



“Alright girls, pool time’s over. Boys’ turn now. Go ahead and dry off.”

Molly stepped out of the water. She felt it trickle down her body, drip from the fabric of her bikini. It was cold.

Molly stepped away from the pool, turned around. She blinked, readjusted her eyes. She saw all the girls walk to the towel racks, drying off their bodies, stretching T-shirts back onto themselves. Once each girl got on the shirt, they were able to walk back across camp. Next to them, Molly saw Heather standing, looking directly at her.

Molly went to the towel racks, dried herself off as much as she could. The water was still on her, was still cold. She lifted her shirt from where she had left it, put her head through the collar. She pulled the fabric down over her bikini, or attempted to; where the water was on her, the shirt stuck and clung, awkwardly stiff against her body. The fabric was rough against her. It felt like hands squeezing her into a shape.

She stopped pulling. She blinked, eyelids fluttering. She looked up, looked at the other girls. She searched for what had changed but could not find it. Something had, though.

Molly looked down at her hands, still holding the shirt. They didn’t look like her hands anymore, although she didn’t know whose they were. She watched them release the cloth, spread away from her body, then turn their palms upwards. It felt like a demonstration, but she didn’t know what of.

When she looked up again everything was blurry. Nothing looked like it was supposed to anymore. And the water was still so cold on her body, colder than usual, colder than she thought possible.

Her shirt was still only half-on. She turned around and looked at Heather, whose face was lost in a glittering cloud. Much like everything else was.

...

Molly was not wearing the shirt. Molly was not wearing a shirt, or shorts, or a towel. Molly felt dirt beneath her feet.

She opened her eyes.

She was looking at the abandoned cabin. Its door was ajar.

Molly blinked. She turned, looked around her. Beside her the lake trickled quietly. The sun was just beginning to descend.

Camp Havenside

She did not know how she had gotten there.

Molly turned back around and there were people stepping out of the cabin. She gasped, went back a little, then steadied herself. It was two boys, peeking out timidly from the darkness of the cabin. They looked at her with something strange in their eyes.

“You ready?”

Molly looked at the one that had spoken.

“Ready . . . for what?”

Neither one replied. They looked down at the ground, cheeks reddening. They shuffled nervously.

Molly looked down at her body. She was wearing just a bikini, skin still wet with pool water. But it didn't seem to be as cold anymore.

She looked back up, and once again everything was shimmering. She felt her hand raise, felt her fingers fumble at the straps of her top. The boys looked at her again, came closer, or she came closer to them. Closer to the darkness of that cabin.



Sam's fingers formed a steeple pressed against his lips.

The sun was setting. Wind rustled quietly through the trees. The red paint of the picnic table where he sat was peeling. Beside him, campers walked to the dining hall.

"Do you know what it is tonight?"

"I texted him the other night, but . . ."

"Then Thatcher just spiked it right over me!"

"Not a wasp, was a locust or something."

"It doesn't matter, we're all gonna be so burnt by the end of this week."

There were voices. There were so many voices.

Campers talked. Counselors talked. Preachers talked. Hymns talked. The Bible talked.

The camper walked all past him. He saw Grace among them, glancing at him, glancing swiftly away.

God didn't talk.

Sam turned to his phone. Seven-thirty-two. Dinner was likely already served, with evening worship to follow. Hymns, a sermon. The word of God. Calvin's voice, Dennis's voice. Repeating verses and lessons and quotes on behalf of God—but what of Him? What of the Voice that was yet to be raised, the Image everyone seemed to want to speak on behalf of, but that never spoke for Itself? What of that face, looking down from steeples and paintings and statues, from the covers of books and from imaginary conceptions? What of that One who loved, who so loved the world that He gave His one and only son, who loved Sam enough to die for him but never enough to talk? What of Him?

"Alright . . ."

Sam closed his eyes. He stood up from the table, lifted his head up straight. He opened his eyes.

"Let's hear You talk."

Camp Havenside

Night was falling.

The water of the pond became still, dark. There were no ripples on its surface. In the darkness, the sickly green shades of its water were not visible. It blended into the night, where no one could see it. No matter how hard they looked.

The grass grew crisper, firmer. In the death of sunlight, a faint chill became manifest, and blades of grass were sharper. But it was not felt by the campers. It never was. They never seemed to notice it as they wandered between branches and leaves as if the forest were their own Garden to tend. But it had never belonged to them. Nor to god.

The hum of locusts rose in the air. As the night became a deep black, it ceased, leaving behind the sound of something else. The sound of something suffocating. The sound of something dying. The sound of something trapped inside of Something else.

The stars gleamed down from above, but in the forest they were not visible. There was always Something blocking them. And when that Something blocked them, they ceased to be real, as if the Thing covering them were more real than they had ever been, consuming their dead light in the darkness of Its silhouette. A silhouette that lived, moved, walked the night with heavy footsteps. That walked among Its camp. In search of someone.

And as the colors of the forest changed, the warmth of sunlight withdrew from Camp Havenside.

God is good!

All the time!

And all the ^{repeat}time?

God is good!
always repeat

Wonderful. Let's be seated.

How are we doing this Wednesday evening, Camp Havenside? That's good . . . that's good . . . Now as you know, we've covered quite a few wills thus far, right? We've talked about what 'will' even means to begin with. We've talked about the will of the world, and the will of the Church. But it can't be denied, there is one will that we haven't touched on yet that, in my opinion, ^{don't even} has to be talked about if we're to understand how we operate our own will. I think we need to evaluate where the will of us Christians factors in with the will of the Devil.

Now when I say that name, what comes to mind? What do you think of, hm? I mean, I don't know about you guys, but just hearing that name, 'the Devil' ^{man's conception of him} instantly ^{all he is} makes me think of all these horror-movie images, like people, y'know, walking on the ceiling, girls with their heads spinnin' round, all that stuff. But let's talk about the Devil. Right? Let's talk about who he was, who he is. Because in general, we Christians know him as this tempter, accuser, deceiver; we know him as the big bad monster with horns who rules over Hell and wants to ^{trinity} make us stray from God's path—and you're like, 'uh . . . yeah, Calvin, duh.' Because that's obvious, right? That's very much who he is. But I don't think a lot of us know much about him past that point. I don't think a lot of us have read and studied up on what makes the Devil, the Devil—and that's because frankly, there isn't much to study. There isn't much in the Bible that tells us of Satan's origin or past, but there is ^{bite at my heels} . . . a little. ^{depending on chapter} *Old Testament, Greek, have to be*

Isaiah chapter fourteen, verses ^{there it is} twelve to fifteen, offers a key description. It says,

How you have fallen from heaven,

morning star, son of the dawn!

You have been cast down to the earth,

you who once laid low the nations!

You said in your heart, ^{Babylon}

"I will ascend to the heavens;

I will raise my throne

Camp Havenside

above the stars of God;
I will sit enthroned on the ^{lights you can't see anywhere but the wilderness} mount of assembly,
on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon.
I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High."
But you are brought down to the realm of the dead,
to the depths of the pit.
pit

So that's Old Testament. And then in Luke chapter ten, verses eighteen through twenty—New Testament—^{disregard, then} Jesus says, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from ^{new} heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the ^{Eden} power of the enemy; ^{nothing} nothing will harm you."
^{nothing} nothing at all?

So, what theologians have generally interpreted from these two verses, and from the Greek translation of "morning star" is that Satan, once called Lucifer, was an angel who sought to be higher than God, ^{bearer of light} right—to 'ascend to the heavens, and raise his throne above the stars of God, to make himself the Most High'—but instead, was punished by God, and cast down into ruin. And there's quite a few sources, including John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, that depict Lucifer as ^{remain there on the ground without needing} having felt slighted or refused by God, choosing then to rebel against him.

So think about that for a second; Lucifer was an *angel*. The *Devil*, was an *angel*. His name, Lucifer, translates to 'bringer of light.' He was an angel under the command of God, and even *he* could fall to sin—and not just fall to it, but become the very *embodiment* of sin. And we can debate, and theologians can debate if he really was an angel, if he was really thrown out of heaven like that, but personally, I think that that is the most helpful way to think about Satan. It's the best way for us, as Christians, to think of him, and here's why:

Before Lucifer became Satan—literally, 'adversary'—he was just an individual who committed sin. He was a person—an angel, admittedly—but an individual who committed the sins of pride and envy, *just* like you, and me. Right? He was just like you and me. ^{me?} What the Devil did to earn his name—and to earn God's wrath—was something you and I do every day. And if you're thinking, 'oh, Calvin, I don't know about that, that's a little dramatic,' or maybe you're thinking 'well, surely not me, right? There's no way he's talking about me.' I'm sorry, I gotta level with you: I am talking about you. If you're thinking that ^{please} right now, it's my responsibility to tell you: I am talking ^{then talking about everyone, unless it's} about you. I'm talking about you, about me, about every single one ^{is this God talking} of us in this church family. Every one of us is **is this God talking**

perfectly, *perfectly* capable of sin, of pride and envy—heck, I probably committed those this morning. I probably committed both of those since the start of this sermon—the start of this sentence. Right? We all have sinful natures, that's nothing new, but think about what motivated that sin of Lucifer's. Sources differ, but one thing carries through them all: he took issue with God. He felt confined by God's superiority, envious of God's love for Mankind, and he used that anger to justify his sin.

dear Lord
as have I
please no
oh God
oh God please no

Quick show of hands: who here has ever felt envious of another person? Hm? Who here has felt like you had some kind of frustration, or anger, toward God? Who here—and this is a big one. This is a big one, guys. Who here has ever felt *abandoned* by God?

I've seen that end some people's faith journeys, guys, I'm not gonna lie. People who have felt abandoned, felt left behind, felt like God was just being plain *silent*. That's how Lucifer felt—that's how the *Devil* felt. And sometimes those people fall away from the faith because of it. Just like Lucifer. *this is God talking*
please no
the pain of thy enlightenment
thy tongue is as a sword

But is that what we're gonna do? Are we gonna be like Lucifer and let whatever issues we have with God make the final decision? Are we gonna blame—gonna try to justify—our sins, whatever they may be—maybe it's letting yourself become jealous for God's attention. Maybe it's looking at a person's body with lust in your heart—boys, maybe that's you. *what have I done*
no
I promise never again, dear LORD I'M SO SORRY
I confess

Whatever the sin is, are we really going to justify it with some issue or frustration that we have with God—with the Almighty, all-powerful, Jehovah! And we, we these tiny little people on a tiny little planet that He created and died for—we're gonna let our issues with Him be the thing that ends our faith? That's exactly what the Devil did, and guys, I'll be honest—it scares me just how easily one of us, many of us, or all of us, could do the exact same thing. At the end of the day, I'm not scared of the Devil possessing one of you and tormenting you in a demonic way. I'm scared you're gonna end up like him, because it's way easier than anybody ever thinks. *dear God, I confess*
how I looked at her, at her body, her bend
COUGE IT OUT
a vapor breathing, am I
I want to but We Ak LiTtLe SiNnEr
His blood covers me
have mercy
WEAK LITTLE SINNER
one of us
one of us
WHAT HAVE I DONE

But the thing that Lucifer missed is the thing that we, all of us here, as followers of Christ and Christian brothers and sisters, need to remember. Need to remember above everything else, and I hope you all hear me when I say this: What Lucifer missed is that we should feel inferior to God, because we are inferior to God. God's superiority is infinite, that much is a given, and it seems real obvious, right? But if we don't remember that fact, if we don't hold that fact close to our hearts at all times of the day, we could end up falling just as far as Satan did—and let's not forget, right? Let's not forget what God does to Satan in the end. *I'm sorry dear God I'm so sorry*
please
please tell me
always remember
PLEASE DON'T

Revelation chapter twenty, verse seven through ten, I'm sure y'all recognize these verses. It describes how Satan will go out and deceive the nations, and gather them for battle, but will be thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. That's the punishment Satan can look forward to—but what about us? God doesn't wait any time, He does right into it with us sinners in the very next verse, verse eleven. *PLEASE DON'T*

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from His presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead great and small standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged

according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hell gave up their dead. And they were judged according to what they had done. I will be like of fire. I be lake of fire, the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

There you have it guys, God sends us to the lake of fire, the exact same lake of fire, right in there with the devil—and let's be honest, guys, why shouldn't He? Hm? Sounds harsh, I know. But guys, I say this out of concern. Out of concern for you, and your souls, and your faith. It is because it scares me. It keeps me up at night. To think that **YOU OR FAITH** could fall prey to the same trap as Lucifer, and end up in there. But if we're going to make ourselves like sin and pride and selfishness, if we're not going to offer Him the love and devotion and love that He created us for, then He's not going to accept the grace He has offered us through the death of His Son. **WHAT HAVE I DONE** if we're going to keep throwing His love away, every single time He tries to extend it to us.

Guys, sometimes I wonder: How many times? How many times are we gonna reject Him before He's just fed up with us? I mean, wouldn't you be? How would you feel if every time you reached out to someone, that person just turned their back on you and left you sitting there in the silence? If they refused your love, over and over and over again.

Amen that our God is merciful. Thank God—and I mean it literally—^{it hurts} thank God. Thank God because He will never, never ever, never give up on you. ^{amen} It doesn't matter what you've done. All He wants is to love you, but it's up to you to step up, to repent and accept that love, to let His grace cover you, to go down in those waters to prove your faith in Him. ^{dear Lord I'm so sorry} Submit yourself to God, not to the past failures of an old liar, and he will flee from you. ^{I will} Because if you don't resist him, if you let yourself fall prey to the same pitfalls as he did, then you're no better than him. ^{king of fools} So what makes you think God will treat you any differently? Just look at verse fifteen. ^{i'm not} God loves you, He loves you in higher infinities than our inferior human minds can even begin to comprehend. ^{but He is} His love for you is boundless, eternal, all-encompassing, so great that He will always take you back if you repent and choose His grace over your sinful self. ^{my Lord} but never forget, guys. Never forget that He once loved the Devil, too. ^{my Savior, my beautiful, wonderful Jesus} ^{i will, i finally will}

*There's a stirring deep within me
Could it be my time has come?
When I see my gracious Savior
Face to face when all is done*

“I just . . . I-I, I feel really s-scared . . . I'm scared to go up there . . .”

*Is that His voice I am bearing?
Come away, My precious one*

“M-my parents told me it was the right thing, that it was what I *had* to do, but I-I just . . . I, I don't want to tell everyone, it's really—”

“You have nothing to be afraid of. We're all sinners, we all struggle with something. Trust me, it'll help you move past this.”

“ . . . I don't want to . . . I really don't want to . . .”

Is He calling me?

“Please don't make me do it!”

Is He calling me?

I will rise up,

“There's nothing to be afraid of, Tristan. God forgives, Tristan, He will always forgive. But it'll help you feel better if you confess it—that's why your parents are making you do it. All this guilt, this shame you're carrying, it'll all go away. Everything you're feeling right now will get better.”

“ . . . will it really?”

“Yes. I promise.”

Rise up,

“ . . . okay . . . I, I guess I'm ready.”

*And bow down
And lay my crown
At His wounded feet*

With holy tears blurring his vision, Sam saw it all clearly.

Within him his soul reviled. Scales fell from self-imposed blindness. Cerements of the dead fell like fig leaves from his flesh, and the rot filled his nostrils like a plague. A seraph bowed to save his soul at the expense of everything else, and aimed the golden scythe above him. He shut his eyes as hoarse and agonized hymns escaped him before the blue screen of worship, and he felt the holy blade's insertion between halves of his skull. Self-pities and apathies crawled like ants amid the gray matter—he felt the sweet, sweet angelic agony rack them out with the portions of him they had defiled, cleaning his self out from who he was, and enlisting what was left—the true him, the holy vessel, the empty jar of clay he was created to become—into the legion of the Lord.

And the bodies, those bodies, her body, the bodies he had looked at with eyes made of filth—they stood planted in the garden of his mind like Christians blazing at the stake, things of beauty and youth and purity tortured to light the garden of his base, unclean flesh, bodies seared by the burning of his shriveled loins. With his eyes he had abused, dehumanized, molested their gorgeous, innocent faces, pleasing to him as sacrifices in his name, a name that now tasted bitter in his mouth, his mind, his body. He hearkened over him in the chanting hymns a call, as God's call to Jeremiah to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, and his skin trembled over his bones. A flaming sword awaiteth him.

Him and his obsession—him and his fear—always him and something else because there beeth no use in him alone, fractured vessel of what could have been a man, ramshackle descendant of dirt half-assembled, anathema come to be desecrated by the Lord Himself—thou lacketh the capacity to comprehend thy own incompleteness. Holy ears are deaf to thee, but now thou seest true—for what ear owes you any regard? Truly blareth before thee now in ink-lain letters, carved into thy heart with the bladed tongue of Jesus, of Jesus Christ, of the Holy Savior, Messiah, Yahweh, Elohim, Jehovah Jireh, Immanuel, The Lamb of God, Prince of Peace, King of Kings, Alpha, Omega, He who sitteth on the throne of Zion, He whose sandals Sam not fit to stoop down and untie no matter how many verses compiled, hymns stacked one upon another in laborious praise, tears and blood fall solemn on soil of his own failure that something might one day grow—

Camp Havenside

—vanity, all vanity! Thy semen spilled on the ground, spilled yield sin and conceit. Repent—repent before Holy Lord Messiah, Elohim. Freed by blood Jesus, drink be made holy. Lick dust of the earth. Holy spit in eyes. Praise be to Him, take the flesh my Lord! Liberate from sin, from self. Flesh rot while standing on feet, eyes rot in sockets, tongues rot in mouths—oh the bliss of this glorious thought! Belong to our God, forever and ever and never and ever and every blessing to praise! Break me make me like You, break me and use my body unto glory and glory—level me to dirt from born was I! Hearken all who know Him not, let ears

“Hey, um . . . hi . . . m-my name is Tristan, a-and I . . . I . . . I have something to confess.”

Freshman . . . brought out . . . brought out . . . onto the stage . . . onto the cross.

“I . . . u-um, I . . .”

Speak . . . cry out to Him in a loud voice . . .

“I . . . I-I-I c-committed the sin of . . . of lust . . . a week ago.”

Give it unto God. Let God put His mercy on you.

“I . . . b-b-b-because I . . .”

Look to the sky. Look Him in the eyes. Let Him hold your face.

“I w-watched pornography . . . and I . . . touched myself, touched my . . . my body . . .”

Love . . . all the love . . . the love spilling from his side . . . love pouring from his mouth, from his words . . . his tears . . .

“A-a-a-and I . . . I pleased myself w-while watching it . . . I looked at a woman’s body w-with . . . with l-lust in my heart, and I know it was wrong . . . I

know it was a sin, and I'm r-r-really, really sorry, God . . . I'm so sorry I d-did it . . . I'm so sorry I hurt You . . .”

Beautiful . . . the beauty in his tears . . . spilling from his eyes, from his skull . . . what beauty . . . what a beautiful gift offered up to Jesus . . . what a beautiful day to follow God . . .

“I'm so sorry . . . p-p-please forgive me, God . . . I'm so sorry . . .”

Oh the glory, glory glory unto You . . . praise—! worship be at Thy feet my Lord . . . worship always unto You, unto the Holy One, the One who is above all . . . holy, holy, holy . . . is the Lord God Almighty . . . who was, and is, and is to come . . .

Dennis took the stage.

“Praise God, amen? It's nights like these that I know God is near us, and that the . . . the Holy Spirit is moving among us. Isn't that wonderful, think about that. The Holy Spirit is among us. Right now. Right here as we speak, it moves among us still, making its home in all of our hearts. Are we going to accept that Spirit? Are we gonna do like Calvin said this evening, and accept God when He reaches out to lift us up and heal us from our broken state, or are we going to walk away from Him again? I encourage you, brothers and sisters to think about that, as we go off to family time.”



*As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good old way
And who shall wear the robe and crown
Good Lord, show me the way!
O sinners, let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
O sinners, let's go down
Down in the river to pray*

Camp Havenside

*As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good old way
And who shall wear the starry crown
Good Lord, show me the way.*

Sam would be baptized. Sam would rise from the waters, clean. Never again would he run out into the woods with a woman and lose himself in godlessness. Never again would he let his body dictate his eyes, and his eternity as a result. Never again would he look upon the gentle ponytail, the humble wiry frame, the conscious brown eyes. No, as for Sam and his household, he would serve the Lord.

“ . . . guys . . . wait, guys, where is Shane?”

“Do you know where he is?”

“ . . . guys, seriously, where is Shane . . .”



Malcolm stared at the floor of the nurse's office.

...
...
...

PRAISE!

His head whipped up. He looked at the closed door of Judith's room.

"Praise thy name, sweet redeemer of flesh, saintly deliverer of life!"

Malcolm scrambled up, opened the door, and turned on the lights.

Judith's arms were stretched out to the sky as in embrace. Astonishment lay warm on her face, pooled in small tears running down her temples. Her mouth was ajar.

"Thy hand is sovereign over your children—for who can deny thy blessed name? Who can deny thy Spirit in our restless bodies like sanctified temples to thee, my beloved, only to thee! Thou art our Lord; from the grave of our defiled selves thou hast risen! It is from our blood, spilled by the sword-edged tongue of a false idol, then raised up as a gift to appease it, that thou art born, among us, come to save us, come to reclaim us, on this very night! *Praise! Praise!*"

"Judith!" Malcolm shouted. "Wake up! Judith, *wake up!*"

Malcolm shook Judith's shoulders, slapped at her face. A warm stream found his elbow. He pulled the sheet from his daughter and examined her body. Colorless fluid burst from her vagina.

"Thy salvation is imminent! See, thy praises are sung in the forests and in the cabins! We are ownership to thee, and thou shall hold us forever in thy kingdom! On this blessed night, thou wilt repossess another lost child—verily, you approach him now, as I speak, for he has lost his way from you; I rejoice, I dance and sing for joy, and offer up to thee one more! I give thee all my remaining days, for I am thy servant—*thou art my master!*"

Laughter quaked her half-soaked body.

"Judith, snap out of it! *Judith, wake up, goddammit!*"

She could not stop laughing. She could not hear her father.

"Nurse! *Nurse, get in here!*"

Malcolm continued to shake Judith's body. His voice began to sound like begging. All the while there continued the ragged laugh, cracking and strident, like something inside of her was screaming.