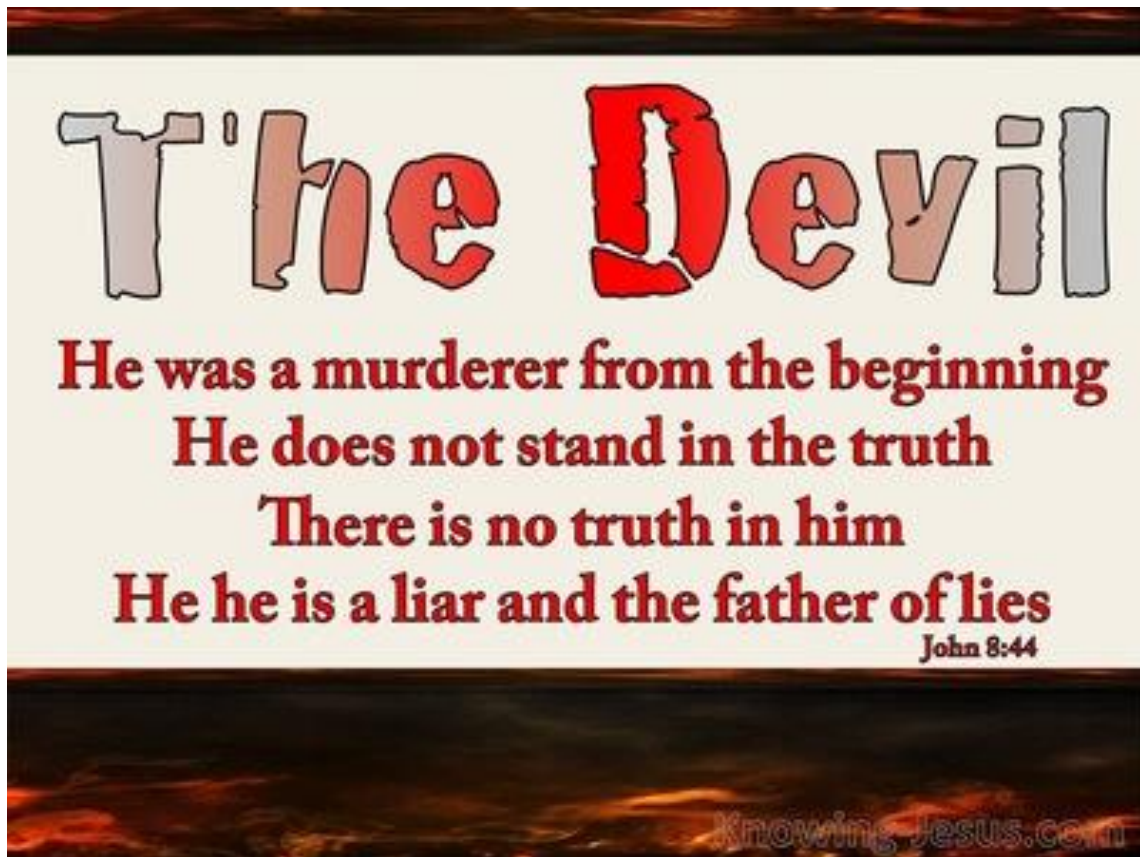


The Lies of the Devil part 4: Exchanging the Truth for a Lie



There is a classic example of lying in the New Testament. We read in Acts, Chapter 5: ¹ But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, ² and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³ But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴ While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God." ⁵ When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last (Acts 5:1-5).

Jesus was not easy on people who lied about God and His Word! He said to the Pharisees who accused Him of being a Samaritan and demoniac, "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

But we, as fallen creatures, have an amazing **inability** to see through the devil's deceptions. We are like children who think that when we put our hands over our eyes, other people cannot see us. So, we think when we do things wrong, we think we can hide them from God.

“The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good” (Proverbs 15:3) and “For my eyes are on all their ways. They are not hidden from me, nor is their iniquity concealed from my eyes” Jeremiah 16:17.

Therefore, one lie Satan “sells” us is that we can keep things from God just as we can keep things hidden from people. That is why confession is not for God’s benefit. The purpose for confession is for us to see ourselves properly, to admit we need help. It is like the A.A. member who says publicly, “Hi, my name is Jim and I am an alcoholic”. It is only after the alcoholic has admitted his condition that he can receive help. So also with us. We must confess our sins to the Lord and He will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

What a beautiful promise. It has no limits. It has no fine print, and it has no expiration (you do, but not the promise). Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world. Believe it, trust it, faith it. The power to believe comes through God’s Word – His word proclaimed, His word combined with the Waters of Holy Baptism, and His Word combined with the bread and wine of Holy Communion (Jesus body and blood in, with, and under the elements).

Another lie that Satan “sells” us is that we can know the mind of God. How many of us really know the mind of our spouses? Sometimes and in some ways we can. Always? You’d be a liar. How many parents know exactly what’s going on with their children when they are out of sight?

If we can’t know everything about our own families, how could we possibly know the mind of an infinite God who spans eternity. God looks at us and sees our entire past, present and future; all our interactions and every possibility. He sees us as both one tiny cell in His body (which is comprised of hundreds of billions of cells), and at the same time sees every hair on our bodies and every thought in our minds. That kind of expansive and yet intimate knowledge of all creation is impossible for us to comprehend, let alone imitate.

That’s where trust (faith) comes in. By His Word and sacraments, He empowers us to faith in His steadfast love and mercy toward His creation through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

A third kind of lie that Satan “sells” us is that God is responsible for bad things that happen in the world. Why did God let this happen to me, or to my loved one, or to the world? God did not create evil; He allowed man to have free will to choose to love God, or not. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Unfortunately, man chose to disobey God. Clearly, we all still fail to keep that first of all Commandments.

This disobedience, starting with Adam and Eve and continuing today is the source of all that is bad in the world – brokenness, pain, suffering, loneliness, betrayal, and death. But God has not forgotten us or abandoned us. He has acted in the world to fix our brokenness and the brokenness of the whole world. He does care. He cares enough to come down to earth in human flesh, to live the life that we fail to live perfectly, to die the death that comes from our sin, and to rise again so that we might be resurrected to new life. This new life will be free from all imperfections, pain, and suffering. Free, free, free at last! It has been accomplished! We have only to wait on Him.