SERMON 1 PETER 5:6-10 The Devil Made Me Do It **October 25, 2026**

This coming Saturday is Halloween. Now Halloween is commonly thought to have pagan origins, even though it has some Christian background. It is linked historically to the Celtic festival of Samhain (sow-an) meaning the end of summer. In Celtic lore, it marked the boundary between summer and winter, light and darkness, a ritual of transition. By the end of the 12th Century, some elements of Halloween were linked to the festival of All Hallows Evening or the eve of All Saints Day. Halloween arrived in North America as an Irish and Scottish festival, and evolved into an unofficial but large-scale holiday by the early 20th Century.

You may have already sensed that Halloween is not one of my favorite days of the year. While it is a lot of fun for the kids, especially my grandkids who love it, over the past few years I have seen an ever-increasing emphasis on it, and that is disturbing. Did you know that Halloween is second only to Christmas in spending? This year Americans are expected to spend $13.5 billion on Halloween candy, costumes and decorations, an average of $115 per family. I also found some statistics that indicate that 50 percent of the people dress up for Halloween and 42 percent decorate their homes. We have someone near us who started decorating in the middle of September. In addition, more and more people are buying costumes for their pets.

Another gripe that I have with this time of year is that all the TV stations devote two to three weeks to horror movies and scary shows, and this is in addition to the nightly news! You know there's just so much of this scary stuff that a sane mind can stand.

Over the years it has become more secular and more associated with the devil and less with Christianity. And this is the main reason that I am not a fan of this day. Do you believe that the devil exists? I think most people do, but I have met some people who do not. When I was in Grants, the Presbyterian minister told me that she did not believe in the existence of the devil. I found that extremely hard to understand since the Bible constantly refers to the devil and his opposition to God. Dwight L. Moody once said: "I believe Satan exists for two reasons; first, the Bible says so, and second, I've done business with him." So, this morning since the devil is associated with Halloween and some of us have done business with him, let look at what the Bible has to say about him starting with one of the best warnings in the Bible found in 1 Peter, the fifth chapter, verses 6 through 10.

Read 1 Peter 5:6-10

The *Message* paraphrases verse 8 as follows: "Keep a cool head. Stay alert. The devil is poised to pounce, and would like nothing better than to catch you napping." So, who is this creature who pursues us and wants to pounce on us? While he is not mentioned by name in the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden Eden, early Jewish and Christian interpreters have assumed that the snake was the devil. John Wesley also assumed that this was the devil and called him "a liar from the beginning," mixing truth and falsehood together. Someone once described the devil as an artist who paints sin in very attractive colors. Now that's a good way to describe temptation.

Do you remember the temptation story in the third chapter of Genesis? When God created Adam and Eve to have fellowship with Him, He only gave them one rule and that was not to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden. Verse 3 tells us that "the serpent was more clever than any other wild animal that God made." Using a series of tempting questions, the devil convinces the woman that God is not telling them the truth, and that if she eats the fruit, she will be as wise as God. In other words, he plays to her pride, to be like God. As we know both Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate the fruit. In a funny scene, when confronted by God for their disobedience, Adam and Eve start pointing fingers and blaming each other. This is most likely the original source of Flip Wilson's famous line: "The devil made me do it!"

Now the devil has been trying to trick and deceive us since the beginning of time. This Saturday night, children may knock on your front door and use the common greeting "trick or treat" to ask for treats and to threaten to play tricks on those who refuse to give them something. But this morning, let's look at this from a different point of view – not from the knock on our front doors this weekend, but from the daily knock on our hearts. As our text from 1 Peter indicates, the devil is always out there trying to separate us from God. Now the devil has a bag of tricks that include, but is not limited to the lies such as there is no God; there is no judgment day; and one little sin will not hurt you.

But his most beautiful ruse is to convince us that he does not exist. Two boys were walking home one Sunday after hearing a strong sermon on the devil. One of them asked the other: "So what do you think about all this devil stuff?" To which the other boy replied: "Well, you know how Santa Claus turned out. It's probably just your dad."

The *New York Times*, in reporting a survey by the Barna Group, noted a decreasing belief in the existence of the devil among Americans. Two-thirds of Americans do not believe in the devil as a living being. The *Times* reported: "If less than 1 in 3 Americans seem willing to give the devil his due, then that is a result of a fundamental, long-term shift in the nation's religious culture." In a sense, it reflects a decline in the spiritual well-being of our nation – something that really disturbs me.

But the truth is the devil is not imaginary; he isn't something people dreamed up just to try to explain the existence of evil in our world. The devil is real, and the Bible makes it clear that he is a powerful, evil spiritual being who is absolutely opposed to God and His goodness. The Bible doesn't give us a detailed account of the origin of the devil, but it does indicate that the devil originally was one of God's angels, created by Him to carry out His will. But apparently the devil was filled with jealousy and pride, he wanted to be like God. And so, he decided that he would lead a rebellion against God so he could take God's place as the ruler of creation. In Isaiah 14:12-15, we are told: "How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will make myself like the Most High. But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit"

As this passage indicates the devil's rebellion failed, and he was cast out of heaven. Now the devil and those who followed him are fallen angels – no longer part of God's heavenly host, but separated from heaven's glory forever. However, the devil is still powerful, roaming throughout the earth, and will do everything he can to block God's plan for our lives. Don't be deceived; the devil is your enemy, and he will do everything he can to keep you from God.

The involvement of the devil in the story of Job is both interesting and confusing to me. Here is one of the first references to the devil as Satan in the Bible. Verses 6 and 7 of the first chapter of Job states: "One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. The Lord said to Satan, 'Where have you come from?' Satan answered the Lord, 'From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." In the scene recorded here, God summons the "heavenly beings" to a divine council. Among the beings is one called "Satan" or "the Accuser." This word is a description of his function, not a proper name. His role in the court of God is to examine human behavior and report those to the court. In other words, he's a tattle tell, like your brother or sister who was always telling your parents when you misbehaved. And in the story of Job, his goal was to turn Job against God. That's also his goal today as he tries to turn you and me away from God and down his road of sin and destruction.

Now I am not a biblical scholar and there are many things in the Bible that confuse me, and one of those is what is the devil doing in heaven with God and the other angels. Have you ever asked that question as you read this story of Job? As I researched this, one commentary noted that Satan stood before God to give an account of himself. God initiated the meeting, led the proceedings and had absolute authority over Satan. The end result of the story of Job is that Satan's power was limited and God was glorified. Satan does not have open access to God's presence. He is summoned only by God, his visits are temporary, and his time before God is limited. Verse 6 of the first chapter of Job states that "Satan also came with them," indicating that he was an outsider. As the story of Job illustrates, the devil's authority is not absolute for he relies on God's permission.

The devil first appears in the New Testament when he tempts Jesus following Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River. Right after receiving the Holy Spirit, Jesus is led into the wilderness, and for forty days He wrestles with His identity, His ministry, and what His Father was calling Him to do. Now in this story, we must not think that the three temptations of the devil came and went like the scenes in a play, but more like a continuous long battle between the devil and Jesus which in reality never ceased until the cross. Of the three gospels that record this event, the Gospel of Luke is the only one that records that the devil left Jesus until a more opportune time, or as the *Message* puts it: "The devil retreated temporarily, lying in wait for another opportunity." Another opportunity, here Luke points out that the devil was always looking for opportunities to tempt Jesus and hinder His ministry on earth. Jesus faced temptation throughout His ministry and life here on earth just as we do each day; it was not a one-time experience. As our

text from 1 Peter indicates, the devil is also always looking for opportunities to trap us and separate us from God.

Now Peter describes our adversary as a roaring lion ready to devour us. The early Christians would have understood this illustration as they lived under the constant danger of being thrown to the loins in the Roman coliseum. To us it implies that the devil will attack us out of nowhere like somebody in a costume jumping out in front of you this Saturday night shouting "boo." Yes, the devil will come at us all of sudden out of nowhere, but a lot of times, he's more subtle. He's like a fisherman, who throws out a temptation that seems harmless. And we'll nibble at it, take a bite and then he'll throw another temptation, and another one and before long we are hooked. That's why Peter tells us to be alert.

Now if we as individuals have to be alert, do you think this also applies to churches; is the devil in the church? I heard a story about a man who dressed up like the devil for a Halloween costume party. He was wearing a red silk devil's costume with a tail and pointed horns. As he walked to the party, it started raining. He rushed into the nearest building to get out of the rain and not ruin his costume. It just so happened that the building was a church where a worship service was being held. As he ran in, the scared congregation started running out all the exits, except one little old lady whose purse got caught on the end of the pew. As he approached her, short of breath due to running, he tried to calm her down. But she shouted back to him: "Satan, I have been a member of this church all my life, but I have always been on your side."

As this story illustrates, the devil is in churches. While, you don't see someone running around with horns and a tail, there's a little of the devil in each of us and at the appropriate time the devil will use us to stir up trouble and cause conflict in the church. Do you remember what happened when Jesus told His disciples that He must suffer, be crucified and rise from the dead in Matthew 16? Peter took Him aside and rebuked Him by saying: "This shall never happen to you!" Then Jesus turns to Peter and said: "Get thee behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

The devil uses us to create stumbling blocks in the church and obstacles for building God's kingdom. We do this in many ways that we are unaware of, such as by gossiping about other church members, judging and criticizing each other, insisting on having our way, arguing over minor details such as the color the carpet, being bossy. The devil will also use us to introduce political issues and opinions into the church, and distract us from the real mission of the church – loving our neighbors and spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. There are many churches this morning that are divided as they argue over political issues and political correctness. The devil loves it when we run off on tangents and forget our basic mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ.

During my ministry, I have found that the devil will not attack churches that are dying or complacent. But he will focus on those that are growing and doing the Lord's will. Thus, when things are going well, you need to be on the lookout for that prowling lion. That's why I pray

every morning that the Lord will protect this church from the devil. After all, Peter tells us to always be alert!

On Saturday night, some kids may knock on your front door and shout “Trick or Treat.” As the Apostle Peter warns in our text for this morning, the devil will not only knock on the door of your heart tonight, but he will look for every opportunity to try and trick you into forsaking God and going down his path of sin and destruction. So, how will you respond? Will you give in to the tricks of the devil or will you resist him? One way we resist the devil is through prayer; call on the Lord Jesus Christ to protect you and give you the strength needed to resist temptations. Be like Jesus and tell Satan to get behind you. And as Jesus did in the wilderness use the Word of God as your shield and protection. While we need to always be on the outlook for the devil, don’t be afraid; Jesus has already defeated the devil on the cross and the empty tomb. And we can overcome and resist his attacks by calling on Jesus and putting our trust in Him and our Father. This morning, let us all say: “Get thee behind us, Satan!” Amen