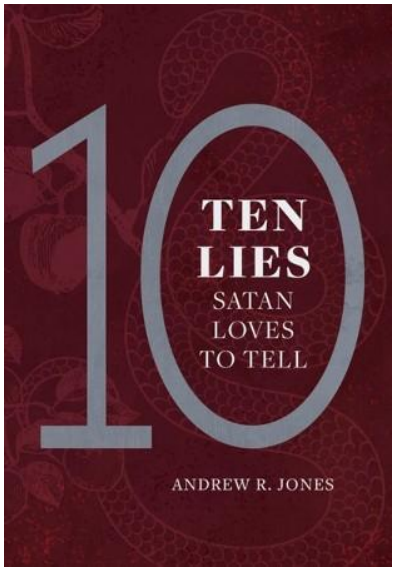
TEN LIES SATAN LOVES TO TELL
ANDREW R. JONES



LIE 5: YOU ARE EXEMPT (THAT DOESN'T APPLY TO YOU) (PP. 92-109)

A professional athlete once came to speak at my middle school. He told us about the incredibly low probability of becoming a professional athlete. Statistically, chances were that nobody in the room was going to play sports professionally. Twelve-year-old me sat there thinking, "Yeah, but that doesn't apply to me."... The lengths to which we will go to exempt ourselves are staggering. Whether it is the silliest or the most serious thing, we try to wriggle out of things applying to us. (92)

SATAN IN THE GARDEN

The lie begins as Satan says to Eve, "You will not surely die" (Genesis 3:4). God had told Adam, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16–17). Satan lies to Eve and convinces her that she and Adam are exempt from God's Word, that the threat of death God proclaimed does not apply to them. But Satan lied. Adam and Eve both die. Satan persuades them that they are exempt from the rule and thereby exempt from the consequence.

Death does not apply to God, so it makes sense that death would not apply to those who are like God.

The temptation to exempt ourselves is rooted in a desire for significance. (93)

SATAN IN THE WILDERNESS

First, Satan says, "If You are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread" (Matthew 4:3). In effect, Satan is trying to convince Jesus that, as the Son of God, He ought to be exempt from any of the inconveniences that humans must deal with.

Second, Satan attempts to persuade Jesus of His exemption from humanity: "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone'" (v. 6). In effect, Satan is saying, "Come on, Jesus, if You are the Son of God, You will be exempt from the consequences of other human beings. Surely gravity is meaningless to one who has angels at His command." (94)

Jesus does begin to show His power almost immediately after this scene. But He does not do so to serve Himself; instead, He shows His power through healing, serving others, and casting out Satan's forces.

SATAN IN THE HEAVENLY COUNCIL

In this case, Satan lies even to God from the midst of the heavenly council. No one is exempt from being lied to by Satan. It is his character, his native language. Remember, being lied to is not a sin. Trusting Satan's lies and acting according to them is where we all make mistakes. (96)

SATAN'S DESIRED OUTCOME

On the surface, Satan wants this lie to produce in us a disregard for consequences. When we believe we are exempt from consequences, we tend to act badly, to sin, to disobey...

Deeper than that, behind the lie that we are exempt is the truth that we are different from others, that we are unique. Satan uses our uniqueness to direct us toward shame or pride. The lie that we are exempt may push us toward inferiority.

...at the same time, Satan uses this lie to make us feel superior to everyone. Satan might tell you that you are better than others, more interesting, more talented, that you are deeper. Such superiority leads us to exempt ourselves from anything mundane that does not make us the center of the universe. (96)

However we are most prone to isolate ourselves, Satan will push us toward such exemptions. If we are prone to arrogance, Satan will push us toward superiority. If we are prone to shame, Satan will push us toward inferiority... Satan's desired outcome with this lie is to lead us into thinking we are at the extremes of being better or worse than everyone else in the world. (96-97)

THE FEAR BEHIND THE LIE

The fear behind the lie of being exempt is that of being without significance or meaning... Satan wants our fear of insignificance to drive us toward seeking significance apart from others and especially apart from Jesus. (97).

What is devastating about this is that you *are* unique. You are a one-of-a-kind, treasured masterpiece. But as Satan pushes you toward uniqueness, he begins to interchange uniqueness for exemption. The uniqueness that each of us has is a wonderful gift, but it is not a gift to be cherished alone. Our uniqueness is meant to bless the Body of Christ, the community of God's people. Satan wants us to find all our meaning and identity apart from Jesus and His people. Satan twists the good gift of our uniqueness into a paradox of superiority and inferiority that pushes us away from others and away from Jesus.

Imagine a large puzzle with thousands of pieces. Each piece is unique. (98)

THE LIE REPEATED IN THE BIBLE

- Ananias and Sapphira: the main facet to the lie is that Ananias and Sapphira believe they are exempt from the community's standards, that they can act differently than others yet take credit for being the same. (100)
- No Longer King Saul: Saul says that the Lord will no longer speak to him. Yet that is not the problem. The problem is that the Lord did speak, and Saul did not listen. Saul was rejected from being king. Saul exempted himself from that Word of the Lord and kept looking for a different word. (101-102)

- The Prodigal Son: Both sons seem to fear they are insignificant. The younger thinks he can find significance on his own with a pile of money. He is wrong. The older thinks he can find significance by his performance as a dutiful son. He is wrong. Both sons have significance in this: they belong to the family, and they are loved by their father. (103)

THE LIE REPEATED IN OUR WORLD

This lie stretches from exempting ourselves from rules to exempting ourselves from bad news and good news. Have you ever thought, "Yeah, but that will never happen to me." We do this with illnesses. Around 40 percent of the population will get cancer at some point in their lives. Yet how many of us have ever considered the truth of those numbers? How many of us have quietly assumed we will be exempted from the possibility of cancer? How many people have assumed that right up until the diagnosis? (104)

While exemption from the rules and bad news is troubling, exemption from good news is far more dangerous. This often happens when we are in a bleak place mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. In such instances, we will begin to expect the worst. When someone tells us we did a good job, we will not believe them. We will deflect and distrust the compliment. When somebody shows us love, we will question it, thinking their actions are a ploy to get something out of us. We will feel patronized and manipulated. We will assume the worst of everything and everyone, even God. In doing this, we inevitably isolate ourselves not only from good news but also from every positive relationship we have. This results in us becoming divided from others and thinking we are superior or inferior to them. Soon, Satan will lead us toward believing that we are exempt from the love, care, and compassion others are trying to show us. And then Satan leads us straight toward Lies 9 and 10, that we are alone and too flawed to be forgiven. (104-105)

THE TRUTH

The truth is that we are not exempt from God's rules. We are not exempt from the bad news that life is full of problems and suffering. We are not exempt from the good news that Jesus loves us, that He died and rose for our forgiveness and eternal life...

But also, the truth is that you are unique. God made you to be you. Nobody else in the entire world is exactly like you. Your contribution to the world, the church, and your family will be different than anyone else's contribution. The truth is that your uniqueness stands together with the commonalities you hold with other people. You are unique, and you are part of a community at the same time. Your commonalities do not make you insignificant. Neither does your significance derive from your uniqueness. But both your uniqueness and your commonalities with others are gifts from the same source: Jesus. Your significance comes from Him. Your identity derives from Him. (105)

GOD'S DESIRED OUTCOME

God's Desired Outcome God's desired outcome (as ever) is the opposite of Satan's. God desires that we recognize that rules, bad news, and good news all apply to us. (106)

THE LOVE THAT CASTS OUT FEAR

This is what Jesus does for us. He comes down to find us when we are lost or angry or ashamed or feeling like we do not belong. He finds us and gifts us with significance by making us a part of His family. Then He chases after us again and again and again to remind us that we are His family and that nothing can separate us from His love. (107)