Give No Place To The Devil

Introduction: (Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4:25-29)

A. What’s the big deal about a few termites in your home… a few can’t really do that much damage! What’s the big deal about a small spot of cancer… it won’t harm you unless it grows and spreads! What’s the big deal with a temper tantrum… it won’t last forever! What’s the big deal about a few bed bugs… a few surely won’t harm you or make you lose sleep!

B. No one talks like this. This kind of reasoning is absurd and will result in greater destruction and heartache.

C. But I wonder if we do this with our souls? Is it possible that we fail to take seriously the threats to our salvation, righteousness, spirituality, and fellowship with God? We’d never say, “At little sin never hurt anybody” but do we live as though that were true? We’d never say, “A worldly decision or two never hurt anybody” but do we live as though that were true? The fruit we produce tells the story!

D. Packed within several practical life instructions, Paul issues a warning. He warns us to take the threats to our souls seriously. He warns us about the reality of our enemy. Are we listening? (Ephesians 4:27)

A. The Devil’s Foothold

1. It’s hard enough to do right, but when we fail to take our enemy the devil seriously we make matters worse. We underestimate him despite the warnings! (I Pet. 5:8; Rev 12:9, 12; 2 Cor. 2:11; John 8:44)
   a. Do you believe you have an enemy that seeks to destroy you? Do you believe you have an adversary actively working against you? Do you believe he walks about as a roaring lion seeking to devour you? Do you believe one seeks to overthrow you through deception?
   b. Sometimes I believe this and sometimes I don’t. Sure, if you asked I would always say this is true, but saying it’s true and truly believing its true are two different things. When I really believe it is true you can tell by the way I life. I bear the fruit in my life. I take the devil seriously!
   c. It is like the person who says they know they are going to Hell but they don’t care. If you truly believed you were going to Hell you would care! So you don’t believe in Hell! If I really believed Satan was out to destroy me I would take precautions to stop him from winning!
   d. Illustration: Song “No One Believes In Me Anymore” by Keith Green

2. Paul was one who well appreciated the danger the devil posed. So through his words to the Christians in Ephesus he warned them and all Christians throughout time not to give any place to the devil (Eph 4:25ff)
   a. Get the context: Paul was discussing the kind of life we live in Christ. We don’t pursue a worldly sensual and impure life like the lost do. We are constantly going through a renewal process where we put off the things which aren’t like Christ and put on holiness and righteousness. Each day we grow more and more like Christ. But we face challenges along the way...
   b. Lying, anger, stealing, dishonesty, corrupt talk, bitterness, and the like are footholds, opportunistic cracks in our spirituality, where the devil can get a good grip and set up residence. It doesn’t have to be big acts of sinfulness… small matters of indiscretion are all the devil needs. He just needs us to crack open the door a little so he can stick his foot in and he has us!
   b. The Greek word for place is “TOPOS” It refers to a specific, marked-off, geographical location. It carries the idea of a territory, province, region, zone, or geographical position
   
   ➔ It is from this word that we get the word for a topographical map. Because the word topos depicts a geographical location, this lets us know that the devil is after specific regions and zones of our lives. He is looking for an opportunistic foothold
   ➔ He is after our money, health, marriage, relationships, business, children, desires, etc
   ➔ To conquer our hearts, he must first find an entry point from which he can begin his campaign of unleashing his devilish destruction. What place is he pursuing?
d. This verse tells me that if the devil has a place in my life it is MY CHOICE. The devil cannot force himself into my heart, I have to open the door & let him in. Every day when we choose our friends, our entertainment, our clothes, our activities, our words... we make this decision.

3. Notice the warning from Paul is that we shouldn’t give PLACE to the devil. Paul doesn’t warn us about giving our whole beings over... He warns about giving the devil ANY room! *(Mark 12:30; I Cor. 6:19-20)*
   a. Have you ever heard someone say, “If you give that man an inch, he will take a mile!” Meaning that you can’t give him any leeway or he will take full advantage of you. Isn’t that true about Satan? If we give Satan ONE INCH he will use that foothold to destroy our whole being. Sin is pervasive to corrupt our whole beings. No sin or element of worldliness is inconsequential!
   b. But think about this... Satan doesn’t need to corrupt our whole being. He doesn’t need the mile. All the devil needs is an inch and he has us! We are to love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This means if I give Satan an inch, I am not giving God my all!
   c. My life is supposed to be a SANCTUARY ➔ This Bible concept is from the idea of holy. It refers to SPACE that is sacred instead of profane. It’s a SPECIAL SPACE that is dedicated & not up for common use by just anyone. It can also mean a place of refuge, a SAFE SPACE. So my life is supposed to be God’s special space, dedicated to Him... A space where His presence can find refuge in a world that is filled with ungodliness and worldliness.
   d. Are you a living sanctuary? If so, we will refuse to give any space to the devil in our place! The only one allowed to occupy space in my place is the Lord. It’s His sanctuary... it’s His space

4. When I think about the devil’s foothold, I immediately think about the events that transpired when David chose to sin with Bathsheba *(2 Samuel 11)*
   a. This intrusion by Satan played out in the life of David but it was about something bigger. David was a man with close fellowship with God. He was also the king over God’s chosen people. The devil wasn’t just gaining access into David’s heart, he was gaining access into the nation! The devil was also proving what could happen even to the godly if he was given a place!
   b. It is easy to fault David for things we are not sure about. Why was he not out at battle when he was supposed to be? We don’t know. There’s no reason to think he was on his roof to spy.
   c. What happened to David? How did he come to not only commit adultery, but cover it up, commit murder to keep hiding it, and run from God for a period of time? He gave the devil a place...
      ➔ *(2 Samuel 5:10-13)* ➔ He began to multiply wives. While a common practice, it was not a right practice. He had given the devil a place in his physical passions. Lust took over.
      ➔ There’s no way David was able to maintain his strength, character, dignity and fellowship with God during this time. He wasn’t thinking like God’s man. ...like a spiritual man.
      ➔ Also during this time he experienced unparalleled physical success. It’s hard to keep your head when you are the top dog and EVERYTHING is going great.
   d. Long before David walked on his roof that night, he opened the door and let the devil invade. David allowed the devil to occupy a place in God’s space! It would haunt him forever.

B. Equipping The Saints: Identifying Threats We Introduce

1. As we look to equip ourselves, we need to pay close attention to the specific “PLACE” Paul warns us about Satan gaining a foothold in... our emotions as they are at work in our relationships *(Eph. 4:25-32)*
   a. The devil just needs a small opening ➔ Refuse to let go of old hurts and wounds. Refuse to acknowledge what we did wrong. Refuse to forgive others for what they did. Refuse to stop judging others for their grievances. Refuse to admit we were wrong too. Refuse to say, "I'm sorry" when we're wrong. Refuse to lay down our "rights" for others.
   b. Think specifically about anger... We are told to be angry and do not sin. Anger has a way of causing us to act without thinking. To brew on small things and allow them to consume us. To not let go of minor annoyances. To refuse to forgive. To not want to forgive. It starts out with JUST anger, but it doesn’t end there. That’s the place, the devil’s foothold.
c. Remember Cain? His anger about God’s disapproval of him and God’s approval of his brother Abel was the place the devil gained entrance into his life (Genesis 4:6-7). Cain was no doubt bitter & jealous of his brother & allowed his emotions to get out of control. That’s all Satan needed.

d. Does Cain’s situation hit home? He prospered and I didn’t... People like him more than me... He gets more business opportunities than I do... He was invited and I wasn’t... He got complimented and I got ignored... People want him and they don’t care if I am there.

2. Let’s think about some other ways we allow the devil to gain a place in our space: (I Cor. 10:12-13)

a. When we choose magazines, movies, books, and apps that are filled with immorality, worldliness, sensuality, idolatry, and other forms of ungodliness. We tell ourselves that it doesn’t impact us. But we deceive ourselves. It chips away at our resolve. It gives the devil a foothold.

b. When we choose to surround ourselves with people who are not spiritual... Again we deceive ourselves thinking we will influence them, not the other way around. Their values & ideals rub off. We get worn down in our beliefs. We grow weary of taking stands. It’s a foothold.

c. When we sacrifice our religion for this world instead of this world for religion. It’s just one time we put a ball game first... it’s just one time we skip church because we’re tired... it’s just one time sacrifice worshipping for vacation time... it’s just one time... But it’s a foothold!

d. When we choose to try to get away with as much immodesty as possible. We know it’s a little too tight, too revealing, too low cut, too revealing, too sensual... but it feels good and its popular. We are still holy and righteous, right? Not while we are thinking that way. And it’s a foothold.

e. When we choose to do things that are questionable at best on our jobs. Maybe the numbers need altered a little. Maybe its something the company wants us to do that is unethical. Maybe we are taking advantage of another person. It seems small at the time, but it is a foothold.

f. When we allow the wrong spiritual voices to influence our hearts and minds. They’re great writers and speakers no doubt. We hang on their every word. When they say it right they say it better than anybody else. But when they say it wrong, they also say it better than anyone else. We are wanting to learn and grow, it can’t be a big deal. But even this is a foothold.

3. So what can I do? What can I do to prevent the devil from gaining access? To kick him out when he has?

a. Realize you are at war! War is not easy. War is not pretty. War is not cheap. War is not for the faint at heart. We must be strong and courageous. We cannot underestimate our foe. We cannot lose sight of what is being fought for... our salvation and the salvation of those around us! Take it seriously. Approach every day as a soldier! (Ephesians 6:10-20)

b. Make difficult decisions. Sometimes we need to cut things and people out of our lives because it is what the devil uses to influence us. It is what opens the door. We may have to give up things and people that others don’t. That’s fine. They aren’t fighting my war. (Matt 5:29-30)

c. Fill your life with spirituality. Read your Bible more. Study your Bible. Look for people of faith in the Bible and how they faced evil. Attend as many gospel meetings (revivals) and singings as you can. Invite spiritually minded people into your home. Talk about your faith more. They say idle hands are the devil’s workshop and that is very true! (Hebrews 10:24-26)

d. Take spiritual inventory. Does the devil have a place in your space? Does he have a foothold? What are the sins you are particularly susceptible to? What worldly influences are in your life? Why not make a list and declare war! Kick the devil out. Reclaim your space and dedicate it to the Lord. Be practical & purposeful about steps to take to change (Rom 12:1-2)

Don’t give the devil a place in your space! The only one that occupies my space is Jesus!

A certain man wanted to sell his house for $2,000. Another man wanted very badly to buy it, but because he was poor, he couldn’t afford the full price. After much bargaining, the owner agreed to sell the house for half the original price with just one stipulation: He would retain ownership of one small nail protruding from just over the door.
After several years, the original owner wanted the house back, but the new owner was unwilling to sell. So the first owner went out, found the carcass of a dead dog, and hung it from the single nail he still owned. Soon the house became unlivable, and the family was forced to sell the house to the owner of the nail. The conclusion: "If we leave the Devil with even one small peg in our life, he will return to hang his rotting garbage on it, making it unfit for [Jesus to dwell]." Dale A. Hays, Leadership, Vol X, 3 (Summer, 1989), p. 35.