is there. Evil is there.

And what God is doing in Genesis 1 and 2 is sort of defeating chaos, putting chaos in its place, and bringing order to the creation that's already there.

[7 : 35] It's very pre-Old Testament, but you see remnants of this worldview sort of survive in the Old Testament. So, for instance, we've got Isaiah 9, verse 10.

It says, So you may be used to the story of Rahab, who helps the Israelites get into Jericho.

Different character. Rahab was a monster, a pre-biblical monster, that represented chaos and evil. And here Isaiah is saying, Hey, Yahweh God, wake up like you used to, and you're the one that defeated the chaos monster Rahab.

You're the one who defeated the chaos dragon. Could you do that again, please? And Isaiah is sort of quoting or alluding to all of these stories that come from the cultures around Israel long before the Bible was around.

You've got Isaiah 27, 1. On that day, the Lord will take a great sword, harsh and mighty, and will punish Leviathan, the fleeing serpent. Leviathan, the writhing serpent, will kill the dragon that is in the sea.

[8 : 49] So again, Leviathan is this pre-biblical monster that existed in other cultures. And Isaiah is saying, God, wake up, do your thing, get rid of this Leviathan, this chaos monster.

Now notice, I'm not talking about Satan, because Satan is a later idea. Satan is a later character that hasn't shown up yet in biblical history. Rather, the biblical authors are talking about chaos, Rahab, Leviathan, referencing the other sort of myths and legends in the world around them.

So then we get to the Old Testament itself, and the times when the Old Testament is being composed and written. And the worldview of most of the Old Testament is actually not monotheism.

So monotheism is the belief of one God. There is one God and no others. But that's a later theological idea, that earlier on in the Old Testament, you've got not monotheism, but henotheism, which is one God above all others.

That's the primary belief of the early Israelites coming out of Egypt, the Davidic kingdom, the Solomonic kingdom, basically everything that happens before Israel's exile.

[10 : 01] They are henotheists. They believe in God, Yahweh God, but Yahweh God is sort of chief over all these other gods that are in the world. Think about the first commandment.

The first commandment is, you shall have no other gods before me. It's not, there are no other gods. No, God is meeting Israel in the theological place that they're at and saying, hey, yes, there's the God of Babylon, the God of Sumer, the God of the Assyrians, the God of Edom, all these different gods.

The first commandment of the Israelites is, don't put any other gods before me. So take a look at Psalm 82 verse 1. It says, God has taken his place in the divine council.

In the midst of the gods, he holds judgment. So depending on your belief system, you could either believe that Yahweh God was in sort of competition with all of the other sort of tribal gods surrounding Israel, or you could believe that God was actually the chief of the gods that then sort of told the other gods what to do.

Take a look at the next verse in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy chapter 32. When the Most High, Elyon, apportioned the nation, so basically drew the map of the world, when he divided humankind, he fixed the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the gods.

[11 : 28] Yahweh's own portion was his people and Jacob his allotted share. So in this sort of way of thinking about the gods, you have a Most High God who is deciding, okay, Israel, you get this piece of property, and Edom, you get this piece of property, and Babylon, you get this piece of property, and how does the Most High God decide this?

Well, it's according to the number of the gods in the divine council. Yahweh's going to be the god of Israel, and this god's going to be the god of Babylon, this god's going to be the god of Edom, so on, etc.

Okay? Is this making any sort of sense? Okay. Now, remember what we're talking about. This is the way that people were thinking about theology when Bible is being composed, which isn't necessarily to be confused with this is what the Bible is saying is the absolute truth.

This is where we can get really mixed up with how to use the Bible. When you turn to a certain verse, like if you go to Deuteronomy 32, and say this is proof that there are other gods. No, no, no, no, no. This is proof that this is what people used to think.

Okay? That's what we're doing. So there's this development from sort of the super dualism, God and chaos, then to one god above all other gods, and these other gods do exist in the ancient mindset, but they all have their roles and tasks.

[12 : 53] So from a perspective of an ancient person, you're very much aware that there are lots of gods out in the universe, and each people group or nationality has their own, and it's usually based on territory.

So an Israelite is going to treat Yahweh, Y-H-W-H, or capital, the Lord in your Bibles, as their territorial or family god, and they're going to worship Yahweh above all others.

And then this eventually further develops into Yahweh is the most high god who's actually in charge of all the others. Yahweh is in charge of this divine council of gods that includes all the other gods of all the other nations, including the angels, and this term used in the Bible called the sons of God or the sons of Elohim who are all there to do Yahweh's bidding.

So when you read through the prophets, you can see the way that Yahweh treats the nations as sort of these tools of my people Israel are disobeying, so I'm going to use the nations to teach Israel a lesson.

I'm going to use these other gods of the other nations to show Israel that ultimately I am Lord. So in the ancient biblical mindset, because of Yahweh's role as most high god, that means that Yahweh is the source of everything, both good and bad.

[14 : 23] Now a way that folks often bump up against the God of the Bible or specifically the God of the Old Testament is that the biblical writers and thinkers have absolutely no theological issue ascribing God really horrific acts because in their mind, there's no one else to ascribe them to.

Now maybe it was a foreign god, but that foreign god was just acting according to what Yahweh, the most high god, wanted. Or maybe it was some other angel, but again, just doing whatever Yahweh God said because there was no other theological option for where evil came from.

So as us modern people, we think, well, this is terrible. Why would the biblical authors say God is the source of both good and evil? But from an ancient perspective, that's because God was the source of everything ever.

So for example, take a look at 1 Samuel 16 verse 14. This is talking about King Saul, the first king of Israel. It says Yahweh's spirit had departed from Saul and an evil spirit from Yahweh tormented him.

So again, ancient biblical authors have no theological issue with this sentence because there's only one source of spirits and that's the most high god.

[15 : 43] So Yahweh's spirit leaves Saul and now an evil spirit torments Saul, drives him insane. And where does that evil spirit come from? From Yahweh, from the most high god, because there's no other option.

Or a different example, 2 Samuel 24. It says the Lord burned with anger against Israel again. And so the Lord, he incited King David against them.

Now later biblical authors, like the book of James, says God cannot tempt or test anybody. But 2 Samuel says, well, actually no. This God incited David to do evil against Israel.

And the reason the biblical author has no problem with this is because there's nobody else who can test or tempt or incite David. Again, Isaiah chapter 45 is very clear about this.

Isaiah says that God says, I am Yahweh, there is no other. I form light, I create darkness, I make prosperity, and create evil. I am the Lord who does all these things.

[16 : 50] Now, as the Old Testament progresses, we begin to see a new development. And that is the angels or the members of the divine council who are under God's payroll, so to speak, begin to have specific tasks given to them.

And this is where we finally meet a new character written very late in the development of the Old Testament called the Satan. The Satan. The Satan is only mentioned three times in the Old Testament.

And as a character, he's very late in the development, the putting together and editing of the Old Testament. And notice I keep calling him the Satan because originally it was not a personal name, it was a title.

It meant the accuser. The Satan, basically, was like a cop and a prosecutor rolled up into one being, which might explain why some of us really don't like the Satan.

He was on God's payroll to essentially set up like sting operations to see if God's people were as faithful as they said they were. His job was to test the people of God, sort of act as the sifter between those who were actually righteous and those who were just pretending and see if they were actually good or worthy or innocent.

[18 : 11] So he serves this job as sort of prosecutor in the divine court. If God is on the side of the person, the Satan is saying, but God, did you see? Okay, that's the accuser.

So we see the Satan first show up in Job chapter one. Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord. So the scene is basically this divine council or divine courtroom where the sons of God, the sons of Elohim or these little minor gods are presenting themselves to Yahweh, the one true God.

And the Satan, Hasatan in Hebrew, came among them. And Yahweh says to the Satan, from where do you come? And the Satan answers the Lord and said, from roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.

And Yahweh says to the Satan, Have you considered my servant Job? So the assumption going on here is that the Satan is not an enemy.

He's not opposed to God. He's not a rebellious angel. He's actually on the divine payroll doing his job of basically patrolling the streets and seeing who's up to no good.

[19 : 24] And then Yahweh's like, Hey, I know what your job is. I know your job is to find out who's actually righteous and who's not. Have you thought about Job? Because Job seems like an actually righteous guy.

And the prosecutor, cop, attorney, the Satan, the accuser, is like, All right, let's test that theory, God. And then the rest of the book of Job goes on. The Satan shows up again in Zechariah chapter 3.

It says, this is Zechariah, the prophet, saying, Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord and thus Satan standing at his right to accuse him.

So again, another sort of prosecutorial courtroom scene where there's Joshua the high priest, angel of the Lord, and the accuser, the Satan, basically being like, Okay, let's find out if Joshua is innocent or not.

Now, theology continues to develop. And Israel goes through the exile, is released from Babylon, they go back to the promised land, they build the temple, and by this point, Judea, Israel, released from the exile, is very much no longer a henotheist.

[20 : 39] They've given that up and they are strong monotheists at this point. So there's one God, all those other gods were just imaginary or pretend didn't actually exist, and now the remnant of Israel that's at the temple rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, sort of rebuilding their society, is sort of beginning to put together what comes to be known as the Hebrew Bible, the Tanakh, the Old Testament.

And by all measures, they are highly righteous by this point. They're following the law of Moses, they're doing temple sacrifice correctly, they're strong monotheists, this is the birth of what will come to be known as Judaism.

This is about 400 BCE. But then a new theological problem comes up, is that this remnant of Jews, they keep having terrible things happening to them.

Eventually Alexander the Great and the Seleucids, the Greek Empire, they come in, they conquer, and the Jews are like, what on earth? We're actually doing everything for the first time that the law says that Moses has asked us to do.

Why are these terrible things happening to us? At this point as well, the Jews have began to interact with other theologies of other religions, so like modern day Iran, Persia, Zoroastrianism, and that begins to influence their theology as well.

[22 : 05] So they get this really strong discomfort with God being the one sole source of both good and evil, especially after the exile where Judah, Israel, is now more faithful than ever.

So at this very edge of where the Old Testament is being written and put together, the Satan begins to be separated out from the divine payroll. It is no longer considered an angel doing God's bidding, but as a separate being that creates evil himself opposed to God.

So earlier, I showed you 2 Samuel 24.1, put it on the screen again. The Lord burns with anger against Israel. He incites David against them. So 2 Samuel, history of Israel and Judah.

It's an earlier history written to sort of support the Davidic kingship. And then there's a new history written called Chronicles. And Chronicles gets written very late towards the end of the closing of the Hebrew Bible.

And it's a rewriting with some specific theological points it wants to make. And whoever gets to rewrite this part of the story is very uncomfortable with God being the one to incite David against Israel.

[23 : 19] So then we read 1 Chronicles 21. This is the parallel story. Then the Satan stood up against Israel and incited David to count or do a census of Israel, which is against God's will.

So now the Satan is doing this new task of not just trying to be prosecuted or cop, figure out who's righteous or not, but actually causing bad things to happen.

And even though 1 Chronicles is likely like in the middle of your Old Testaments or your Bible, it's written towards the very end of when the Bible gets edited and put together. Okay, so by the end of the Old Testament, we've moved from sort of chaos monsters to God is the ultimate source of both good and evil, to the Satan being this divine attorney prosecutor to now the Satan beginning to take on a new role as the source of evil.

Then there's the period between the Old Testament and the New Testament called the Intertestamental Period. It's about 400 years long and there is tons of fascinating theological development going on.

Because if you've read your Bible through, you might get to the end of the Old Testament and then you flip over to the New Testament and all of a sudden there's like Sadducees and Pharisees and all these new things that have never been talked about before.

[24 : 44] That's what's being developed in between Malachi and Matthew in that Intertestamental Period. And there's also lots of interesting things being written about where did evil come from? Why is the world so messed up?

So you get these origin stories composed about demons, about the Satan, about other sort of malevolent characters being created in these new origin stories.

Christians usually think about angels as like fallen demons. But from the Jewish mindset being written at this time, it's much a little bit more interesting than that. So there's this weird story in Genesis 6 where it seems like angels are having intercourse with humans and then they have babies and those are the Nephilim or the giants.

Well, in one of these intertestamental stories called the Jewish Apocrypha, the flood comes and kills all of the Nephilim, all of the giants. And then those Nephilim, those angel human children, they have spirits, they have ghosts, and those become the demons and the chief of those becomes the evil Satan figure.

There's also different sort of versions of this. But long story short, theologians needed stories with explanatory power as to why bad things kept happening.

[26 : 00] Because by the time of Jesus, the Greek empire has taken over, Judah, then the Roman empire has taken over Judah, and done horrific things to the Jewish people.

So the theology continues to develop, and there's no longer any comfort in saying that the Satan or the accuser is under God's payroll.

There's now this fully independent figure who is doing his own thing to wreck the world. Quick aside, Lucifer, not originally a name for Satan.

That was a later development. Lucifer comes out of a story about the king of Babylon who is trying to take his place as sort of ruler of the world, and God says that he will overthrow this Lucifer, this shining one, the king of Babylon.

That story motif about a powerful king who becomes too big for his britches, then becomes a later metaphor for Satan in Christian thought. But time of Jesus, Lucifer had no role to play in people's ideas about Satan.

[27 : 12] So we get to the New Testament. There's quite a few competing ideas out there, but overall the Satan is now the primary chief adversary against God.

He's the chief of demons. He is opposed to God's people and God's kingdom. And Satan was seen as the primary spirit in charge of the world.

That is the powers, the systems, the empires of the world. So you can see this in a few examples. 1 John 5, 19, the whole world is given over to the evil one.

Or Ephesians 2 talks about the prince of the power of the air. Or 2 Corinthians 4, the God of this age has blinded the minds of those who don't have faith so they can't see the light of the gospel.

Or Jesus speaking in John 12, 31, now is the time for the judgment of this world. Now this world's ruler will be thrown out. So by the time of Jesus, this chief evil figure, the Satan, is now seen as king of the world.

[28 : 17] And this is not a desirable thing for people. So Jesus comes along and he's tempted by the devil.

Or Satan. See this in Luke 4. The devil said to him, I will give you all this domain, all the world's empires, its glory, for it has been handed over to me and I, Satan says, I give it to whoever I want.

Now it's important to remember who handed over the empires of the world to Satan. It was not God. It was people. It was humans. Because again, back to Genesis 1 and 2, God made human beings the co-regents of the world for humans to rule and to reign over as God's images on the planet.

And then in the Jewish imagination, we turned around and gave that authority right over to the devil, to Satan, who then both sort of hilariously and sadly tries to tempt Jesus with it.

So, time of Jesus, the Satan is considered the ruler of the world. And then we should remember what Jesus' message and mission is. One, the announcement that actually God is king and God is coming back to take rightful kingship over the world.

[29 : 37] And two, to be the announcement and the embodiment of God on earth. Jesus' message, Mark chapter 1, the kingdom of God is at hand.

Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, my kingdom come, thy will be done. Which means if the true king has come, the one in charge is going to have to be thrown out. Jesus was God in the flesh.

And if we want to know what God is like, then we look at what Jesus does. Jesus says, I only do what I see the Father doing. I only say what I see the Father, hear what I hear the Father saying.

And so Jesus goes around from town to town, people to people, and he's healing them, he's feeding them, he's teaching them, and he's casting out demons. And remember, Jesus' message, the announcement that God is king, the embodiment of God on earth, this is all pre- crucifixion, pre-resurrection.

In Christianity, even in our own creeds, there's this very large emphasis on Jesus' death and resurrection, and rightfully so. But this can often come at the neglect of Jesus' life, which was just about just as much as an embodiment and announcement of that message and mission.

[30 : 49] So, if Jesus is going to be successful in this announcement, in this embodiment, in this mission, then that means he's going to have to confront the ruler of the world, Satan.

Look at Jesus' words in Matthew 12, verse 28. If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. In other words, if Jesus is going around, empowered by God, kicking out these evil demons, these minions of the ruler of the world, that means a new king has come, a new kingship has arrived.

Again, the words of Jesus in John 12, talking about his death and resurrection as this confrontation with the forces of evil. Now is the time for the judgment of this world. Now this world's ruler will be thrown out.

How is the world's ruler going to be thrown out? In this sort of jiu-jitsu move of all the forces of evil and darkness, nailing Jesus to a cross, and then Jesus reversing it with his resurrection, showing that those forces are impotent after all.

So, the good news is what theologians call this kingdom of the now and the not yet. Now remember our main idea for the day.

[32 : 08] God's son appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. And in the New Testament writer's imagination, Jesus' victory over Satan was both decisive and still in progress.

It was both decisive and still in progress. Yes, God appeared to destroy the works of the devil, and that work was started and very decisively done in his life, death, and resurrection, and there is clearly more work to do.

Paul writes about it in this way in Colossians 2. When you were dead in trespasses, God made you alive together with Jesus. When he forgave us all of our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands.

He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public spectacle example of them, triumphing over them in it.

And again, this language of rulers and authorities, he's not just talking about like Pilate and the emperor. He's talking about the rulers and authorities over the spiritual realm. Again, Satan.

[33 : 19] The cross and the resurrection then are the means of which sins are forgiven, and the means by which the powers Satan is defeated. 1 Corinthians 2, Paul writes, we do speak wisdom among those who are mature, a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away.

And so you can imagine a Venn diagram of the current age and the age to come, and we are in that shaded spot in the middle of this age is passing away. The rulers of this age are passing away, but the work is not done yet.

But NC Wright compares it to like a football match between two teams where one team has ran up the score, they are clearly going to win the game, and it's the last quarter and the losing team has nothing to lose, and so they begin to play dirty.

The ultimate score is basically decided, we know who's going to win, yet the losing side will not stop fighting. That's the situation that we're in right now.

That Jesus has been victorious, the powers, including Satan, have been defeated, and the final victory is yet to be won, the now and the not yet. And the reason why the final victory is yet to be won is two.

[34 : 41] One, we're called to join the fight, and two, we're called to join the fight constrained by the requirements of love. Because couldn't God just like snap their fingers as an omnipotent creator of everything and make this all go away?

Maybe, but not a God defined by patience and non-coercion and gentleness. So, how do we respond today? Is there a real Satan?

Is he a personal being or just a malevolent force or sort of like an icon that we throw all of our nightmares onto? Walter Wink, a late theologian, writes about it this way.

He says, Beliefs about Satan are a matter of debate. The experience of Satan is a brute and terrifying fact. Now, I say this a lot, but it's like not really my job to convince you of anything.

I'm not up on this stage to sort of like perform apologetics and talk about proofs or anything like that. I think there is a personal Satan, but it's a belief. It's a faith thing more than like something I can like go to a chemistry lab and prove.

[35 : 52] But the experience of Satan, it's pretty darn obvious. There are clearly evil forces in the world. We even experience them today. We can all relate to the hearing a voice of an accuser that says, You're not good enough.

You suck. You're awful. Everyone hates you. Why don't you hurt yourself? Why not just end it? Why not sabotage that relationship? Why not sabotage your life? I, you know, when I was involved in that hyper charismatic group, I used to experience nightmares.

I told you a couple weeks ago that my very mentally ill biological mom tried to like wake up my dead grandmother. And I was present for that as she was like trying to open up her eyelids and all these things.

And so I was like six, seven years old at the time. And for years afterwards, about 10 years afterwards, I'd have these recurring nightmares of my dead grandmother sort of waking up and, you know, you know, yelling at me why we hadn't saved her from the grave.

And so I brought this to my hyper charismatic friends and had them pray over me. And they cast out the evil spirit. They cast out those nightmares.

[37 : 02] And here's the thing. It's not just that I never had that nightmare again. I never had any nightmare again. Like I don't have bad dreams for like the past 20 years.

So there's something going on there. Is Satan a personal being? I'm not going to make a scientific claim about it. But people definitely experience Satan and demons as personal beings.

And we should pay attention to the fact that the more colonized and privileged a society, the more likely they are to dismiss the spiritual and supernatural. The Christianity that thrives in the global South and in spaces less influenced by Western philosophy and thought are still very much experiencing the so-called personal realities of evil.

On the other hand, reducing Satan down to a merely individual personal temptation can also be really all too convenient as well. Again, this is Walter Wink. He writes, there's something sad in the moralistic tirades of fundamentalist preachers terrifying the credulous with pictures of Satan lurking in the shadows.

My mom says that Halloween is a one-night stand with the devil. Coaxing individuals to violate rules which are often satanic themselves and deserve to be broken.

[38 : 21] While all the time ignoring the mark of the cloven hoof in economic or political arrangements that suck the life out of whole generations of people. The media have made a sensation of a few rare cases of possession of teenage pubescent youth with no comprehension whatever of Satan's grip on our entire civilization.

Why should Satan reveal himself more often in individual cases when he can, from invisibility, preside over an entire global culture that spreads out over the whole surface of the planet like a cancer?

A civilization that systematically erodes traditional religions, treats people as robots for producing and serving things, that denies not only the spiritual but even the poetic, the artistic, the inner, that propagates belief in the ultimate power of money, and that organizes an economic system exploitative of most of the peoples of the world and anchored in a permanent war economy.

So yeah, I do believe in a Satan. A Satan that's clearly doing his best to corrupt not just me, but the world.

This is again Wink's definition. Satan is the real interiority of a society that idolatrously pursues its own enhancement as the highest good.

[39 : 38] Satan is the spirituality of an epic, the peculiar constellation of alienation, greed, inhumanity, and oppression and entropy that characterizes a specific period of history as a consequence of human decisions to tolerate and even further such a state of affairs.

But the good news is this. You are of God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Satan is absolutely one worth contending with. The world's systems, Satan's systems, are worth denouncing, decrying, dismantling, and exercising.

And also Satan is someone I am absolutely not afraid of. Ephesians, Paul writes this, for we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Therefore, take the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. I need a theology of Satan because, at least for me, it's far too easy to hate people.

[40 : 54] When in reality, I need to spend much more energy on loving people, even as Jesus says, loving my enemies, so that I can work on dismantling the Satan who thinks that he's still in charge.

Spiritual warfare is the call of each follower of Christ. Spiritual warfare is not merely waving around holy water and saying, in the name of Jesus. Creating a neighborhood and a home and a workplace and a friend group of inclusion is spiritual warfare.

Forgiving yourself and forgiving your friend is spiritual warfare. Calling out and breaking down injustice and oppression is spiritual warfare. Every act of kindness and gentleness and joy and rest and self-compassion, that makes Satan shake in his red pointy boots.

Every movement towards collective liberation, towards freedom and equity and justice, the gates of hell tremble. Every cup of cold water, the thirsty lips. Every just law passed and unjust law repealed.

Every homophobic, transphobic, xenophobic, racist, sexist action prevented or called out and then healed from. That's when you're joining in the work of Jesus to destroy the works of Satan.

[42 : 11] That's when you are joining Jesus in the work of revealing the already present, the already victorious kingdom of God. Where no one goes hungry, no one is left out, and where joy comes every morning.

Thank you.