

THE PROBLEM AND POWER OF PAIN

WEEK 1 • DAILY BRIEFING 1 • THE ENEMY YOU CAN'T SEE

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

Revelation 21:4

This week follows Sunday's sermon, "The Threat of Pain," from Jesus' parable of the soils in Luke 8. You can watch or listen to the sermon at 1mso.church or on the One Missoula app.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help me understand and trust what You have revealed about the spiritual evil at work beyond my five senses. Keep me from overreacting or walking in fear. Instead, help me use what You have shown me to stand against doubt and temptation in times of trial. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

TODAY'S TEACHING

On Sunday we walked through Jesus' parable of the soils in Luke 8. Before Jesus ever got to the rocky ground, where pain makes faith wither, He named an enemy. The first soil Jesus listed was the walking path, hard ground where the seed sits on the surface and the birds eat it before it can sink in. When Jesus explains it, He does not blame the weather or the soil. He says, "then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved." Remember, the word "heart" in the biblical mind means thoughts, desires, values, and loyalties. This week's Briefings take the soils one at a time, and today starts where Jesus started: you have a spiritual enemy, and he wants your unbelief.

That is a hard sentence for a lot of people to take seriously, and the reasons vary. Some people were raised to trust only what can be measured and seen. Others grew up in churches that rarely mentioned anything supernatural because it felt strange or embarrassing. Still others came out of churches that talked about angels and demons constantly, sometimes far past what the Bible actually says, and those people have overcorrected by avoiding the subject altogether. The goal is not to join a team or to react against one. The goal is to be biblical in your worldview, and Jesus talked about the devil as plainly as He talked about seed and soil.

This matters for a series on pain. Sunday's first category was spiritual evil, and the Bible shows it causing real suffering, from a boy whose father told Jesus that an evil spirit had often thrown him into fire and water (Mark 9:22) to a man named Job, whom we will meet next Sunday. Still, suffering is not the enemy's final goal. Pain is one of his tools, but the end game is to crush your trust in God. A person who walks away from God in grief has given the enemy exactly what he came for.

He rarely gets there by announcing himself. Paul warns that "even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). In a culture that already doubts he exists, he has every reason to stay hidden. When something terrible happens, the thought "God must not care" almost never feels like an attack. It feels like your own honest conclusion. That is what deception looks like.

None of this means there is a demon behind every flat tire. Sunday gave five categories of pain for a reason, and blaming the devil for your own choices is its own kind of deception. Still, ignoring him altogether is a mistake Jesus never made. Paul told one church he wanted to make sure they would not be "outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs" (2 Corinthians 2:11). Knowing his designs is a real advantage, and today's passages show what those designs look like.

READ & MEDITATE

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹²The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

Luke 8:11–12

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” ... ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Genesis 3:1, 4–5

Read both passages twice. The second time through, watch for what the enemy is trying to accomplish and how he goes about it.

REFLECT

Reminder: honest introspection and Scripture-informed self-assessment are far more beneficial than self-delusion and wishful thinking.

Jesus explains the first soil in one sentence, and the sentence ends by stating the devil’s purpose.

1. Fill in the blanks from Luke 8:12: “then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not _____ and be _____.”*

According to Jesus, what is the enemy ultimately after?

Genesis 3 is the enemy’s first appearance in the Bible, and Revelation 12:9 identifies that serpent as the devil. God had placed the first two people, Adam and Eve, in a garden full of good food and given them one command not to eat from one particular tree. The serpent’s first move was a question.

2. In Genesis 3:1, what is the serpent trying to get Eve to doubt?

In verses 4 and 5, what does he suggest about God’s motives?

Pain opens the same door. Grief and betrayal tend to come with questions about God, and some of them sound a lot like what the serpent asked Eve.

3. Think about the hardest season you have walked through. What thoughts about God came with it? Which of them echo “Did God actually say...?” or the idea that God is holding out on you?

Paul says Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Deception works because it does not look like deception.

4. Some people dismiss a spiritual enemy altogether, and others blame him for everything, including their own choices. Which way do you tend to lean, and what does that leaning cost you?

Peter wrote to Christians who were suffering, and he told them, “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith” (1 Peter 5:8–9).

5. What is one belief about God that pain has been wearing down in your life? What does Scripture actually say about that belief?

Do some honest introspective self-assessment before moving on.

**These fill-in-the-blank questions use the ESV text. Your Bible may use different words for the same idea.*

PRAYER

Write your prayer or pray out loud.

MEMORY VERSE

Write or recite Revelation 21:4 from memory.
