

YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL

By

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With reluctance I give the least bit of publicity to the devil. But millions of believers today seem to live in a sort of fool's paradise, almost totally ignorant of the realities of the condition that exists. For we are not called unto a happy playground, as many religious hucksters would have us believe, but we are committed to the grim battlefield of mortal conflict against a foe that terribly outnumbers us. The least we can do is to know something of our "adversary the devil" (I Peter 5:8).

The Bible has a great deal to say about angels, and the devil. The chief work of the devil is to deceive man, and in this he has demonstrated his skill by convincing man that he—the devil—has no real existence. This being accomplished, he proceeds without much resistance.

But if Satan's reality is denied, then the Scripture is denied, and Jesus was Himself deceived, for He recognized Satan as a real being, with personality and superhuman intelligence and power. Scripture teaches that Satan was an archangel with superior abilities who led a host of angels in rebellion against God and was expelled from the celestial environment to set up headquarters on earth (Gen. 3:1, II Cor. 4:4, Job 1:7, Eph. 2:2, 6:12, Luke 10:17–18, Isa. 14:2, Ezek. 28:12). The Biblical names given the devil indicate personality; Satan, deceiver, liar, murderer, accuser, tempter, prince, Apollyon (Destroyer), the evil one, Beelzebub, old dragon, adversary. These names disclose the nature of a rational moral being. His works are defined as "wiles" (Eph 6:11), "devices" (II Cor. 2:11), and "snares" (I Tim. 2:24) and experience proves that one must be constantly on guard against his intelligent and destructive aggression.

The lethargic condition of modern professing Christians is manifest in the fact that while so many church members have no concept of a personal devil, thousands of young people are actually openly worshipping him, as members of a Satanic church, complete with its priests, rituals and sacrifices. The children of darkness recognize the reality of their god, and it is high time that Christians understand the admonition of Peter to "Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour, whom withstand steadfast in your faith..." (I Peter 5:8–9).

Satan's seduction of our first parents in the garden of Eden was by his masterful use of a two-fold lie. First, he suggested that man can be as God, knowing good and evil; that is, that man can establish for himself his own religion and laws. This lie still prevails over most of humanity, as demonstrated in modern education which proceeds on the hypothesis that education should be secular and morals (knowledge of good and evil) should be left to each person's own creation. The second phase of the lie was that man "shall not surely die" for rebellion against God. This lie has world-wide acceptance. It is most revealing that some who claim, "we speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent," make an exception where the word "death" occurs. Here they add a word to make it "spiritual death." By heeding Satan, Adam sinned and immediately death began to work in him so that in time the magnificent man God had created was dead. "The wages of sin is death." Satan consistently turns men from the truth, thus

bringing about their ultimate death. Loudly he roars his lies, seeking whom he may devour.

Satan is called “the god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4), “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2). While men speak of “the devil in hell,” the actual realm of Satan’s work is in the world where men dwell. Contrary to popular fantasy, Satan is not the keeper of hades or hell. It is not until judgment that the lake of fire will be kindled for the destruction of sinners, and God is the one who will have the power of execution (Matt. 10:28).

Having begun with a lie, and succeeded with it, Satan proceeded to counterfeit the entire program of Christ and to control man with a counterfeit kingdom. He has his “synagogue” (Rev. 2:9); his gospel which is a “different gospel” (Gal. 1:6) from that of salvation through the death of Christ; his “ministers” who masquerade as true ministers of righteousness (II Cor. 11:14); his “doctrine” (I Tim. 4:1); and his “kingdom” (Rev. 17:17). Within the Satanic realm is an unholy trinity; the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. Just as God has purposed to establish an eternal kingdom with all His people subject to Him, and in which all is provided from His hand, so Satan proposes a world government with all mankind subject to him, and looking to him—his government—for the provision of all necessities. He promises freedom and security in a world brotherhood, and humanity is echoing his promise and seeking to make it come true through abandoning God-given laws and establishing in their place humanism and a “Brotherhood” of man without the Fatherhood of God and His law.

Subjection to the devil is voluntary, as described in the Book of Revelation: “and the whole earth wondered after the beast: and they worshipped the dragon...” (Rev. 13:2–4). It isn’t hard to see that this is what is taking place throughout the country when people no longer even try to hide the fact that they have no use for the commands of God, arrogantly flaunt their sins in his face and openly support the aims of the devil. If you even identify a person as a Jew who denies Christ, you will immediately be smeared as a bigot and anti-semitic, but if you ridicule Christ and slander Christians you will receive the warm hand of fellowship from all the world. Jesus said He was sending his disciples out as sheep in the midst of wolves. He knew what He was doing.

There are only two classes of men: those who submit themselves to Christ and those who do not. The believers are called the sons of God and the sons of Abraham. The rest are of the world and are “of that wicked one,” called the sons of men and the sons of the devil. One simply cannot serve Christ and still be a friend of the world. Jesus said that His disciples should not be surprised if the world hated them (John 15:18–19).

Were the evil free to exercise his power as he desires, then defeat for every person would be certain, for his power is hideously great and terrible. Satan is powerful; but the Lord is all-powerful. Satan has power over fallen angels and exercises power over those who submit to him, but the Lord Jesus Christ has power over Satan and his hosts. “All authority has been given unto me in heaven and upon earth,” said Christ (Matt. 28:18). “There is no power but of God” (Rom. 13:1). This control over Satan is demonstrated in Job’s experience. “The Lord said unto Satan, behold all that he (Job) has is in your power; only upon himself put not forth your hand” (Job 1:12, 2:6). Satan was permitted to destroy all that Job had, his livestock, his home and even his sons and daughters. But he could not take Job’s life; God set a limit to his power. He was allowed to tempt Jesus,

but could only offer that which God allowed (Luke 4:6) and for a limited time (Luke 4:13).

Christ allowed Satan to tempt Peter, only up to a certain point (Luke 22:31–32). In fact, Christ never allows Satan to get the best of a Christian whose faith is sound. To the Christian Satan is bound. “When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger one than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he takes from him his armor wherein he trusted, and divides the spoils” (Luke 11:21–22). The stronger one, Christ, has overcome the strong one, Satan.

Throughout His earthly life, Christ was assailed by satanic attacks. Herod sought to kill Him when he was a child. The Jews plotted to murder Him and made several attempts. In Gethsemane Satan tempted Christ to abandon the cross, and even when He was on the cross, the mob challenged Him to come down and thus fail to die the death assigned Him. But Jesus resisted Satan and finished His mortal course, “that through death he might bring to nothing him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14). By His death Christ suffered the full penalty for sin for His people so that for the saints Satan’s work is rendered void (Compare I John 3:2, Col. 2:15).

If there seems to be frantic opposition to God’s truth today, it is all the more evidence of the truth of Scripture and the fulfillment of God’s inexorable purpose: “Therefore rejoice, O Heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time” (Rev. 12:12). At Christ’s return He will judge the world, giving immortality in a new creation to all His saints, while destroying all those who have rebelled against Him. Satan hasn’t long to work his wiles and deceive the nations, but his efforts will continue as long as man lives on this earth in the realm of time.

The Christian is called to wage war. “Our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). Christ challenges men to choose sides. “Think you that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, nay: but rather division” (Luke 12:51). To become a Christian means much more than to “just open up your heart and let Jesus come in,” whatever that is supposed to mean. It is to decisively desert the ranks of the kingdom of darkness and enounce it; it is to enlist in the army of Christ and militantly press His claim as the Lord of lords, and King of kings; it is to resist the devil with all one’s strength, even to the point of death; it is to suffer all the reproach, all the invectives (the four letter words known so well by the wicked) poured out by the enemy, to endure the ridicule of the scornful sophisticates, and suffer the loss of friends who are fighting for the other side, even while wearing the name of Christ.

Man’s basic sin remains the same, “To be as God, knowing good and evil,” to establish for himself his own religion and laws. The determination to do this is growing in intensity and fervor until the Christian is viewed by the world as one who stands in its way and opposes its goals. This is the work of Satan, seeking whom he may devour.

But let us celebrate. While the battle rages there is no doubt as to the outcome. Christ is Lord over all, even Satan, and has guaranteed to us that He will be the final victor. Everyone who, in faith, has been immersed (baptized) into Christ has participated in His death, so that he is redeemed from sin, and thus has “overcome the evil one” (Rom. 6:3, I John 2:13–14). Each Lord’s day he eats the bread and drinks the cup of the

Lord “in remembrance” of the atonement, thus celebrating continually the victory won by Christ, and shared by the faithful (I John 5:4–5).

Christ is reigning today. He has relinquished none of His authority to anyone (although some have claimed to take his place on earth over the years). Satan is a defeated foe, and can do nothing without the King’s consent. Our task is to resist him, and by the power of Christ, overcome him.

“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 15:57).

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