

# Percolating on Faith | Satan

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

evil, Satan, power, devil, exorcisms, demons, temptation, divinities

## SPEAKERS

Tony Chvala-Smith, Carla Long, Josh Mangelson, Charmaine Chvala-Smith

### Josh Mangelson 00:17

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

### Carla Long 00:34

Hello, and welcome to the *Project Zion Podcast*. I'm your host, Carla Long and today you're listening to what I can only assume is your favorite podcast of all time, "Percolating on Faith," with Charmaine and Tony Chvala-Smith. Hello, Charmaine. Hello, Tony.

### Charmaine Chvala-Smith 00:49

Hi, Carla. It's our favorite one to be with you on.

### Carla Long 00:53

Oh, you guys.

### Tony Chvala-Smith 00:54

Of course, it's *[inaudible]* to be with you on, but it's still our favorite.

### Carla Long 01:00

I'll take it. Let's just say, I'll take it. So, today on "Percolating on Faith", where we talk about all matters of theology and things like that, we are going to be talking about, dun, dun, dun, Satan, the devil, or Lucifer, which I know things about Satan, the devil, Lucifer, but you know, there's this TV show that was on, it was quite popular, like five or six years ago, called "Lucifer", and I gotta tell you, Lucifer was very attractive, very attractive man. Even my husband thought he was a very attractive man. And then, at some point in the show, when he was really evil, he would turn red, and he would have a tail and things like that, and so hopefully, you're going to talk about where all that stuff came from, as well. Because where did the idea of a red devil come from? Or a devil with a tail? Like, where's this from? So, I'm really curious to hear about everything Satan related.

### Tony Chvala-Smith 01:52

There's so much mythology woven into that from all the way back to Babylonian mythology, medieval mythology and so on. So, so, the devil figure is a fly strip for mythology. Let's put it that way.

**Carla Long** 02:03

Just tons of yucky stuff sticks to it, huh?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 02:07

Apparently.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 02:07

Pretty much.

**Carla Long** 02:09

Let's talk about where does the idea of Satan really even come from? How much does the Bible talk about it? Where do we get this, even the whole idea that Satan exists?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 02:18

Great, great question, because there's this common tendency among human beings to believe that whatever they believe is what always has been believed, and that it's probably the right thing, and that all faithful people have always thought the same thing as they do. So, they might be quite surprised to find out that actually, the idea of Satan is something that developed over a really, really long time. In fact, within Judaism, there really wasn't, until probably...

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 02:47

Was in a couple of years, yeah, first century before Jesus, there's, it starts to develop.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 02:48

...first century, yeah, that there's starting to be an idea of a figure that is evil in some way. But before that, the figure ha-satan is, isn't evil at all, is actually part of the heavenly court, and so, it's been a long progression. And so, we'll hopefully be able to help you see what got stuck to the fly strip here is kind of suggesting that this idea. So, it's the development over time, and...

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 03:18

We probably should say right up here, right at the first, that lots of people who are serious about their faith, hate to learn that religion develops over time. The idea that one's religion has developed and evolved and is different from what it once was, sometimes is really discomfoting to people. And that may be because what people want from religion is often stability or certainty or security. The idea that it's a phenomenon, like everything else that shifts and changes through time, is difficult. But actually, with the idea of Satan and the whole idea of the demonic, we can trace out a development. And so, we go back, probably, to the very first place in the Hebrew Bible where this figure comes up is in Job and Charmaine just gave you the Hebrew word, ha (the) satan, (the accuser). And in the folk story that the book of Job starts with, ha-satan is a functionary. In fact, the term is not a name there, it's a title.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 04:11

It's a job description.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 04:12

Right, like bishop. Does that help a little bit, Carla?

**Carla Long** 04:18

Maybe I don't love you comparing the title bishop-the accuser, but whatever. We'll take it. I understand a good metaphor when I hear it.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 04:24

In the folk story, ha-satan is a regular member of the divine court. This is all the mythological imagery of the Old Testament, and ha-satan, and we'll call him a he, it's a masculine term in Hebrew, he has a job. His job is to be the prosecutor, to be the private eye. He's going out sniffing around to look for cases that can be prosecuted, and comes back and reports to Yahweh. That's his job, right.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 04:50

But specifically, his job is to see whether or not people's faith is real or not. It's to say, oh, here's someone, that's, they're just going through the motions? Are they just pretending to be faithful because it'll give them more status in their community? Is this person really what they say they are or not? So, it's a truth finder in lots of ways.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 05:12

So, the book of Job starts with two chapters of a folk story, and ends with a highly modified version of what the original folk story was. But in the two chapters where it starts, ha-satan asks the determinative question for the whole book, that is, ha-satan, in this conversation with God and the heavenly court, God says, have you considered my servant, Job, he's upright, righteous. He's so good. He's so amazing. And ha-satan asks the question: Well, does Job fear God for nothing? Is Job pious because you protect him, because nothing bad's ever happened to him? And so, that's the question. Is Job's faith actually real? It's not an evil question, though in the story, I'm gonna keep saying story, story, story, in the story, God allows ha-satan to...

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 05:58

Test.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 05:59

...to test, to mess with Job, to see if what the answer to that question really is, right. So, that's where the figure really kind of first appears in the Hebrew Bible, say roughly around 500 BCE.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 06:08

And I think another way to talk about that question is, do people love God for God's own sake, and not for what they get out of it.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 06:17

Right.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 06:17

So, that's really one of the big questions of the book of Job. Are people faithful to God just because they can get security or stuff? Or do they love God for God's own sake? That's the testing that's being done by the ha-satan.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 06:33**

We meet this word again in Zechariah, Prophet Zechariah, post-exilic, after the exile.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 06:39**

So, about what year?

**Tony Chvala-Smith 06:39**

And we...so, oh, oh, 400ish, somewhere in there.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 06:43**

400 BCE?

**Tony Chvala-Smith 06:44**

Yes, somewhere. Zechariah is a book of multiple authors, so you have to play with that a little bit. But sometime after 500 BCE, let's say, we meet the figure again, and we especially meet this figure with a slightly modified role in the book of Chronicles. And in Chronicles, Satan is now the one who caused King David to take a census he wasn't supposed to take, right. Now, very interestingly, the chronicler, the author of Chronicles, has in front of him, Samuel and Kings, and so, he's coming up with a new version of the history of Israel. And when you go back to Samuel and read about the census David took, what you're told there is that Yahweh stirred David up to take a census, so that Yahweh can then justify punishing him, right. In the older Old Testament traditions, everything is single causality. God is behind everything that happens. God made David take a census, and therefore could justify a little bit of discipline there. You get to Chronicles, it's shifted. Now we're, say in the 300s BCE, it's shifted. Now it's Satan, it's a different figure. In other words, there's an awareness, there's a dawning awareness that the old single line causality, God is responsible for everything, doesn't work anymore.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 07:56**

And during their time in exile, so 58-...

**Tony Chvala-Smith 08:02**

7 to 538.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 08:04**

...538. I can never remember those numbers. They're not round numbers. Anyhow, during that time, they're in Babylon, and there they're influenced by other religions, Persian religions where Zoroastrianism comes from. And so, as they're coming back to Israel, to Judah, they are bringing with them these ideas of other powers that affect different things, that are helping them to make sense, both of their exile, you know, why would God have let this happen to us? And now they have this other figure that they can start to say, well, maybe this figure, which we now could say influenced David negatively, may also have been some of the cause for why we had to go through this very difficult time, either that

figure being at work in our midst and making us turn away from God, or having some power to mess up our lives.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 09:05

In Persian religion, there's a strong dualism, right. There's a good god, and then there's a not so good God, and they're in kind of a constant conflict, right. And so, that...

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 09:14

The issue is, they're almost equal gods, which is not compatible with Jewish thought. So, but if, they are taking on some aspects of that thinking.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 09:24

But that dualistic view and the idea that there's a lesser god that creates malice and evil in the world, that starts to get overlaid on this older Hebrew concept of Satan as the accuser, who was a functionary of the divine court. But now that functionary is being severed from the divine court, is becoming something different. At the same time, roughly...

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 09:46

Probably because they didn't like the idea of that figure of ha-satan checking over their shoulder to see if they were sincere or not. So, yeah, that one, that's the one that we want blame.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 10:01

So, here's something else. From 500 BCE down to the time of Jesus, there's all these developments going on. We've just talked about a couple. Another one is that by the time you get to, say after 300 BCE, more and more Jewish people are living in Greek speaking areas, and they're adopting Greek culture. And so, by the time you get after 300 BCE, increasingly in those areas, sacred texts from Judaism have to be translated from Hebrew into Greek. So, when Job is translated into Greek, and other places in the Hebrew Bible where ha-satan is, what word do you use in Greek? And the Septuagint translators chose a word that had some negative consequences. They chose the word ha diabolos. Our English word diabolical comes from that, right, diabolos, the devil. And the word means the slanderer, somebody who slanders, obstructs, and so on. It's a negative word in Greek, whereas ha-satan was not a negative word originally. It was just a function, right. So, a number of scholars have noted this and this in particular, what we're referring to, comes from *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. They have a great article in the old one on Satan that helps with a lot of this historical development. So, it maybe doesn't seem like a big shift to go from accuser to...

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 11:18

Slanderer.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 11:19

...to s-, but it's actually a really big shift.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 11:22

Because there's malicious intent when you talk about slander. Someone chooses to intentionally harm, misrepresent, hurt in some way, which is of course, not what the accuser is. The accuser is just saying, hey, are you really what you say? Do you really believe what you say you believe?

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 11:43

Satan is now in the process of becoming the devil, diabolos, right. Now, in addition, Greek culture, Greek thought, used the word daemon, demon, daemon, used that word to refer to lesser divinities that could go either way. They could be good, or they could be bad, but they were just there, and they were not major divinities. In some ways, in classical Greek thought, each person has their own daemon. If you read Socrates, the *Dialogues of Plato*, Socrates talks about his daemon. Sometimes it's like a muse, right. And so, these daemones, these demons were imagined to have different kinds of influence or special powers. By the way, the Greek word for happiness is eudaimonia, right, meaning your inner divinity is doing well.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 12:31

My inner demon is great today.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 12:35

So.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 12:36

Of course, without that necessary, negative connotation that was later put onto the word demon.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 12:43

So, what...

**Carla Long** 12:43

I feel like that would be a great meme for today. Like for today's people, my inner demon is happy today. That's a great new meme. Go ahead, Tony.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 12:52

By the time you get down to the New Testament, demons, they've entirely lost that either/or. They're now entirely evil. They work for ha-satan who is now ha diabolos, now the devil. And this is like this mix of some ideas that have come out of the Hebrew Bible that have been modified in some Jewish circles because of Persian influence and Greek influence. And so then, when you also add in what's called Jewish apocalyptic thought, the original Jewish end of the world thought, that then, makes even more space for these figures. And all of this is in the background when we get down to the New Testament, right, when we get down to the stories of Jesus and the disciples in the New Testament. So, by the time you get to the Gospels, Satan is often portrayed as evil. He's given other names, Beelzebul. Jesus calls him the strong one, right. And the world, at least in some Jewish circles, is imagined as God's power appears to be eclipsed by negative demonic forces, though, in Judaism, God is always permitting this. It's not the Persian two Gods fighting against each other. This is always somehow fitting into God's sovereignty and plan. But this is now part of the mix when you come to the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament. So.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 14:09**

So, you know, when you think about it, whatever century you're in, whether it's the fourth century BCE, or it's first century CE, or it's the 19th century, or maybe even the 21st century, there's all these things that happen in life, and it is human nature to make meaning out of what is happening. And so, people take the pieces they have, and they try to fit them together to try and understand what is happening. And if you have single causality, there's only one power in the world that makes things happen, then God is somehow responsible for evil. If you, as we've been seeing this development of these ideas of other entities that have some kinds of power, usually lesser power than God, but the idea that they might be doing evil or harm or making things chaotic, or hurtful, people will latch on to that, because it's like, oh, my goodness, that makes so much sense. Or, this one person I know, at one point they were like this, and then all of a sudden, they're just completely different. And how does one account for the evil and the bad things that this person did after this? They started out good, and they ended up bad. And so all of these things are at least temporary answers for some of the questions about, why is there suffering? Why is there evil? Why is having faith so difficult? Why is hanging on to faith so difficult? Why is, we would talk about this now, other centuries they might not, why is it so difficult to get out of habits that are addictive? 'Cause it feels like there's a power that is holding me into my addiction, or this pattern that is self-destructive. So, these images of these other forces really helped make a lot of sense for people at different times, about what was happening around them or within them. And you think about times when there wasn't psychology, wasn't psychiatry, there wasn't awareness of mental illness, or of the effect of brain injuries, or of trauma, or PTSD, times when you don't have these explanations, you find other ways of trying to make sense of it. And so, these were ready answers, or ways of starting to try to understand. If God is in charge, how come these other things can happen? And so, this whole, sometimes very complicated idea of what God's power is, and what realms of power the, Satan has, or the demons have, were a way for people to try and make sense, make meaning out of what was happening to them.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 17:00**

As we get into the New Testament then, basically what we have is this whole swirl of influences. And already, by the time you get to Jesus and the Gospels and the Pauline letters, in some parts of Judaism, there's a fairly developed demonology, and a lot of it has folk elements in it too. For example, in the synoptic Gospels, you're going to see exorcisms are part of Jesus' ministry, removing, liberating people from an oppressive thing that, in the text, is inside of them. It's very important to know, we'll come back to the synoptics in a minute, but it's really important to know that there's one Gospel, though, that doesn't depict Jesus as in contest with satanic forces.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 17:40**

Right, right. Mark, Matthew and Luke all have exorcisms and encounters with Satan or the demons. And they're the ones, typically in those Gospels, who know who Jesus is before his disciples even have any inkling of it. But the thing is, in the Gospel of John, there are no exorcisms. So, that indicates that it wasn't necessary to emphasize Jesus' power to show how he had power over demons, or evil, or Satan, that here's a Gospel that says probably the strongest things about who Jesus is, as far as divinity and humanity, but doesn't feel the need to draw in the stories of Jesus' ability to get rid of demons and, and other things. Jesus raises people from the dead and does healings and all of these kinds of things, but there aren't any exorcisms. So, I think that helps us to see that there's differing views, even in the first century, as Christianity is developing, where the sense of these forces weren't

really relevant for talking about who Jesus was. So, that just gives us some more dimensions of seeing not everybody thought the same, and not everybody had that same dependence on using the idea of Satan or demons to explain evil.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 18:59**

Yeah, and, and in John, Jesus can say things like, "I am the light of the world," and so on. His contest is with darkness, which in the Gospel is willed refusal to see what's going on.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 19:08**

Which is people. It's people's ideas that the Gospel of John is having Jesus challenge, not demons.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 19:18**

If we go back to the synoptics, Matthew, Mark, and Luke for a second, there Jesus comes preaching the kingdom of God, the reign of God, repent for the reign of God has begun, its commenced. And exorcisms, as well as healings and feedings and other things, that is a sign that God in Jesus has come to clean out the house, right. In other words, demonic powers are part of what is oppressing people. And so, Jesus' exorcisms are part of the dawning of the reign of God. And, as I mentioned earlier, Jesus refers in one Gospel story, he refers to Satan as the strong man. And in that little saying, he describes himself, he's like a thief who's come to plunder the strong man's house, which he does. He, in other words, freeing people from obsession, from possession, however we want to describe it, was part of kicking the strong one out of the house and taking people back.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 20:11**

Letting new kinds of power rule.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 20:15**

There's that marvelous story, it's in Mark 5 and then paralleled in Matthew and Luke, about the demon called Legion, right. And you have to ask yourself, in the story, when Jesus confronts the man, and confronts the demon and asks what your name is, the demon names himself as Legion, uses a Latin word for a regiment of Roman troops, a Roman legion. And it's so interesting that the demon calls himself Legion, because one of the things we haven't put into this picture yet is, you take all those influences we talked about earlier, and then add into it Roman imperial occupation, often by violence and force, and you've got a mix in which there's a lot of bad stuff that's happening, right.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 20:56**

People's land is being taken away. There's death if you step wrong with the empire. You're paying taxes, high taxes, to be, to be, to have the soldiers wandering your streets and picking on people.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 21:14**

And so, you've got this situation of violence. There is actually an external force now, that has occupied Palestine. And so, the demon, Legion, you know, calling himself Legion is part parody, right. In other words...

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 21:27**

Or political.



**Tony Chvala-Smith 21:28**

Yeah, what's called political barriers, right. It's like, so, "What is your name? Legion, for there's so many of us." And it's like this is true on the political, imperial level, as well as in this poor man. And, the fact that Jesus cast the Legion out and sends them into pigs, this is double parody, right. But I think it's fair for us to ask the question, from our framework, what did that poor man see? What did he experience? What kind of horrors did he watch Roman troops do in his homeland? You can imagine, you can imagine that, and yet Jesus overcomes that and gives him his life back again.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 22:03**

Sometimes that story, the focus is on the number of demons, or that they go into the pigs, or that the pigs go and drown. And then people say, you're messing up our commerce here. Out of town with you. But the amazing thing is that Jesus doesn't turn away from someone that other people thinks has demons. He doesn't turn away from this person or judge them. He goes to them and he brings healing. And throughout the synoptics, the demons are probably Jesus' best selling point. Look what he's done. He has vanquished these evil spirits from people's lives. He's freed them. This was really a valuable thing. So, this story of Legion is really about who Jesus is, and what he's come to do, which is to free us from all kinds of imprisonment, internal as well as external.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 23:00**

So, that's a classic among the exorcism stories in the synoptic Gospels. But of course, we should go right to the start of the synoptics, and to Jesus' temptation, where Jesus has been fasting 40 days in the wilderness. It seems to be in imitation of Israel's 40 years in the wilderness, back in the book Exodus and Numbers. And after 40 days, Jesus is like, super hungry and the devil appears, Satan appears.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 23:24**

Right. Christians have had this tendency, at least in our time, to project it back as Satan is this bad, evil, nasty thing that's coming to test Jesus. But actually, if you look at those passages, and you think about the Job story of ha-satan coming to test people's faith, to test whether or not people's devotion to God is real or not, with no evil intent, I think you will see that the temptation is very much like the Job story. Because there's no threats, the devil coming to Jesus to tempt him, there's no threats against Jesus. There's no evil intent. In lots of ways, I think of the temptation as an entrance exam into Jesus' ministry. What is it that this figure tempts Jesus with? Well, with the big ones that all of us humans struggle with: the desire for comfort, you know, the whole bread to stone thing, for recognition, you would be the king of all these places, and people would know, recognition and power, you would have the power over all these kingdoms. So, these are the three things that are the hardest for people to not be tempted by. And so, here's the tempter, the tester, the prosecuting attorney, who's, who's saying, okay, Jesus, I'm here to help you see, are you ready? Are you ready to leave the desert, and are you going to be able to not give in to these temptations that people really struggle with? Because there isn't any evil intent. I think you'd have a hard time finding real evil intent in the temptation story, but it really is about helping Jesus know, am I ready to begin this ministry?

**Tony Chvala-Smith 25:14**

So, this scene in the synoptics, in some ways, is a throwback to the older idea of ha-satan, but, in a sense, it's not the most common view in the New Testament. There's, the views we've already talked about are. In the Pauline letters there are demonic principalities and powers, right, power structures. You can go to the Pauline letters, and you can have an analogy for what we call structural evil in our time, systemic violence and oppression and corruption. Paul calls that kind of stuff, the "principalities and powers", and gives them a kind of a sense of, that they're demonic, right, that they're, against God's will. But then elsewhere, you can go in the New Testament, like to the book of James. The book of James is really interesting, because it kind of, we'll say, de-mythologizes all of this. I'll give you the two examples. In James 1 the author says, "Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. No one, when tempted, should say, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one." Hear is the key verse; "But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death." In other words, real temptation arises from within. It's not from an external thing. When I am tempted to hyper-eat at a pizza buffet, it's not because some external force is making me. I can't say the pizza smells so good I just must be eating. Oh, no, no, no, it's something within me. It's me giving in. Carla.

**Carla Long** 26:49

So, what's really interesting, though, and Charmaine, I think you may have touched on this, but, you know, the idea, and maybe you're gonna talk about this later, but the idea that Satan does force us to do bad things. Where does that come from? Obviously, it's not from what you've just read. But that overarching view of Satan or the devil, or all the other words you've said, is that that being forces us to do bad things. Where did that come from? And if you're going to talk about that later, I totally understand.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 25:17

Yeah.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 27:17

I don't think we're gonna go into a lot, so we'll just jump in here. I mean, I think there's a number of things. So, we are enriched by psychology which helps us to become self-aware, and we can name that some of these impulses come from within us. But when, when people didn't have that, to be able to say, I have an addiction, then it really does feel like there's an outer power that is making you do something that you can't control. And so, I think that whole idea that we are not in control of this thing must mean that somebody else is. And I think that is an easy place to then give over the power to a persona, a being, because we can't control it, but somebody else must be controlling it. Does that make sense? For people who haven't understood the power of addiction, either at a physiological level where our body wants, needs it so much that if it doesn't get it, it's sick. And then that being there for us, only taking us deeper into the addiction, but that's coming from outside, not being able to see it as somehow built in to who we are. And we've live in a time when there aren't ways of dealing with this, except by guilt, by saying, well, you're just a bad person. You have no willpower. There's something terribly flawed about you, or God doesn't care about you and is not going to help you have the strength to change this. And faithful people who prayed and prayed and prayed for things in who they were to change, and it doesn't. Again, you're grasping. You're looking for ways to explain this. Yes, I love God,

but this addiction has control over my whole being, and when I'm under its control I'm terrible to the people around me or I hurt myself or hurt other people. It's like whatever pieces you have you put together to try and solve the puzzle that you've got. So, and because these ideas have been there, either deeply ingrained in people's belief, or Christian thought, or floating around, kind of transitory, people grab at them because they at least explain things when nothing else can.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 29:41**

And we can say that in the New Testament, there are different, different approaches to this. Some, we're backing up now to the first century, but, for example, James' approach is that look, temptation and evil, they come from inside you, right, so you can't blame it on an external force. There are other texts in the New Testament which do tend to see this satanic power as having pushed people into doing stuff. So, it's a mix. You know, there's no single answer. In the New Testament, it's a nice patchwork. But the thing is it corresponds to reality in lots of ways. You could answer, if you want to be 21st century and use a little bit of Jungian psychology, you could say, where does this stuff come from? Well, it may come from our unacknowledged shadow side in our own personality, right. We have multiple sides of our own personalities, and one is the shadow side that often functions behind the scenes, has lots of power in our lives. So, but it's really important to, for now we'll just say that the New Testament has a variety of different ways to think about these things, and James' way is saying, we have control over this stuff. This is not outside our control. In fact, James 4:7, the author says, "Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you", right. So, in other words, from James' perspective, this is not a power that we can't control. We can control it, right. So, it has to do with resistance.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 30:58**

So, I think one of the things that we would really want to make sure that we say is that we're not trying to dismiss the idea that there is evil in the world, but rather that this figure has a history. And that if there is a personification of evil, I mean, there's lots of cultures and individual's experiences of that, but it's not really as prevalent as one might think, but it's the one that sticks with people, perhaps because it's the one that engenders the most fear, that there's this power that can do something to us or make us do things. We're not dismissing the idea that there is evil, that there are demonic forces at work in the world, but to say that we can name them or understand them or give them horns and a tail, that's really probably at a more mystical level than we can fully describe. So, we're not trying to dismiss some of people's ideas about this, but we do want people to know that there's this long, long history of emerging images of Satan or the devil or demons, or that kind of power at work.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 32:11**

We live in a world that experienced multiple holocausts in the 20th century. We live in a country that practiced race-based enslavement of people for centuries, and then practiced Jim Crow to this day. We can't seem to ever get past that. So, we have to be able to talk about evil. You want to not use the word lightly, but we have to be able to talk about that, because some kinds of human experience, the negativity in it exceeds just falling and skinning your knee, right. There's so much more to it. So.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 32:43**

After talking about a topic, it's like, so what? And what we'd like to do is ask the question, so what? What benefits or dangers do we see in this idea of Satan or evil today? What can we do with it now?

Might seem strange to talk about benefits of it, but I really do think that this is essential. First of all, if we don't talk about evil in our society, then we don't give people options about ways of thinking about it, and understanding themselves or understanding the dynamics around them. And especially for groups or people who have the Deuteronomistic theology that we've talked about, where if you do good, you get good, and if you do bad, you get bad. And so, if bad's happening to you, ha, ha, ha, you're the fault. You know, it's your fault, and God's punishing you, or your actions themselves are punishing you. In those kinds of places where people internalize guilt or shame when bad things are happening in their lives, it really is important that we have this talk about where is evil, because quite often it is outside of us. And it is in some of the things Tony was just talking about: systemic racism, systemic sexism, the fear of the other, fear of those who are different in any way from what we consider the norm. And so evil is embodied, often in systems, in things like white supremacy, and we need to be able to name those. And perhaps the man is Satan. When you think about the struggle against the man, and that is a representative of the systems in our culture that intentionally marginalize and oppress whole groups of people. And so, having this discussion about where does evil come from? Is it embodied? Is it a thing? can help us to say, "Yes. It's this system." It's the incarceration system that is willing to incarcerate people of one color at many times the number of white people who are incarcerated. So, it's all those kinds of things. There's actually two little benefits in there: one is talking about it, and the other is able to recognize and name the evil that is around us.

#### **Tony Chvala-Smith 35:12**

And it's so, so important to be able to do that because I'm going to use some Paul Tillich language, Paul Tillich, the great 20th century theologian. He's one of the few theologians who used the word demonic, he used it symbolically, to describe the very things that Charmaine is describing there. Paul Tillich was forced out of Nazi Germany because he was a socialist and pushed back on the Nazis. And he would say that there are some features of human life and experience that can only be described by the symbol demonic. That is, something profoundly evil has entered the system through human choice, and is corrupting things with lies and deceit, and with the hatred of the other. So, there is a space for that, there has to be a space for that in our theology. We don't necessarily have to think and, in Community of Christ, we don't require people to believe certain things about Satan or the devil. We don't have a statement on that. We leave people free to think that through for themselves, but we do have to be able to talk about evil, profound evil in the world. And what does following Jesus have to do with it? How do we resist that evil in proper ways? And how do we exercise those evils from our societies that really damage people?

#### **Charmaine Chvala-Smith 36:21**

So, those were some of the benefits, now we're going on to some of the dangers, and one of them that is very easy to see is that in a time now, when there's been such a blossoming of psychology and psychiatry and mental health understandings, you know, there've been such great strides made in understanding what shapes people, and in identifying and treating some kinds of mental illness, and of naming societal factors that shape people or twist people. So, we have so much more understanding today about why people do what they do, and where some of those negative things come from that people do to each other or to themselves. And so, we have real science, real data, that can help us understand why, why is there certain kinds of suffering that are tied to evil, or to bad things happening in people's lives, or within their own struggles? So, to not use them, because we're saying, well, they're come from the devil, from something outside of us, and to not then encourage people, help people get

treatment, so that they can have a better life, that they can find some relief from some of the struggles, they can find healing, to prefer the idea of demons and Satan doing these things to people instead of helping them recognize the health benefits that are available to them, that's a danger.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 38:01**

We can't reduce all evil things that happen to social or psychological causes, I don't think, but many things we can, and so those that we can, and where there is healing available for that, whether that's through medication, whether that's through therapy, whatever it is, right. And so, we want to be careful and not to use demon and devil language, because that then ends up disempowering people from taking responsibility for their lives, and for finding actual healing through the means that are available.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 38:30**

Yes. One other danger that I can think of, is sometimes people use the Satan, demon, devil, all that kind of stuff, as like a little power tool. And I've seen this. People with, I would call them overdeveloped theologies of Satan, or the devil, who go to youth camps and scare kids. Carla is reacting like so many of us who have been to youth camps where someone is all of the sudden, you know, I saw the devil last night after campfire, and gets everybody all stirred up and afraid and anxious. And for some people, they seem to think that if you make Satan more real and more present, than people will be driven into Jesus' arms. But what usually happens is that people at a camp kind of setting, more people end up focusing on Satan than on Jesus' love. And that kind of gets lost in it all. So that's another danger is that sometimes the emotional, spiritual drama that people can build on can really be dangerous to people who are vulnerable, who are seeking God's love, and instead finding something else. So that's another of the dangers I would say. We had an administrator back in Michigan, Gary Beebe, who was once asked a question about, I need a definitive answer about the devil. Is he real or not? And, the questioner was being very emphatic that he needed an absolute answer. And, and Gary basically said, we need to be careful what we're giving our attention to. And he said, if you're going to be obsessive about Satan or the devil, then that's what you're making space for. That's what you're making room for? Is that what you want to be the prominent focus in your life? Or do you want who Jesus is, what God is doing in the world to be the focus? He said, the thing you focus on is the thing you give power to. And I thought that was so helpful. When we go back to the Gospels, even the synoptic Gospels with all of the exorcisms and the demons and all of that going on about, the point is to draw attention to God's power, to the love and the healing that Jesus brings. In all of these settings, who Jesus is and his presence, vanquishes these forces. And I think that's the message we can take, is that the power that we have in Christ allows us to trust that love, forgiveness, hope, peace, supporting each other, community, that these things are stronger than fear and evil and struggle.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 41:24**

So, there's so many other places we could go with all this, but we think we'll bring it to a close there, Carla. We've had a nice romp through the satanic woods here for a while. But yeah, I think it's just so important to recognize that, in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, God's struggle with evil is not some kind of eternal, everlasting, ongoing struggle, that there's an imagined Omega point where evil is vanquished. That's really important in Christian theology, and really important for those of us who are trying to resist the forms of evil we see in our world, to know that, even if we don't succeed in our own time, Easter is the guarantee that, one way or another, evil will ultimately be vanquished.

**Carla Long** 42:05

And what a beautiful place to end. That is wonderful. Thank you so much for all that cool information about all the different names for the devil and where they come from. It is fascinating to me how things just continue to develop over time, and even now, they're still developing. I guess it would be pretty boring if things never got to be in a set place. So, thank goodness that's never gonna happen.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 42:29

Well, I, and I think that that's a good point. Because, you know, we know a lot of young adults who kind of have clumped together Satan and the devil and hell. They're saying, we don't understand. We don't believe in that. If God is good and loving, then these other things, they're not real. So, I think it's kind of interesting that there are some people in a new generation who have a different set of beginning points to understand, where does evil, where does suffering, where does pain come from? And they don't see that, that there has to be these figures, this personified evil in order to trust or to follow Christ, to find ways where love makes a way.

**Carla Long** 43:15

Well, thank you so much, you two. As always, it was wonderful, and I learned a lot and I'm just so grateful for you sharing your knowledge with us all the time.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 43:23

We're just glad to get a chance to talk to you. But also, it's fun exploring people's questions and trying to put some kind of organized thought to it, sometimes more organized than others.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 43:33

And believe it or not, it was fun exploring Satan briefly.

**Carla Long** 43:38

I have no doubt. With you, two, most things are very fun. So, thanks again.

**Josh Mangelson** 43:51

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