

# Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 267

## YOUR ADVERSARY

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*Your adversary the devil.*

1 Peter 5:8

### Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,  
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,  
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

# Free Grace Broadcaster

## YOUR ADVERSARY

# 267

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# A FIGMENT OF THE IMAGINATION?

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

**I**S the devil a living reality, or is he nothing more than a figment of the imagination? Is the word *Satan* merely a synonym for wickedness, or does it stand for a concrete entity? In cultured circles, it has become the custom to return a negative answer to these questions and to flatly deny the existence of the tempter. Among such people it is regarded as a mark of intellectual superiority to repudiate the personality of the devil. By many, Satan is now looked upon as a product of priestcraft,<sup>1</sup> a relic of superstition, the myth of a bygone age. With others, Satan is simply an abstraction,<sup>2</sup> a mere negation, the opposite of good. “All the devil there is is the devil within you,” is the last word of “modern thought.” The words that Goethe<sup>3</sup> puts into the mouth of Mephistopheles<sup>4</sup>—“I am the Spirit of Negation”—is accepted as a good workable definition of the devil. He is regarded as a mere abstract principle of evil. As someone has quaintly put it, “They spell devil without a *d*, as they spell God with two *o*'s. Good and evil is their scheme.”

But the more general conception of Satan is different from the above. The popular idea, the one that prevails among the masses, may be gathered from the pictorial representations of him that appear on the street posters, which are to be met with in our illustrated magazines and displayed upon the stage—where he is pictured as a grotesque monster in human form, having horns, hoofs, and forked tail. Such a conception is an insult to intelligent people; and in consequence, the devil has come to be regarded either as a bogey<sup>5</sup> with which to frighten naughty children or as a fit subject for jest and joke.

It need hardly be said that both conceptions above are far from the truth. The fact that they have gained such wide credence<sup>6</sup> is due largely to ignorance—ignorance concerning the teaching of God's Word, ignorance concerning the Satan of Holy Scripture. But it is to Satan's interests to keep people in such ignorance.

An intelligent enemy always keeps in the background and remains

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<sup>1</sup> **priestcraft** – schemes and frauds of priests.

<sup>2</sup> **abstraction** – idea.

<sup>3</sup> **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe** (1749-1832) – German poet, playwright, and scholar.

<sup>4</sup> **Mephistopheles** – evil spirit to whom Faust, in a German legend, sold his soul.

<sup>5</sup> **bogey** – evil spirit or goblin that someone uses to frighten children.

<sup>6</sup> **credence** – acceptance.

hidden out of sight. It is an important consideration with him that his identity should be concealed. Many an evil enterprise owes its success to its perpetrator remaining secreted. The assassin who plunges a knife into the back of his victim is usually hired for that purpose. The one who throws the bomb is merely a tool; the mastermind that planned the deed is unseen and unsuspected. Therefore, it need not surprise us to find that the masses do not believe in the existence of a personal devil. It serves his purpose well to keep his dupes<sup>7</sup> in ignorance concerning his real existence. The devil has always worked secretly and sought to hide his true identity. When he beguiled Eve, he did so through a serpent. When he appeared before God to accuse Job, he waited until a day when “the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them” (Job 1:6). When he sowed his “tares,” he did so secretly—in *the night* “while men slept” (Mat 13:25). When he betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ into the hands of His enemies, he worked through Judas! Satan is an adept<sup>8</sup> at disguising himself: he comes to us not as a dragon of darkness but “is transformed into an angel of light” (2Co 11:14).

From *Satan and His Gospel*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

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**Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952):** Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, author; born in Nottingham, England, UK.



The Bible speaks of Satan in terms of might and power. The New Testament refers to Satan as a spiritual “prince,” which means ruler or authority. Satan is “the prince of demons” (Mat 9:34), “the prince of this world” (Joh 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), and “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2). He is the “king” over the swarming hordes of demons that torment mankind (Rev 9:11). He is “the god of this world” (2Co 4:4). The prince of demons is called “Beelzebub” or “Beelzebul,” the name of the pagan deity “Baal-zebub the god of Ekron” (2Ki 1:2-3). “Baal” means “lord, master,” often the title of a false god. The Hebrew term *zebub* means “flies,” but it may be that the Old Testament writers twisted *zebub* (“prince” or “lofty one”) to make the deity’s name into an insult, “lord of the flies.”

In summary, the biblical vocabulary for the devil portrays him as a being of intense hatred against God and His people, complete moral corruption and wicked influence, and great power and authority over the demons and this world of fallen men. His names associate him closely with the pagan gods of nations such as Canaan and Greece.

—*Joel Beeke & Paul Smalley.*

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<sup>7</sup> **dupes** – easily deceived persons.

<sup>8</sup> **adept** – person very skilled at something.

# YOUR ADVERSARY THE DEVIL

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

**W**HAT has the Bible to tell us about the devil? First, let us consider some of the names that are applied to him in the Scriptures. He is referred to as “Satan,” and the word *Satan* means “adversary.” He is also referred to as the “devil,” and that means “slanderer,” one who slanders us. He is also described as “Beelzebub,” which means that he is the prince of the devils. He is described as “Apollyon,” and as the “angel of the bottomless pit” (Rev 9:11). He is called the “prince of this world” (Joh 12:31) and the “god of this world” (2Co 4:4). He is described as the “prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2). He is referred to as the “dragon,” as a lion, as “Lucifer,” “that old serpent,” and, perhaps one of the most significant names of all, as the “evil one.”

Now you will often find in the New Testament that whereas in the Authorized Version the word *evil* is used, it is probably true to say that it should be the “evil one.” Sometimes you will find “wicked” when it should be “wicked one.” There are those who say that when we pray, “deliver us from evil” (Mat 6:13), it should be “deliver us from the evil one.” And when John, in the last chapter of his epistle, says that the “whole world lieth in wickedness,” he is undoubtedly saying that the whole world lies in the “evil one” (1Jo 5:19). And in the same way in John 17 when our Lord prays His high priestly prayer, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil,” it should be translated “from the evil one” (Joh 17:15). It is a most important term—the *evil one*.

**The second thing that the Bible tells us about the devil is that he is a person.** This is most important at the present time because it has been the fashion for at least a century not to believe in the devil as a person. This is true not only of those who are unbelievers but also of many who call themselves Christians. They say they believe in the power of evil, or an evil influence, or a kind of lack in us, but they have a feeling that to believe in a personal devil is to be very much behind the times. But that is thoroughly unbiblical because the Bible, as I shall show you, teaches us that the devil is a person. For myself, there is one proof that is more than sufficient in and of itself, and that is the accounts we have in the Gospels of the temptations of our Lord. Now obviously, our Lord’s temptations came from somewhere; and when people say that

temptation to evil is something that arises solely from within and from a certain lack of power or positive qualities in us, they have no explanation to offer of the temptations of our Lord. A *person* tempted our Lord, and our Lord addressed him as such; the devil spoke to Him, and He spoke to the devil (Luk 4:1-13)—not an influence but a *person*. Furthermore, we find the same thing shown quite clearly in the book of Job in the first chapter, where the devil appears quite clearly as a person and addresses God. And God addresses him.

The biblical teaching is in no doubt at all about this. Our Lord, turning to certain Jews one day, said to them, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (Joh 8:44). How often you find the phrase, “the wicked one”—“then cometh the wicked one” (Mat 13:19)—and that phrase, let me emphasize again, is very significant. Indeed, all these names that are applied to the devil assert in different ways that he is a *person*. Now I must not stay with this, but you notice that there is always a kind of parallelism in false doctrine. In dealing with the doctrine of God we had to point out that God is personal, but that people have been trying to describe God as some Force or some Energy. They have said that He is some great mind behind the universe and have denied the personality. The same error, you see, has been committed regarding the evil one...

So, we must realize that apart from the sin that is in us and the evil of our nature as the result of the Fall, we are confronted by a person outside us who is tracking us down: a person who has a kingdom of which he is the head, which is highly organized, and [whose] one great concern is to destroy the work of God. We have referred to the great statement in Ephesians 6:12—“against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world”—that is the kingdom, the organized kingdom, of Satan, the evil one.

Then, of course, at the very beginning of the human story in the first chapters of Genesis, we are given positive evidence that the devil is a person because he came and tempted Eve, leading to the Fall. Indeed, if you want one other proof, I suggest that the very term “the Holy Spirit,” Who is a person, suggests the opposite, namely, “evil spirit,” the evil one, who is also a person, and who tries to counterfeit all that God does. That is something, then, which we must never forget. It is of vital importance to realize that there is this person set over against the kingdom of God and His Christ and all that belongs to it.

**Next, we must come to a very important and difficult question: What is the origin of the devil?** The Bible asserts the fact of the devil and of his personality. Where has he come from? Now, we are not told much

about this in the Bible, which is generally concerned simply to state things about the devil and his activities. The devil's origin seems to be assumed in Genesis, but I think there can be very little doubt that in Ezekiel 28:11-19 we are given an account of the devil. Now it is clear that in the whole chapter two persons are being dealt with. The first is the king of Tyre. But certain of the descriptions in verses 11-19 obviously are not descriptive of any human being; they arise above that to another.

That is typical of Scripture. We see it in the prophecies concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophecy is often put in that kind of dual form. It refers partly to some king or to some prince, but in addition there is a further suggestion about the Messiah. There are many examples of that in the prophecies of Isaiah and in other prophecies—an immediate reference, but then in it and above it a remote reference. And here in Ezekiel, it seems to me, we have the same thing. These verses, then, clearly refer to Satan and his origin, and there are certain things in them that we must emphasize.

**The first thing we are told about Satan is that he was created:** “the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes<sup>1</sup> was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created... Thou was perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee” (Eze 28:13, 15). The devil has not existed from all eternity; he is not an eternal being; he is a created being. There was a time in the history of the church when that needed to be emphasized very powerfully because there were those who taught that evil was eternal, that Satan was eternal, and that there were two gods, the good and the evil god. But that is an unscriptural idea. The devil is not eternal—he was made by God. Not only that, but we are also told that he had great power and ability. You get that in verse 12: “Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.” That was the devil as he was made by God. He seemed to sum up perfection.

He is also described, you notice, as the “anointed cherub that covereth” (v. 14). Now this is a very significant statement: “the anointed cherub”... The cherubim are undoubtedly the highest form of [*created*] beings, and their special function is to worship God and to present to Him the worship of the entire universe. You see that in the four beasts in Revelation 4. They are the representations of man worshipping God, and, therefore, of the whole universe worshipping God—the “living

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<sup>1</sup> **tabrets and pipes** – Some understand the Hebrew to mean *tambourines* and *flutes*, others understand it to mean *settings* and *mountings* of precious stones.



creatures.”

Well now, here we seem to have an indication that the devil was originally made by God as the anointed cherub, the chief of all cherubs. The suggestion is (and it is only a suggestion) that when God created this being, He meant him, as it were, to represent the whole universe in its praise, worship, and adoration. He was the anointed cherub—this cherub that “covereth.” Does it not remind us of the Ark of the Covenant, shielded by the wings of the cherubim, still with the idea of worship and of adoration? There is much in Scripture that leads one to the conclusion that the devil was the brightest of all the angelic beings, given this position of superiority in which he was the head of the whole created universe in representing worship and adoration unto God...

And then we are told here in verse 15 that the devil was perfect in all his ways, but that, alas, he did not keep that first estate: “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.” Then in verse 17 we read, “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness.” This bright, angelic, glorious being was perfect in beauty, but he became lifted up and consumed with pride. Instead of leading the worship and adoration of God, he desired to be worshipped himself and to be equal with God, and thus he raised himself against God, sinned against God, and was cast down and cast out by God. That seems to be the teaching of Ezekiel 28, and in Isaiah 14 you find something similar. Verses 12-15 of Isaiah read: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.” That undoubtedly is a reference to the same thing.

**Now, you notice, the Bible does not tell us how all this became possible.** It does not explain to us how all these thoughts ever entered the heart of Satan, the devil. It simply tells us that they did. The Bible gives us no explanation as to the ultimate origin of evil. And I suggest to you, therefore, that if you waste a second of your time in trying to speculate about that, you are guilty of a lack of faith because faith means to be content with the revelation given. It is beyond us. We cannot understand it. Theologians have speculated and have said that because the devil was perfect, he must have been perfectly free, and perfect freedom contains within itself the possibility of choosing against God. All right.

Still, it does not seem to me to explain the ultimate origin of evil. All we do know is that the devil was created, as we have seen; then that evil entered his heart, and he rebelled against God and was cast down.

**What do we know further about him?** Well, we are told a good deal in the Bible about his power, and what we learn about it is not surprising in view of what we have been told about his origin. Peter tells us that the devil is like a “roaring lion” (1Pe 5:8). He is described as “leviathan” (Isa 27:1) and the “dragon” in several places in Revelation. I wonder whether you have ever noticed, when you have gone through your Bible, that there is the suggestion that the power of Satan is even greater than the power of the archangel? In Jude 9, we read, “Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.” Even Michael the archangel speaks to the devil in that way—he does not “bring against him a railing accusation.” He does not treat him with contempt, as if he were a nonentity. Even Michael says, “The Lord rebuke thee.” You will find the same suggestion in 2 Peter 2:10-11.

**There is no doubt at all about the power of the devil being greater than human power.** Our Lord Himself described Satan as the “strong man armed” who “keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace” (Luk 11:21). And you will recall that the devil is as powerful as this: he is able to influence our bodies. You remember what he did to Job? And Peter tells us that our Lord “went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil” (Act 10:38). Then you remember what Paul tells us about himself and the “messenger of Satan” that was sent to buffet him (2Co 12:7). Yes, the devil can affect and influence our bodies.

**What is his status?** He is described as “the god of this world” (2Co 4:4). He is the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2). He is the evil one, the concentration of evil; all evil, as it were, is centered in him. He is the head, and all evil seems to emanate<sup>2</sup> out of him. Indeed, we are told in the Scriptures that he is the one who controls the power of death (Heb 2:14). And in Matthew 25:41, we read that our Lord refers to the “devil and his angels,” again showing that he is powerful.

**Now I emphasize all that for this reason:** if there is one lesson we should learn above all others from this consideration, it is that we should never speak loosely or flippantly<sup>3</sup> about the devil. I am often

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<sup>2</sup> **emanate** – issue forth.

<sup>3</sup> **flippantly** – in a way that shows a lack of seriousness and respect.

appalled as I hear good Christian people referring jocularly<sup>4</sup> to the devil. The Bible never refers to him in that light and flippant manner. It emphasizes his power, his status. Nevertheless, let me hasten to say, his power is limited; he is not almighty. In the first chapter of Job, we are told that God, as it were, gave the devil permission to do certain things to Job, but He put a very definite limit upon them, and the devil could not go beyond that.

There is a mystery at this point: ultimately the devil acts within the power of God, and yet the Bible teaches quite clearly that for some inscrutable<sup>5</sup> reason that we cannot understand, God seems to accord to the devil a certain status and position. He allows him to do certain things. These very names and distinctions are applied to him. God in His eternal wisdom has allowed the devil to maintain a certain amount of power until the end, and yet that power is ultimately under the control of God. It is His permissive will that allows it, and the devil, as in the case of Job, was only allowed to go so far and no further (Job 1:12; 2:6).

From *God the Father, God the Son* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 116-122; used by permission; Crossway is an imprint of Good News Publishers.

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**David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981):** Welsh expository preacher and author; born in Cardiff, Wales, UK.



A person in a Christless, graceless state, is naked and unarmed, and so unfit to fight Christ's battles against sin and Satan. Or thus, a soul out of Christ is naked and destitute of all armor to defend them against sin and Satan.—*William Gurnall*

Since the world is Satan's kingdom, it swarms with unseen demonic powers. "Babylon the great," that ancient city that symbolizes the world with all its vice and enticements, is "the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit" (Rev 18:2). When human civil authorities and military powers become like a "beast" oppressing God's people, they are empowered by the ancient dragon (13:1-9). False religions and corrupt spirituality are but painted masks worn by Satan. When people worship idols, they offer their worship to demons (1Co 10:20; cf. Deu 32:17). Sorcerers who oppose the gospel are children of the devil (Act 13:8-11). In ancient writings, astrological powers and Greek gods were called "world rulers," but Paul tells us that these "rulers" are the demons that war against the church (Eph 6:12).

Neither is the visible church free from Satan's influence. Hypocrites are the devil's agents (Act 5:3). False teachers in the church are Satan's "ministers"

(2Co 11:14-15). The devil is not "out there" somewhere; his forces confront us here and now.—*Joel Beeke & Paul Smalley*

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<sup>4</sup> **jocularly** – jokingly.

<sup>5</sup> **inscrutable** – incomprehensible; mysterious; impossible to understand.

# SATAN: A REAL PERSON

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

**P**ERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS ARE PREDICATED OF HIM: **Intelligence.** His temptations are spoken of as “the *wiles* of the devil” (Eph 6:11), while in Revelation 2:24, we read of “the depths of Satan” (*Greek*, “deep things”). Further, in Revelation 12:9, he is termed “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.” To deceive implies design, and design is the product of intelligence, and intelligence is inseparable from personality.

**Memory:** In his conflict with our Lord, he quoted from the Old Testament Scriptures (Mat 4:6). A mere abstraction<sup>1</sup> could not do this.

**Knowledge:** In Revelation 12:12, we are told he has “great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.” But that which is impersonal cannot be said to “know.”

**Will:** “that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2Ti 2:26). “How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation” (Isa 14:12-13). That Satan possesses a will or the power of choice is further proof that he is a personal being.

**Moral character:** Satan is spoken of as a “deceiver,” “liar,” “murderer,” “tempter,” all of which are terms implying moral character—i.e., that of which duty or obligation, and right and wrong, may be predicted.

**Speech:** He is represented as talking with God (Job 1:9-10), arguing with our Lord, and as “accusing” the brethren. This is a further indication that Satan possesses the same characteristics as [we do].

**Emotions:** He desired Peter that he might sift him as wheat (Luk 22:31). *Pride* is spoken of as “the condemnation of the devil” (1Ti 3:6). While in Revelation 12:12 we read, “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath.” But pride and anger cannot be predicated of the law of gravitation—they are inseparable from personality.

**Executive and organizing ability:** “And there was war in heaven:

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<sup>1</sup> **abstraction** – thing that exists only as an idea.

Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels” (Rev 12:7). “Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle” (Rev 20:7-8). Here we find Satan marshalling<sup>2</sup> his legions to engage in warfare. Ephesians 6:12 more than hints that he is the head of graduated<sup>3</sup> and organized forces.

**PERSONAL ACTS ARE ATTRIBUTED TO HIM: He tempts.** The first time this mysterious being is introduced to us in the Word of God, he appears in this capacity, inciting our first parents to disobey their Maker. In Matthew 4:3, he is expressly termed “the tempter.” And again, in 1 Corinthians 7:5 and 1 Thessalonians 3:5, the saints are warned against his [schemes]. To tempt implies design and argues intelligence and moral qualities, and these are inseparable from personality.

**He accuses.** To “accuse” unquestionably argues a conscious and rational entity. “And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night” (Rev 12:10). This verse affords us a glimpse into the unseen and presents our enemy maliciously [accusing] the saints before God. Two striking illustrations of this part of his work are furnished in Scripture. In Job 1:9-11, we find him charging the old patriarch, and in Zechariah 3:1-5, he is seen standing before God to resist Joshua the high priest. Upon these interesting passages, we cannot now comment. Blessed it is to know that Satan’s efforts in this direction are all in vain: “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth” (Rom 8:33).

**He makes war.** We have already quoted Revelation 12:7 and 20:8-9 in another connection...They furnish another proof that Satan is an intelligent albeit malignant being.

**He performs miracles.** This opens a wide subject into which we cannot now enter at length. We content ourselves with two Scripture references. When Moses and Aaron wrought their miracles before Pharaoh as credentials of their divine commission, we read that “Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments” (Exo 7:11, etc.). And again, we read concerning the “man of sin” (Antichrist) that his coming shall be “after the working of Satan with all power and signs

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<sup>2</sup> **marshalling** – assembling and arranging in order.

<sup>3</sup> **graduated** – characterized by a sequence of grades or levels of rank.

and lying wonders” (2Th 2:9).

**He causes bodily suffering.** The first two chapters of the book of Job clearly [show] that all the trials and afflictions that came upon Job were directly caused by the malignant assaults of the devil. When vindicating Himself for healing a sufferer on the Sabbath day, our Lord said, “Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?” (Luk 13:16). Again, after the apostle Paul had been caught up to the third heaven, an affliction was sent him lest he should be exalted above measure at the abundance of the revelations that he had received, and this affliction is described as “a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan” (2Co 12:7).

**He works in and through the wicked.** Just as we read that “it is God which worketh in you [the believer] both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13), so, also, we read that Satan is “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2). Another evidence of his activities is furnished in Matthew 13. In imitation of our Lord Who scattered the “good seed” in the field, Satan went and sowed tares.

**THE TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD BY SATAN PROVES HIM TO BE A PERSONAL BEING.** No unbiased mind can carefully read the fourth chapter of Matthew without concluding that we have recorded there a real conflict between two persons—our Lord Jesus Christ and Satan. If we deny that the latter is there definitely brought before us as a person, we must logically affirm the same of the former. To say, in reply, “We admit that Christ there *is* a real person but that the devil must be regarded as a personification of evil,” is blasphemy, for it [calls into question] the character of our blessed Lord.

Unlike every fallen son of Adam who is shaped in iniquity and conceived in sin, the Lord Jesus Christ was *sinless*. He is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb 7:26). “In him is no sin” (1Jo 3:5). He is “the Holy One of God” (Mar 1:24). He declared, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (Joh 14:30). As then there was no evil in our blessed Savior, the one who tempted Him must have been external and personal.

To deny that Matthew 4 presents Satan as a personal entity is either to traduce our Lord’s character or it is to reduce the entire narrative to meaningless jargon.<sup>4</sup> Everything that is said of Satan in this chapter indicates and [shows] that he is as real and actual a person as the Lord

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<sup>4</sup> **jargon** – unintelligible, meaningless talk; nonsense; gibberish.

Jesus Himself. The tempter “came to him” (Mat 4:3). He spoke, yes, reasoned and argued. He took Christ up into the holy city. He quoted to Him from the Psalms. He showed Him all the kingdoms of the world. He sought worship from the Savior. At His word, “he departed from him for a season” (Luk 4:13). All of which is proof positive—to one that believes in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures—that Satan is a living person.

**FINALLY, THE FACT THAT THE WORD OF GOD ANNOUNCES THAT SATAN SHALL YET BE CAST INTO THE BOTTOMLESS PIT, AND AFTERWARDS INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE, ARGUES THAT HE IS AN ACCOUNTABLE BEING.** A mere abstraction cannot be punished. That which is nothing more than a negation could not be tormented. That which was incorporeal<sup>5</sup> and intangible could not be “cast into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:10). The fact that the Scriptures declare that Satan *shall* be punished is conclusive evidence that he is a person, and a person endowed with moral responsibility.

From *Satan and His Gospel*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

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**Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952):** Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, author; born in Nottingham, England, UK.



Wherever evil appears, it is to be fought with by the children of God in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Ghost. When evil appeared in an angel, straightway there was war in heaven. Evil in mortal men is to be striven against by all regenerate men. If sin comes to us in the form of an angel of light, we must still war with it. If it comes with all manner of deceivableness of unrighteousness, we must not parley for a single moment, but begin the battle forthwith, if indeed we belong to the armies of the Lord. Evil is at its very worst in Satan himself: with him we fight. He is no mean [*inferior*] adversary. The evil spirits that are under his control are, any one of them, terrible foes; but when Satan himself personally attacks a Christian, any one of us will be hard put to it.

But even if Satan were ten times stronger and craftier than he is, we are bound to wrestle with him: we cannot for a moment hesitate or offer him terms. Evil in its highest, strongest, and proudest form is to be assailed by the soldier of the cross, and nothing must end the war but complete victory. Satan is *the* enemy, the enemy of enemies. That man had need have Omnipotence with him who hopes to overcome the enemy of God and man. He would destroy all godly ones if he could; and though he cannot, such is his inveterate [*long-established*] hate, that he worries those whom he cannot devour with a malicious eagerness.

—Charles H. Spurgeon

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<sup>5</sup> **incorporeal** – without material form or existence; the devil is a spirit being, not physical.

# THE WAR BETWEEN TWO SEEDS

Thomas Manton (1620-1677)

*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.—Genesis 3:15*

**T**Hese words are a part of the gospel preached in Paradise, or the first promise of grace and life made to mankind, now fallen and dead in sin. As God was cursing the serpent, He draweth out this comfort to our first parents, who were confounded with the sense of sin and their defection from God. Satan's condemnation is our salvation. He did the first mischief, therefore the crushing of his head giveth hope of our deliverance out of that state of misery into which he hath plunged us.

**DOCTRINE:** Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman, is at enmity with Satan and hath entered conflict with him. Though bruised in the conflict, yet [Christ] finally overcometh him and subverteth his kingdom.

**1. WE MUST STATE THE ENMITY BETWEEN CHRIST AND HIS CONFEDERATES AND SATAN AND HIS INSTRUMENTS.** For it is said in the beginning of the verse, "I will put enmity...between thy seed and her seed," which is principally to be understood of the Lord Christ and of His confederates in the second place; against Satan in the first place, and his instruments on the other side. There is a double enmity that Christ hath against Satan, and so He undertakes the war against him as contrary to His nature and office.

[1] **There is a perfect enmity between the nature of Christ and the nature of the devil.** The nature of Satan is sinful, murderous, and destructive; for it is said, he was "a liar" and "murderer from the beginning" (Joh 8:44; 1Jo 3:8). "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1Jo 3:8). Again, 1 John 3:12 [says], "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Now the nature of Christ is quite contrary. It is the devil's work to do all the hurt that he can to the bodies and souls of men; it is Christ's work to do good, and only good: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed



of the devil; for God was with him” (Act 10:38). Christ did nothing by way of malice and revenge. He used not the power that He had to make men blind or lame or to kill any—no, not His worst enemies, when He could easily do it and justly might have done it. No, He went up and down giving sight to the blind, limbs to the lame, health to the sick, life to the dead. He rebuked His disciples when they tempted Him to destroy some for their contempt by calling for fire from heaven, telling them they knew not what manner of spirit they were of. “For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (Luk 9:55-56). It was unlike His spirit and design... Thus, there was a perfect contrariety<sup>1</sup> of nature between Christ and Satan.

**[2] An enmity proper to His office and design.** For He came “to destroy the works of the devil” (1Jo 3:8) and was set up to dissolve that sin and misery that [the devil] had brought upon the world. The devil sought the misery and destruction of mankind, but Christ sought our salvation. Satan is the great destroyer of the creation, and Christ is the repairer of it. Now, salvation and destruction are diametrically opposite. So are the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan, the function and office of Christ the Savior and the purpose and design of the devil as Abaddon the destroyer. Therefore, Christ proveth that He had not the least confederacy with Satan; for then His kingdom would be divided against itself, and how could it stand? (Mat 12:25-26). It was impossible [that] the Savior could befriend the destroyer or the destroyer the Savior. No, their ends and designs are perfectly opposite. Now, as there is such an enmity between Christ and Satan, so there is between the rest of the confederates on either side.

**[3] An enmity or contrariety of nature [in their confederates].** The seed of the serpent inherits his venomous qualities; for as these are an estate opposite to God, so they are to the people of God. [They] seek the destruction of [people of God] by all cruel and bloody means. All people of a false religion, whether infidels, idolaters, or heretics, are of bloody and desperate principles, their minds being [made fierce] by their false religion and the influence of their great guide and leader, who is the devil: “They have gone in the way of Cain” (Jude 1:11).

**[4] There is an enmity of design [in their confederates].** As Christ employeth any as soldiers to fight under His banner, so they participate of the enmity of His design and office. Every private Christian is one of Christ’s soldiers; for we give up our faculties and powers as weapons: “present yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead,

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<sup>1</sup> **contrariety** – opposition.

and your members as instruments [or weapons] of righteousness unto God” (Rom 6:13). And the graces of the Spirit are called armor of light: “Let us...cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” (Rom 13:12). And we are bidden, “Put on the whole armour of God...For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:11-12). The ministers and those in a public station are leaders under Christ the general and are by office and employment engaged in this warfare against the kingdom of the devil. And therefore, the apostle biddeth Timothy to “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2Ti 2:3); and, “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God for the pulling down of strong holds” (2Co 10:4). They must set themselves against the devil and his kingdom.

## 2. THE ENMITY BEING SUCH BETWEEN THE SEEDS, CHRIST SETS UPON HIS BUSINESS TO DESTROY SATAN’S POWER AND WORKS.

[1] **His power.** Satan hath a twofold power over fallen man—*legal* and *usurped*.<sup>2</sup>

(1) *The legal power is that which the apostle calleth the power of death and the terrors that follow upon it.* “That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb 2:14-15). The devil hath no power as a judge to condemn sinners: he is not the *lord* of death but the *minister* of death. For, being condemned of God, the poor sinner is put into his hand that he may either terrify or stupefy him, and so more and more involve him in the curse of God’s broken law and may also hasten his death and everlasting destruction.

(2) *Satan hath a tyrannical usurped power.* So, the devils are called “rulers of the darkness of this world” (Eph 6:12)—the blind, idolatrous, superstitious world. And Satan is called “the prince of this world” (Joh 14:30), and “the god of this world” (2Co 4:4). God made him an executioner, but we make him a prince, a ruler, and a god. Now Christ, as a *priest*, disannulleth [Satan’s] legal power by His death and the merit of His sacrifice; Christ, as a true *king* and head both of men and angels, pulls down Satan as a usurper, delivers the poor captive souls out of his power; and as a *prophet*, He [revealeth] Satan’s cheats and delusions.

[2] **His works.** There is a twofold work of Satan—the work of the devil without [*outside*] us, or the work of the devil *within* us.

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<sup>2</sup> **usurped** – taken illegally.

(1) *The work of the devil without us is false religion or those idolatries and superstitions by which Satan's reign and empire is upheld in the world.* This is destroyed by the doctrine of the gospel, accompanied with the all-powerful Spirit of God. Therefore, when the gospel was first preached by Christ's messengers, the devil fell from that great and unlimited power that he had before in the world: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luk 10:18). It is an allusion to his first fall; as lightning flasheth and vanisheth, and never recollecteth itself again, so "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (Joh 12:31). When Christ did first set upon the redemption of mankind, the apostles went abroad to beat the devil and hunt him out of his territories; and they did it with great effect. Therefore, this is made one argument by which the Spirit doth convince us of the truth of the gospel: "He will reprove...the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (Joh 16:8-11). The silencing of his oracles, the suppressing of his superstitions, the destroying of the kingdom of wickedness and darkness, was apparent evidence of the truth of the gospel. The old religion, by which the devil's kingdom was supported everywhere, went to [destruction]—no more the same temples, the same rites, the same gods; all was made to stoop and bow before God as worshipped in Christ.

(2) *There is the work of the devil within us.* This concerneth the recovering of particular persons out of the snare of the devil, who were taken captive by him at his will and pleasure. Here we must distinguish between the *purchase* and *application*. The *purchase* was made when Christ died: "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col 2:15), that is, on His cross. Christ's death was Satan's overthrow; then was the deadly blow given to his power and kingdom. This was the price given for our ransom, and the great means of [depriving] all that power Satan had before. The *application* is begun in our conversion; for then we are said to be turned from Satan unto God: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God" (Act 26:18). Then we are rescued out of the devil's clutches and adopted into God's family that, being made children, we may have a child's portion.

From *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, Vol. 17  
(London: James Nisbet & Co., 1874), 241-248.

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**Thomas Manton (1620-1677):** English Presbyterian Puritan preacher; born in Lawrence-Lydiat, Somerset, England, UK.



# SATAN CONSIDERS YOU

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered  
my servant Job?—Job 1:8*

**W**HAT is it that Satan considers with a view to the injury of God's people? It cannot be said of him, as of God, that he knoweth us altogether. But since he has been now nearly six thousand years dealing with poor fallen humanity, he must have acquired a very vast experience in that time. And having been all over the earth, and having tempted the highest and the lowest, he must know exceedingly well what the springs of human action are and how to play upon them.

**Satan watches and considers first our peculiar infirmities.** He looks us up and down—as I have seen a horse-dealer do with a horse—and soon finds out wherein we are faulty. I, a common observer, might think the horse an exceedingly good one as I see it running up and down the road; but the dealer sees what I cannot see, and he knows how to handle the creature just in such quarters and at such points that he soon discovers any hidden mischief. Satan knows how to look at us and reckon us up from heel to head, so that he will say of this man, “His infirmity is lust,” or of that other, “He hath a quick temper,” or of this other, “He is proud,” or of that other, “He is slothful.” The eye of malice is very quick to perceive a weakness, and the hand of enmity soon takes advantage of it. When the arch-spy finds a weak place in the wall of our castle, he takes care to plant his battering-ram and begin his siege. You may conceal, even from your dearest friend, your infirmity; but you will not conceal it from your worst enemy...He goes about with a match, and though you may think you have covered all the gunpowder of your heart, yet he knows how to find a crack to put his match through. Much mischief will he do unless eternal mercy shall prevent.

**He also takes care to consider our frames and states of mind.** If the devil would attack us when our mind is in certain moods, we should be more than a match for him. He knows this and shuns the encounter. Some men are more ready for temptation when they are distressed and desponding; the fiend will then assail them. Others will be more liable to take fire when they are jubilant and full of joy; then he will strike his spark into the tinder. Certain persons, when they are much vexed and

tossed back and forth, can be made to say almost anything. And others, when their souls are like perfectly placid waters, are just then in a condition to be navigated by the devil's vessel. As the worker in metals knows that one metal is to be worked at such a heat and another at a different temperature...so Satan knows exactly the temperature at which to work us to his purpose. Small pots boil directly [as] they are put on the fire, and so little men of quick temper are soon in a passion. Larger vessels require more time and coal before they boil; but when they do boil, it is a boil indeed, not soon forgotten...The enemy, like a fisherman, watches his fish, adapts his bait to his prey, and knows in what seasons and times the fish are most likely to bite. This hunter of souls comes upon us unawares, and often we are overtaken in a fault, or caught in a trap through an unwatchful frame of mind. That rare collector of choice sayings, Thomas Spencer,<sup>1</sup> has the following, which is much to the point: "The [chameleon,] when he lies on the grass to catch flies and grasshoppers, taketh upon him the color of the grass, as the polypus<sup>2</sup> doth the color of the rock under which he lurketh, that the fish may boldly come near him without any suspicion of danger. In like manner, Satan turneth himself into that shape that we least fear and sets before us such objects of temptation as are most agreeable to our natures, that so he may the sooner draw us into his net. He sails with every wind and blows us that way which we incline ourselves through the weakness of nature. Is our knowledge in matter of faith deficient? He tempts us to error. Is our conscience tender? He tempts us to...too much preciseness. Hath our conscience...some latitude? He tempts us to carnal liberty. Are we bold spirited? He tempts us to presumption. Are we timorous and distrustful? He tempteth us to desperation. Are we of a flexible disposition? He tempteth us to inconstancy. Are we stiff? He labors to make obstinate heretics, schismatics, or rebels of us. Are we of an austere temper? He tempteth us to cruelty. Are we soft and mild? He tempteth us to indulgence and foolish pity. Are we hot in matters of religion? He tempteth us to blind zeal and superstition. Are we cold? He tempteth us to Laodicean lukewarmness. Thus doth he lay his traps, that one way or other, he may ensnare us."

**He also takes care to consider *our position among men*.** There are a few persons who are most easily tempted when they are alone. They are the subjects then of great heaviness of mind, and they may be driven to most

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<sup>1</sup> EDITOR'S NOTE: Spurgeon attributes this quote to Thomas Spencer, but the original author was John Spencer. The book referenced is KAINA KAI ΠΑΛΑΙΑ *Things New and Old or, A Storehouse of Similes* (London: W. Wilson and J. Streater, 1658).

<sup>2</sup> **Polypus** – octopus or cuttlefish.

awful crimes. Perhaps most of us are more liable to sin when we are in company. In some company, I never should be led into sin; into another society, I could scarcely venture. Many are so full of levity, that those of us who are inclined the same way can scarcely look them in the face without feeling our besetting sin set a-going; and others are so somber, that if they meet a brother of like mold, they are pretty sure between them to invent an evil report of the goodly land. Satan knows where to overtake you in a place where you lie open to his attacks. He will pounce upon you, swoop like a bird of prey from the sky, where he has been watching for the time to make his descent with a prospect of success.

**How, too, will he consider our condition in the world!** He looks at one man, and says, "That man has property: it is of no use my trying such-and-such arts with him; but here is another man who is very poor, I will catch him in that net." Then, again, he looks at the poor man and says, "Now, I cannot tempt him to this folly, but I will lead the rich man into it." As the sportsman has a gun for wild fowl, and another for deer and game, so has Satan a different temptation for various orders of men. I do not suppose that the Queen's temptation will ever annoy Mary the kitchen-maid. I do not suppose, on the other hand, that Mary's temptation will ever be very serious to me. You could probably escape from mine—I do not think you could; and I sometimes fancy I could bear yours—though I question if I could. Satan knows, however, just where to smite us; and our position, our capabilities, our education, our standing in society, our calling may all be doors through which he may attack us. You who have no calling at all are in peculiar peril—I wonder that the devil does not swallow you outright. The most likely man to go to hell is the man who has nothing to do on earth. I say that seriously. I believe that there cannot happen a much worse evil to a person than to be placed where he has no work; and if I should ever be in such a state, I would get employment at once, for fear I would be carried off, body and soul, by the evil one. Idle people tempt the devil to tempt them...Nor [am] I done yet.

**Satan, when he makes his investigations, notices all the objects of our affection.** I doubt not when he went round Job's house, he observed it as carefully as thieves do a jeweler's premises when they mean to break into them. They very cunningly take account of every door, window, and fastening. They fail not to look at the next-door house; for they may have to reach the treasure through the building that adjoins it. So, when the devil went round, jotting down in his mind all Job's position, he thought to himself, "There are the camels and the oxen, the asses, and the servants—yes, I can use all these very admirably." "Then," he

thought, “there are the three daughters! There are the ten sons, and they go feasting—I shall know where to catch them, and if I can just blow the house down when they are feasting, that will afflict the father’s mind the more severely, for he will say, ‘Oh, that they had died when they had been praying, rather than when they had been feasting and drinking wine.’” “I will put down too in the inventory,” says the devil, “his wife—I dare say I shall want her,” and accordingly it came to that. Nobody could have done what Job’s wife did—none of the servants could have said that sad sentence so stingingly... “Curse God, and die” (Job 2:9). Ah, Satan, thou hast ploughed with Job’s heifer, but thou hast not succeeded! Job’s strength lies in his God, not in his hair, or else thou mightest have shorn him as Samson was shorn! Perhaps the evil one had even inspected Job’s personal sensibilities, and so selected that form of bodily affliction that he knew to be most dreaded by his victim. He brought upon him a disease that Job may have seen and shuddered at, in poor men outside the city gates.

Brethren, Satan knows quite as much regarding you. You have a child, and Satan knows that you idolize it. “Ah,” says he, “there is a place for my wounding him.” Even the partner of your bosom may be made a quiver in which hell’s arrows shall be stored until the time may come, and then she may prove the bow from which Satan will shoot them. Watch even your neighbor and her that lieth in your bosom, for you know not how Satan may get an advantage over you. Our habits, our joys, our sorrows, our retirements, our public positions—all may be made weapons of attack by this desperate foe of the Lord’s people. We have snares everywhere: in our bed and at our table, in our house and in the street. There are gins and trap-falls in company; there are pits when we are alone. We may find temptations in the house of God as well as in the world; traps in our high estate, and deadly poisons in our [humiliation]. We must not expect to be rid of temptations until we have crossed the Jordan, and then, thank God, we are beyond gunshot of the enemy. The last howling of the dog of hell will be heard as we descend into the chill waters of the black stream; but when we hear the hallelujah of the glorified, we shall [be] done with the black prince forever and forever.

From a sermon delivered on Sunday morning, April 9, 1865, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

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**Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892):** Influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England, UK.



# HELPS AGAINST SATAN'S DEVICES

Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

**I**F Satan hath such a world of devices and stratagems to ensnare and undo the souls of men, then, instead of wondering that so few are saved, sit down and wonder that any are saved, that any escape the snares of this cunning fowler, who spreads his nets and casts forth his baits in all places, in all cases and companies...[So] my main business shall be to set before you some special rules and helps against all his devices.

**The first help: If you would not be taken by any of Satan's devices, then *walk by rule*.** He that walks by rule walks most safely; he that walks by rule walks most honorably; he that walks by rule walks most sweetly. When men throw off the Word, then God throws them off, and then Satan takes them by the hand and leads them into snares at his pleasure. He that thinks himself too good to be ruled by the Word will be found too bad to be owned by God; and if God does not or will not own him, Satan will by his stratagems overthrow him. Those that keep to the rule, they shall be kept in the hour of temptation. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev 3:10).

**The second help: As you would not be taken with any of Satan's devices, *take heed of vexing and grieving the Holy Spirit of God.*** It is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ that is best able to discover Satan's snares against us; it is only He that can point out all his plots, discover all his methods, and enable men to escape those pits that he hath digged for their precious souls. Ah! If you set that sweet and blessed Spirit a-mourning, Who alone can secure you from Satan's depths, by whom will you be secured? Man is a weak creature and no way able to discover Satan's snares nor to avoid them, unless the Spirit of the Lord gives skill and power; therefore, whoever be grieved, be sure the Spirit be not grieved by your enormities,<sup>1</sup> nor by your refusing the cordials<sup>2</sup> and comforts that He sets before you, nor by slighting and despising His gracious actings in others, nor by calling sincerity hypocrisy, faith

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<sup>1</sup> **enormities** – monstrous offenses or evils; outrages.

<sup>2</sup> **cordials** – medical tonics, used figuratively for whatever comforts, gladdens, or exhilarates.



fancy, etc., nor by fathering those things upon<sup>3</sup> the Spirit that are the brats and fruits of your own hearts. The Spirit of the Lord is your counsellor, your comforter, your upholder, your strengthener. It is only the Spirit that makes a man too great for Satan to conquer. “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1Jo 4:4).

**The third help: If you would not be taken with any of Satan’s devices, then labor for more heavenly wisdom.** Ah, souls! You are much in the dark, you have but a little to that others have, and to that you might have had, had you not been wanting to yourselves.<sup>4</sup> There are many *knowing* souls, but there are but a few *wise* souls. There is oftentimes a great deal of knowledge, where there is but a little wisdom to improve that knowledge. Knowledge without wisdom is like mettle<sup>5</sup> in a blind horse, which is often an occasion of the rider’s fall and of his bones being jostled<sup>6</sup> against the walls. It is not the most *knowing* Christian, but the most *wise* Christian that sees, avoids, and escapes Satan’s snares. “The way of life is above to the wise,” saith Solomon, “that he may depart from hell beneath” (Pro 15:24). Heavenly wisdom makes a man delight to fly high; and the higher any man flies, the more he is out of the reach of Satan’s snares. Ah, souls! You had need of a great deal of heavenly wisdom to see where and how Satan lays his baits and snares—wisdom to find out proper remedies against his devices, and wisdom to apply those remedies seasonably, inwardly, and effectually to your own hearts, so that you may avoid the snares that the evil one hath laid for your precious souls.

**The fourth help: If you would not be taken with any of Satan’s devices, then make present resistance against Satan’s first motions.** It is safe to resist; it is dangerous to dispute. Eve disputes and falls in Paradise (Gen 3:1-24). Job resists and conquers upon the dunghill. He that will play with Satan’s bait will quickly be taken with Satan’s hook. The promise of conquest is made over to resisting, not to disputing: “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jam 4:7). Ah, souls! Were you better at resisting than at disputing, though happily<sup>7</sup> you were not very expert at either, your temptations would be fewer, and your strength to stand would be greater than it is now.

**The fifth help: If you would not be taken with any of Satan’s devices, then labor to be filled with the Spirit.** The Spirit of the Lord is a Spirit of

<sup>3</sup> **fathering...upon** – attributing to.

<sup>4</sup> **wanting to yourselves** – neglecting your own best interest.

<sup>5</sup> **mettle** – courage to carry on.

<sup>6</sup> **jostled** – bumped or shoved.

<sup>7</sup> **happily** – perhaps; it may be.

light and power; and what can a soul do without light and power "against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph 6:12)? It is not enough that you *have* the Spirit, but you must be *filled* with the Spirit, or else Satan, that evil spirit, will be too hard for you, and his plots will prosper against you. That is a sweet word of the apostle: "Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18), *i.e.*, labor for abundance of the Spirit. He that thinks he hath enough of the Holy Spirit will quickly find himself vanquished by the evil spirit. Satan hath his snares to take you in prosperity and adversity, in health and sickness, in strength and weakness, when you are alone and when you are in company, when you come on to spiritual duties and when you come off from spiritual duties. If you are not filled with the Spirit, Satan will be too hard and too crafty for you. [He] will easily and frequently take you in his snares and make a prey of you despite your souls. Therefore, labor more to have your hearts filled with the Spirit than to have your heads filled with notions, your shops with wares, your chests with silver, or your bags with gold. [Then] shall you escape the snares of this fowler and triumph over all his plots.

**The sixth help: If you would not be taken in any of Satan's snares, then *keep humble*.** A humble heart will lie in the dust rather than rise by wickedness, and sooner part with all than the peace of a good conscience. Humility keeps the soul free from many darts of Satan's casting and snares of his spreading, as the low shrubs are free from many violent gusts and blasts of wind, which shake and rend the taller trees. The devil hath least power to fasten a temptation on him that is most humble. He that hath a gracious measure of humility is neither affected with Satan's proffers nor terrified with his threatenings...God hath said that He will teach the humble, that He will dwell with the humble, and that He will fill and satisfy the humble (Psa 25:9; Isa 57:15; Psa 22:26). And if the teachings of God, the indwellings of God, if the pourings in of God, will not keep the soul from falling into Satan's snares, I do not know what will. And therefore, as you would be happy in resisting Satan and blessed in triumphing over Satan and all his snares, keep humble; I say again, keep humble.

**The seventh help: If you would not be taken in any of Satan's snares, then *keep a strong, close, and constant watch* (1Th 5:6).** A secure soul is already an ensnared soul. That soul that will not watch against temptations will certainly fall before the power of temptations. Satan works most strongly on the fancy<sup>8</sup> when the soul is drowsy. The soul's security

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<sup>8</sup> fancy – imagination.

is Satan's opportunity to fall upon the soul and to spoil the soul, as Joshua did the men of Ai. The best way to be safe and secure from all Satan's assaults is, with Nehemiah and the Jews, to watch and pray, and pray and watch. By this means, they became too hard for their enemies, and the work of the Lord prospered sweetly in their hands. Remember how Christ chid<sup>9</sup> His sluggish disciples: "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" (Mat 26:40). What, cannot you watch with me? How will you then die with me? If you cannot endure words, how will you endure wounds? Satan always keeps a crafty and malicious watch, "seeking whom he may devour" or whom he may drink or sip up, as the apostle speaks in 1 Peter 5:8. Satan is very envious at our condition, that we should enjoy that Paradise out of which he is cast and out of which he shall be forever kept.

Shall Satan keep a crafty watch, and shall not Christians keep a holy spiritual watch? Our whole life is beset with temptations. Satan watches all opportunities to break our peace, to wound our consciences, to lessen our comforts, to impair our graces, to slur our evidences, and to damp our assurances. Oh! What need then have we to be always upon our watchtower, lest we be surprised by this subtle serpent. Watchfulness includes a waking, a rousing up of the soul. It is a continual, careful observing of our hearts and ways in all the turnings of our lives, that we keep close to God and His Word.

Watchfulness is nothing else but the soul running up and down, back and forth, busy everywhere; it is the heart busied and employed with diligent observation of what comes from within us, and of what comes from without us and into us. Ah, souls! You are no longer safe and secure than when you are upon your watch...A watchful soul is a soul upon the wing, a soul out of gunshot, a soul upon a rock, a soul in a castle, a soul above the clouds, a soul held fast in everlasting arms...Therefore, it doth very much concern us to stand always upon our guard.

**The eighth help: If you would not be taken with any of Satan's snares and devices, then *keep up your communion with God.*** Your strength to stand and withstand Satan's fiery darts is from your communion with God. A soul high in communion with God may be tempted but will not easily be conquered. Such a soul will fight it out to the death. Communion with God furnisheth the soul with the greatest and the choicest arguments to withstand Satan's temptations. Communion is the result of union. Communion is a reciprocal exchange between Christ and a

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<sup>9</sup> **chid** – rebuked; scolded.

gracious soul. Communion is Jacob's ladder, where you have Christ sweetly coming down into the soul, and the soul, by divine influences, sweetly ascending to Christ. Communion with Christ is very inflaming, raising, and strengthening... So long as your communion with God is kept up, you will be too hard for "spiritual wickedness in high places"; but if you fall from your communion with God, you will fall, as others, before the face of every temptation. David stands so long as he kept up his communion with God and triumphs over all his enemies; but when he was fallen in his communion with God, then he falls before the enemies that were in his own bosom, and flies before those that pursued after his life. It will be so with your souls if you do not keep up your communion with God... Adam loses his communion with God and is conquered by Satan in Paradise. Communion with God is a shield upon land, as well as an anchor at sea; it is a sword to defend you, as well as a staff to support you; therefore, keep up your communion.

**The ninth help: If you would not be taken in any of Satan's snares, then engage not against Satan in your own strength, but be every day drawing new virtue and strength from the Lord Jesus.** Certainly, that soul that engages against any old or new temptation without new strength, new influences from on high, will fall before the power of the temptation. You may see this in Peter: he rested upon some old received strength—"Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never" (Mat 26:33)—and therefore he falls sadly before a new temptation. He curses, swears, and denies [Jesus] thrice that had thrice appeared gloriously to him. Ah, souls! When the snare is spread, look up to Jesus Christ, Who is lifted up in the gospel as the brazen serpent was in the wilderness, and say to Him, "Dear Lord! Here is a new snare laid to catch my soul, and grace formerly received without fresh supplies from Thy blessed bosom will not deliver me from this snare. Oh! Give me new strength, new power, new influences, new measures of grace, so that I may escape the snares." Ah, souls! Remember this, that your strength to stand and overcome must not be expected from graces received but from the fresh and renewed influences of heaven. You must lean more upon Christ than upon your duties; you must lean more upon Christ than upon spiritual tastes and discoveries; you must lean more upon Christ than upon your graces, or else Satan will lead you into captivity.

**The tenth help: If you would not be taken in any of Satan's snares, then be much in prayer.** Prayer is a shelter to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge to the devil. David's heart was oft more out of tune than his harp. He prays, and then, despite the devil, cries, "Return unto thy

rest, O my soul.” Prayer is the gate of heaven, a key to let us into Paradise. There is nothing that renders plots fruitless like prayer; therefore, saith Christ, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Mat 26:41). You must watch and pray, and pray and watch, if you would not enter temptation. When Sennacherib and Haman had laid plots and snares to have destroyed the Jews, they prayed, and their souls were delivered, and Sennacherib and Haman destroyed. David had many snares laid for him, and this puts him upon prayer. “Keep me,” saith he, “from the snares which they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I...escape” (Psa 141:9-10). “The proud,” saith he, “have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me. Selah. I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD” (Psa 140:5-6). Saul and many others had laid snares for David, and this puts him upon prayer, and so the snares are broken, and he is delivered! Ah, souls! Take words to yourselves and tell God that Satan hath spread his snares in all places and in all companies; tell God that he digs deep and that he hath plot upon plot, and device upon device, and all to undo you. Tell God that you have neither skill nor power to escape his snares; tell God that it is a work too high and too hard for any created creature to work...Tell God how His honor is engaged to stand by you and to bring you off that you be not ruined by his plots...Tell God how the wicked would triumph if you should fall into Satan’s snares. Tell God of the love of Christ, of the blood of Christ, and of the intercession of Christ for you that a way may be found for your escape. Tell God if He will make it His honor to save you from falling into Satan’s snares, you will make it your glory to speak of His goodness and to live out His kindness. Christians must do as Daedalus<sup>10</sup>—when he could not escape by a way upon earth, [he] went by a way of heaven, and that is, the way of prayer, which is the only way left to escape Satan’s snares.

From *The Complete Works of Thomas Brooks*, ed. A. B. Grosart, Vol. 1  
(Edinburgh; London; Dublin: J. Nichol; J. Nisbet & Co.;  
G. Herbert, 1866), 157-163; in the public domain.

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**Thomas Brooks (1608-1680):** English Nonconformist Puritan preacher and advocate of Congregationalism; buried in Bunhill Fields, Islington, UK.




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<sup>10</sup> **Daedalus** – (Greek mythology) an Athenian inventor who built the labyrinth of King Minos of Crete; to escape the labyrinth, he fashioned wings for himself and his son Icarus.

# A DIALOGUE BETWEEN SATAN AND A CHRISTIAN

William Perkins (1558-1602)

**S**ATAN. You say that you have true faith, but I shall sift you and disprove you.

*Christian.* The gates of hell shall never prevail against my faith, do what you can.

*Satan.* Tell me then, do you think that all the world shall be saved?

*Christian.* No.

*Satan.* What, shall some be saved and some condemned?

*Christian.* So says the Word of God.

*Satan.* You then are persuaded that God is true, even in His merciful promises, and that He will save some men, as Peter, Paul, and David, etc., and this is the only belief by which you will be saved.

*Christian.* Nay, this I believe, and more too, that I particularly am in the number of those men who shall be saved by the merit of Christ's death and passion, and this is the belief that saves me.

*Satan.* It may be that you are persuaded that God is able to save you, but that God will save you—that is, that He has determined to advance your body and soul into His kingdom, and that He is most willing to perform it in His good time—herein you waver and doubt.

*Christian.* Nay, Satan. I, in my own heart, am fully persuaded that I shall be saved, and that Christ is especially my Redeemer (Joh 1:12-13; 6:35, 54). And (O Lord) for Christ's sake, help my doubting and unbelief (Mar 9:24)!

*Satan.* Your full persuasion is only a fantasy and a strong imagination of your own head. It goes not with you as you think.

*Christian.* It is no imagination, but [the] truth that I speak. For I think I am as certain of my salvation as though my name were registered in the Scriptures (as David's and Paul's) to be an elect vessel of God. And this is the testimony of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, assuring me inwardly of my adoption and making me with boldness and confidence in Christ to pray unto God the Father (2Co 1:22; Eph 1:14; Rom 8:18).

*Satan.* Still, you dream and imagine. You love and like yourself, and therefore you think the best of yourself.

*Christian.* Yea, but God of His goodness has brought forth such tokens of faith in me that I cannot be deceived (Act 13:9; 1Th 1:3):

1. I am displeased with myself for my manifold sins, in which sometimes I have delighted and bathed myself (Rom 7:15, 24).

2. I purpose never to commit them again, if God gives me strength, as I trust He will.

3. I have a very great desire to be doing those things that God commands.

4. Those who are the children of God, if I do but hear of them, I love them with my heart and wish unto them as to myself (1Jo 3:14).

5. My heart leaps for gladness when I hear of the preaching of the Word.

6. I long to see the coming of Christ Jesus, that an end may be made of sinning and of displeasing God (Rev 22:20).

7. I feel in my heart the fruits of the Spirit: joy, love, peace, gentleness, meekness, patience, [and] temperance. I abhor the works of the flesh: fornication, adultery, uncleanness, wantonness, idolatry, strife, envy, anger, drunkenness, bibbing and quaffing,<sup>2</sup> and all such like (Gal 5:19-22).

All these cannot proceed from you, Satan, or from my flesh, but only from faith, which is wrought in me by God's Holy Spirit.

*Satan.* If this were so, God would never suffer you to sin as you do.

*Christian.* I shall sin as long as I live in this world (Rom 7:15; Mat 26:69-75). I am sure of it because I am taught to ask [for the] remission of my sins continually. But the manner of my sinning now is otherwise than it has been in times past. I have sinned heretofore with full purpose and consent of will, but now doubtless I do not. Before I commit any sin, I do not go to the practicing of it with deliberation, as the carnal man does, who takes care to fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Rom 13:14). But if I do it, it is flatly beside my mind and purpose. In the doing of any sin, I would not do it. My heart is against it, and I hate it; and yet by the tyranny of my flesh being overcome, I do it. Afterwards, when it is committed, I am grieved and displeased at myself, and do earnestly, with tears, ask at God's hands forgiveness of the same sin.

*Satan.* Indeed, this is very true in the children of God, but you are

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<sup>2</sup> **bibbing and quaffing** – expressions for drunkenness.

sold under sin, and with great pleasure do commit sin, and love it with your whole heart. Otherwise, you would not fall to sin again after repentance, and commit even one and the same sin so often as you do. You hypocrite, your behavior turns all the favor of God from you.

*Christian.* Indeed, it is dangerous to fall again into the same sin after repentance. Yet it is the order of the prophets to call men to repentance, which have fallen from the fear of God and from the repentance that they professed (Isa 1:18; Jer 2:1). And God, in thus calling them, puts them in hope of obtaining mercy. And the law had sacrifices offered every day for the sins of all the people, and for particular men, both for their ignorance and their voluntary sins, which signifies that God is ready to forgive the sins of His children, though they sin often...God's will is that men forgive until seventy-seven times, and therefore He will show much more mercy. And for my part, so often as I shall fall into the same sin, so often I shall have Christ my Advocate and Intercessor to the Father for me, Who will not damn me for the infirmity that He finds in me (1Jo 2:1). I will abstain from external iniquity, and I will not make my members servants unto sin. And so long I trust my imperfections shall have no power to damn me, for Christ's perfection is reputed to be mine by faith, which I have in His blood...Nay (which is a strange thing), I know it by experience that God has turned my filthy sins to my great profit and to the amendment of my life, like as the good physician is able to make a sovereign medicine (from rank poison) to preserve life (Rom 8:28).

*Satan.* Well, be it that now you are in the state of grace, yet you shall not continue so. You shall, before death, depart from Christ.

*Christian.* I know I am a member of Christ's mystical body. I feel in myself the heavenly power and virtue of my Head, Christ Jesus. And for this cause, I cannot perish but shall continue forever and reign in heaven after this life with Him.

From *The Works of William Perkins*, ed. J. S. Yuille, J. R. Beeke, and D. W. H. Thomas, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), 561-564; [www.heritagebooks.org](http://www.heritagebooks.org); used by permission.

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**William Perkins (1558-1602):** Influential English Puritan preacher and theologian; born in Marston Jabbett, Bulkington, Warwickshire, England, UK.



The devil is the wicked man's god by voluntary submission: "His servants ye are, to whom you obey" (Rom 6:16). Wicked men are Satan's volunteers.

—*Benjamin Keach*



# GOD'S WISDOM IN SATAN'S OVERTHROW

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

**T**HE wisdom of God greatly and remarkably appears in so exceedingly baffling and confounding all the subtlety of the old serpent. Power never appears so conspicuous as when opposed and conquering opposition. The same may be said of wisdom; it never appears so brightly and with such advantage as when opposed by the subtlety of some very crafty enemy and in baffling and confounding that subtlety.

The devil is exceeding subtle. The subtlety of the serpent is emblematic of his (Gen 3:1). He was once one of the brightest intelligences of heaven and one of the brightest, if not the very brightest, of all. And all the devils were once morning stars of a glorious brightness of understanding. They still have the same faculties, though they ceased to be influenced and guided by the Holy Spirit of God; and so, their heavenly wisdom is turned into hellish craft and subtlety. In the work of redemption, God hath wondrously baffled the utmost craft of the devils, and though they are all combined to frustrate God's designs of glory to Himself and goodness to men, the wisdom of God appears very glorious herein. For,

**1. Consider the weak and seemingly despicable means and weapons that God employs to overthrow Satan.** Christ poured the greater contempt upon Satan in the victory that He obtained over him by reason of the means of His preparing Himself for it and the weapons He hath used. Christ chooses to encounter Satan in *human nature*, in a poor, frail, afflicted state. He did as David did. David, when going against the Philistine, refused Saul's armor: a helmet of brass, a coat of mail, and his sword. No, he puts them all off. Goliath comes mightily armed against David with a helmet of brass upon his head, a coat of mail weighing five thousand shekels of brass, greaves<sup>1</sup> of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders; a spear, whose staff was like a weaver's beam, and the spear's head weighing six hundred shekels of iron. And besides all this, he had one bearing a shield before him. But David takes nothing but a staff in his hand, a shepherd's bag, and a sling; and he goes against the Philistine. So, the weapons that Christ

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<sup>1</sup> greaves – pieces of armor that protect the legs below the knee.

made use of were His poverty, afflictions and reproaches, sufferings and death. His principal weapon was His cross: the instrument of His own reproachful death. These were seemingly weak and despicable instruments to wield against such a giant as Satan. And doubtless the devil disdained them as much as Goliath did David's staves and sling. But with such weapons as these has Christ in a human, weak, mortal nature overthrown and baffled all the craft of hell.

Such disgrace and contempt has Christ poured upon Satan. David had a more glorious victory over Goliath for his conquering him with such mean<sup>2</sup> instruments; and Samson over the Philistines, for killing so many of them with such a despicable weapon as the jawbone of an ass. It is spoken of in Scripture as a glorious triumph of Christ over the devil—that He should overcome him by such a despicable weapon as His cross. “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Col 2:14-15). God shows His great and infinite wisdom in taking this method to confound the wisdom and subtlety of His enemies. He hereby shows how easily He can do it, and that He is infinitely wiser than they. “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are” (1Co 1:27-28).

**2. God has thereby confounded Satan with his own weapons.** It is so contrived in the work of redemption that our grand enemy should be made a means of his own confusion. By those very things whereby he endeavors to rob God of His glory and to destroy mankind, he is made an instrument of frustrating his own designs. His most subtle and powerful endeavors for accomplishing his designs are made a means of confounding them and of promoting the contrary. Of this, I will mention but two instances.

**First, his procuring man's fall is made an occasion of the contrary to what he designed.** Indeed, he has hereby procured the ruin of multitudes of mankind, which he aimed at. But in this, he does not frustrate God's design from all eternity to glorify Himself; and the misery of multitudes of mankind will prove no contentment to him but will enhance his own misery.

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<sup>2</sup> **mean** – inferior; of little consequence.

What Satan did in tempting man to fall is made an occasion of the contrary to what he intended, in that it gave occasion for God to glorify Himself the more and giveth occasion for the elect being brought to higher happiness.

Satan envied the happy state of man. That man who was of earthly original should be advanced to such honors, when he who was originally of a so much more noble nature should be cast down to such disgrace, his pride could not bear. How then would Satan triumph, when he had brought [man] down!

The devil tempted our first parents with this: if they would eat of the forbidden fruit, they should be as gods (Gen 3:5). It was a lie in Satan's mouth; for he aimed at nothing else but to fool man out of his happiness and make him his own slave and vassal with a blinded expectation of being like a god. But little did Satan think that God would turn it to make man's fall an occasion of God becoming man—and so an occasion of our nature being advanced to a state of closer union to God.

By this means, it comes to pass that one in man's nature now sits at the right hand of God, invested with divine power and glory, and reigns over heaven and earth with a God-like power and dominion. Thus is Satan disappointed in his subtlety. As he intended that saying, "*Ye shall be as gods*" (Gen 3:5), it was a lie to decoy and befool man. Little did he think that it would be in such manner verified by the incarnation of the Son of God. And this is the occasion also of all the elect being united to this divine person, so that they become one with Christ. Believers are as members and parts of Christ... Little did Satan think that his telling that lie to our first parents, "*Ye shall be as gods,*" would be the occasion of their being members of Christ, the Son of God.

Again, Satan is made a means of his own confusion in this: It was Satan's design in tempting man to sin to make man his captive and slave forever—to have plagued and triumphed over him. And this very thing is a means to bring it about: that man, instead of being his vassal, should be his judge. The elect, instead of being his captives to be forever tormented and triumphed over by him, shall sit as judges to sentence him to everlasting torment! It has been the means that one in man's nature should be his supreme Judge. It was man's nature that Satan so envied and sought to make a prey of. But Jesus Christ at the Last Day shall come in man's nature, and the devils shall all be brought to stand trembling at His bar. He shall judge [them], condemn them, and execute the wrath of God upon them. And not only shall Christ in the human nature judge the devils, but all the saints shall judge them

with Christ as assessors with Him in judgment. "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1Co 6:3).

**Secondly, in another instance, Satan is made a means of his own confusion, that is, in his procuring the death of Christ.** Satan set himself to oppose Christ as soon as He appeared. He sought, by all means, to procure His ruin. He set the Jews against Him. He filled the minds of the scribes and Pharisees with the most bitter, persecuting malice against Christ. He sought by all means to procure His death, and that He might be put to the most ignominious death. We read "that Satan entered...into Judas" and tempted him to betray Him (Luk 22:3). And Christ speaks of His sufferings as being the effects of the power of darkness: "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luk 22:53). But Satan hereby overthrows his own kingdom. Christ came into the world to destroy the works of the devil. And this was the very thing that did it, *viz.*, the blood and death of Christ. The cross was the devil's own weapon, and with this weapon, he was overthrown, as David cut off Goliath's head with his own sword.

Christ thus making Satan a means of his own confusion was typified of old by Samson's getting honey out of the carcass of the lion. There is more implied in Samson's riddle, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness" (Jdg 14:14), than ever the Philistines explained. Christ verified it in a far more glorious manner. God's enemies and ours are taken in the pit that they themselves have digged; and their own soul is taken in the net that they have laid. Thus, we have shown, in some measure, the wisdom of this way of salvation by Jesus Christ.

From *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2 (Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 151-152; [www.banneroftruth.org](http://www.banneroftruth.org).

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**Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758):** American Congregational preacher and theologian; born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony, USA.



A hunter has many devices and cunning stratagems to ensnare the game he pursues: so the devil hath many snares and cunning wiles to catch and destroy the souls of men. Hence, he is compared to a serpent: "We are not ignorant," saith Paul, "of his devices" (2Co 2:11); and in another place, he exhorts the saints to "put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph 6:11). The

Greek word signifies such snares as are set to catch a man: "He will deliver thee," saith the psalmist, "from the snare of the [hunter]" (Psa 91:3), meaning...the devil. Satan hath many devices and snares

to draw men into sin.—*Benjamin Keach*

# OVERCOMING SATAN BY THE BLOOD

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.—Revelation 12:11*

**I**N this chapter, the devil is called the “great red dragon” (Rev 12:3). He is great in capacity, intelligence, energy, and experience. Whether or not he was the chief of all angels before he fell, I do not know. Some have thought that he was such, and that when he heard that a man was to sit upon the throne of God, out of very jealousy he rebelled against the Most High. This is also conjecture.<sup>1</sup> But we do know that he was and is an exceedingly great spirit as compared with us. He is a being great in evil: the prince of darkness, having the power of death. He shows his malice against the saints by accusing the brethren day and night before God. In the prophets we have the record of Satan standing to accuse Joshua the servant of God. Satan also accused Job of serving God from mercenary motives: “Hast not thou made an hedge about him...and...all that he hath?” (Job 1:10-11).

This ever-active enemy desires to tempt as well as accuse: he would have us and sift us as wheat. In calling him the dragon, the Holy Spirit seems to hint at his mysterious power and character. To us, a spirit such as he is must ever be a mystery in his being and working. Satan is a mysterious personage though he is not a mythical one. We can never doubt his existence if we have once come into conflict with him; yet he is to us even more real because he is so mysterious. If he were flesh and blood, it would be far easier to contend with him; but to fight with this spiritual wickedness in high places is a terrible task. As a dragon, he is full of cunning and ferocity. In him, force is allied with craft;<sup>2</sup> and if he cannot achieve his purpose at once by power, he waits his time. He deludes, he deceives; in fact, he is said to deceive the whole world (Rev 12:9). What a power of deception must reside in him, when under his influence the third part of the stars of heaven are made to fall, and myriads of men in all ages have worshipped demons and idols! He has steeped the minds of men in delusion, so that they cannot see that they should worship none but God their Maker. He is styled “that old

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<sup>1</sup> **conjecture** – opinion based on insufficient evidence.

<sup>2</sup> **craft** – skill in deception and trickery.

serpent” (Rev 12:9); and this reminds us how practiced he is in every evil art. He was a liar from the beginning, and the father of lies (Joh 8:44). After thousands of years of constant practice in deception, he is much too cunning for us. If we think that we can match him by craft, we are grievous fools; for he knows vastly more than the wisest of mortals... To this cunning, he adds great speed, so that he is quick to assail at any moment, darting down upon us like a hawk upon a poor chick. He is not everywhere present, but it is hard to say where he is not. He cannot be omnipresent; but by that majestic craft of his, he so manages his armies of fallen ones that, like a great general, he superintends the whole field of battle and seems present at every point. No door can shut him out, no height of piety can rise beyond his reach. He meets us in all our weaknesses and assails us from every point of the compass. He comes upon us unaware and gives us wounds that are not easily healed.

Yet, dear friends, powerful as this infernal spirit certainly must be, his power is defeated when we are resolved never to be at peace with him. We must never dream of terms or truce with evil. To suppose that we can let him alone and all will be well is a deadly error. We must fight or perish: *evil will slay us if we do not slay it*. Our only safety will lie in a determined, vigorous opposition to sin, whatever shape it assumes, whatever it may threaten, whatever it may promise. The Holy Ghost alone can maintain in us this enmity to sin.

According to the text, it is said of the saints, “They overcame him” (Rev 12:11). We are never to rest until it is said of us also, “They overcame him”... Do you refuse the conflict? Do you think of turning back? You have no armor for your back. To cease to fight is to be overcome. You have your choice between the two: either to gird up the loins of your minds for a lifelong resistance or else to be Satan’s slaves forever. I pray God that you may awake, arise, and give battle to the foe. Resolve once for all that, by the grace of God, you will be numbered with those who overcome the archenemy.

Our text brings before us a very important subject for consideration: **WHAT IS THIS CONQUERING WEAPON?** “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.”

**The blood of the Lamb signifies, first, the death of the Son of God.** The sufferings of Jesus Christ might be set forth by some other figure, but His death on the cross requires the mention of blood. Our Lord was not only bruised and smitten, but He was put to death. His heart’s blood was made to flow. He of Whom we speak was God over all, blessed forever; but He condescended to take our manhood into union with His Godhead in a mysterious manner. He was born at Bethlehem a babe;

He grew as a child; He ripened into manhood and lived here among us, eating and drinking, suffering and rejoicing, sleeping and laboring as men do. He died in very deed and of a truth and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. That death was the grand fact which is set forth by the words “the blood of the Lamb.”

We are to view Jesus as the Lamb of God’s Passover: not merely separated from others, dedicated to being Israel’s memorial, and consecrated to divine service, but as the Lamb *slain*. Remember that Christ viewed as living, and not as having died, is not a saving Christ. He Himself saith, “I am he that liveth, *and was dead*” (Rev 1:18). The moderns cry, “Why not preach more about His life, and less about His death?” I reply, “Preach His life as much as you will, but never apart from His death; for it is by His blood that we are redeemed... We preach Christ.” Complete the sentence. “We preach Christ *crucified*” (1Co 1:23), says the apostle. Ah, yes! There is the point. It is the death of the Son of God that is the conquering weapon. Had He not poured forth His soul unto death, even to the death of the cross—had He not been numbered with the transgressors and put to a death of shame—we should have had no weapon with which to overcome the dragon prince. By “the blood of the Lamb” we understand the death of the Son of God. Hear it, O men! Because you have sinned, Jesus dies that you may be cleared from your sin. He “his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24) and died that He might redeem us from all unrighteousness. The point is His death, and, paradoxically, this death is the vital point of the gospel. The death of Christ is the death of sin and the defeat of Satan, and hence it is the life of our hope, and the assurance of His victory. Because He poured out His soul unto the death, He divides the spoil with the strong (see Isa 53:12).

Next, by “**the blood of the Lamb**” we understand *our Lord’s death as a substitutionary sacrifice*. Let us be very clear here. It is not said that they overcame the archenemy by the blood of Jesus, or the blood of Christ, but by the blood *of the Lamb*; and the words are expressly chosen because, under the figure of a lamb, we have set before us a sacrifice. The blood of Jesus Christ, shed because of His courage for the truth, or out of pure philanthropy, or out of self-denial, conveys no special gospel to men and has no peculiar power about it. Truly it is an example worthy to beget martyrs; but it is not the way of salvation for guilty men. If you proclaim the death of the Son of God, but do not show that He died the just for the unjust to bring us to God, you have not preached the blood of the Lamb. You must make it known that “the chastisement of our peace was upon him,” and that “the LORD hath

laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:5-6), or you have not declared the meaning of the blood of the Lamb. There is no overcoming sin without a substitutionary sacrifice. The lamb under the old law was brought by the offender to make atonement for his offence, and in his place, it was slain. This was the type of Christ taking the sinner’s place, bearing the sinner’s sin, suffering in the sinner’s stead, thus vindicating the justice of God, making it possible for Him to “be just, and the justifier of him which believeth” (Rom 3:26). I understand this to be the conquering weapon—the death of the Son of God set forth as the propitiation<sup>3</sup> for sin. Sin must be punished: it is punished in Christ’s death. Here is the hope of men.

**Furthermore, I understand by the expression, “The blood of the Lamb,” that *our Lord’s death was effective for the taking away of sin.*** When John the Baptist first pointed to Jesus, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Joh 1:29). Our Lord Jesus has taken away sin by His death. Beloved, we are sure that He had offered an acceptable and effectual propitiation when He said, “It is finished” (Joh 19:30). Either He did put away sin, or He did not. If He did not, how would it ever be put away? If He did, then are believers clear. Altogether apart from anything that we do or are, our glorious Substitute took away our sin, as in the type the scapegoat carried the sin of Israel into the wilderness. In the case of all those for whom our Lord offered Himself as a substitutionary sacrifice, the justice of God finds no hindrance to its fullest flow: it is consistent with justice that God should bless the redeemed. Near nineteen hundred years ago, Jesus paid the dreadful debt of all His elect and made a full atonement for the whole mass of the iniquities of them that shall believe in Him, thereby removing the whole tremendous load, and casting it by one lift of His pierced hand into the depths of the sea. When Jesus died, an atonement was offered by Him and accepted by the Lord God, so that before the high court of heaven there was a distinct removal of sin from the whole body of which Christ is the head. In the fulness of time each redeemed one individually accepts for himself the great atonement by an act of personal faith, but the atonement itself was made long before. I believe this to be one of the edges of the conquering weapon. We are to preach that the Son of God has come in the flesh and died for human sin, and that in dying He did not only make it possible for God to forgive, but He secured forgiveness for all who are in Him. He did not die to make men savable, but to save them. He came not that sin might be

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<sup>3</sup> **propitiation** – appeasement; to propitiate is to satisfy God’s justice and thus to satisfy His wrath.



put aside at some future time, but to put it away there and then by the sacrifice of Himself; for by His death, He finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness (Dan 9:24). Believers may know that when Jesus died, they were delivered from the claims of law, and when He rose again, their justification was secured. The blood of the Lamb is a real price that did effectually ransom. The blood of the Lamb is a real cleansing that did really purge away sin. This we believe and declare; and by this sign, we conquer. Christ crucified, Christ the sacrifice for sin, Christ the effectual redeemer of men, we will proclaim everywhere, and thus put to rout the powers of darkness!

**HOW DO WE USE IT?** I have shown you the sword; I now come, in the second place, to speak to the question, How do we use it? “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb”...The precious blood of Jesus is not meant for us merely to admire and exhibit. We must not be content to talk about it, extol<sup>4</sup> it, and do nothing with it; but we are to use it in the great crusade against unholiness and unrighteousness *until it is said of us*, “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.” This precious blood is to be used for overcoming and, consequently, for holy warfare. We dishonor it if we do not use it to that end. Some, I fear, use the precious blood of Christ only as a quietus<sup>5</sup> to their consciences. They say to themselves, “He made atonement for sin, therefore let me take my rest.” This is doing a grievous wrong to the great sacrifice. I grant you that the blood of Jesus does speak better things than that of Abel, and that it sweetly cries, “Peace! Peace!” within the troubled conscience; but that is not all that it does. A man who wants the blood of Jesus for nothing but the mean<sup>6</sup> and selfish reason, that after having been forgiven through it, he may say, “Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry: hear sermons, enjoy the hope of eternal felicity, and do nothing”—such a man blasphemes the precious blood and makes it an unholy thing. We are to use the glorious mystery of atoning blood as our chief means of overcoming sin and Satan. Its power is for holiness. See how the text puts it: “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.” These saints used the doctrine of atonement not as a pillow to rest their weariness, but as a weapon to subdue their sin. O my brothers, to some of us, atonement by blood is our battle-axe and weapon of war by which we conquer in our struggle for purity and godliness—a struggle in which we have continued now these many years. By the

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<sup>4</sup> extol – praise.

<sup>5</sup> quietus – something that has a calming or soothing affect.

<sup>6</sup> mean – despicable; low.

atonement blood, we withstand corruption within and temptation without. This is the weapon that nothing can resist.

Let me show you your battlefield. Our first place of conflict is in the heavenlies, and the second is down below on earth.

**First, then, you, my brothers and sisters who believe in the blood of Jesus, must do battle with Satan in the heavenlies.** And there you must overcome him “by the blood of the Lamb.” “How?” say you. I will lead you into this subject.

First, you are to regard Satan this day as being already literally and *truly overcome through the death of the Lord Jesus*. Satan is already a vanquished enemy. By faith, grasp your Lord’s victory as your own since He triumphed in your nature and on your behalf. The Lord Jesus Christ went up to Calvary, and there fought with the prince of darkness, utterly defeated him, and destroyed his power. He led captivity captive. He bruised the serpent’s head. The victory was the victory of all who are in Christ. He is the representative seed of the woman, and you who are of that seed and are in Christ actually and experimentally, you then and there overcame the devil by the blood of the Lamb. Can you get a hold of this truth? Do you not know that you were circumcised in His circumcision, crucified on His cross, buried with Him in baptism, and therein also risen with Him in His resurrection? He is your federal head, and you being members of His body did in Him what He did. Come, my soul, thou hast conquered Satan by thy Lord’s victory. Wilt thou not be brave enough to fight a vanquished foe, and trample down the enemy whom thy Lord has already thrust down? Thou needest not be afraid, but say, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Co 15:57). We have overcome sin, death, and hell in the person and work of our great Lord; and we should be greatly encouraged by that which has been already wrought in our name. Already “we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom 8:37). If Jesus had not overcome the enemy, certainly we never should have done so; but His personal triumph has secured ours. By faith, we rise into the conquering place this day. In the heavenlies we triumph, as also in every place...for by Him we see Satan cast out, and all the powers of evil hurled from their places of power and eminence.

This day I would have you overcome Satan in the heavenlies in another sense: *you must overcome him as the accuser*. At times you hear in your heart a voice arousing memory and startling conscience; a voice which seems in heaven to be a remembrance of your guilt. Hark to that deep, croaking voice, boding evil! Satan is urging before the throne of

justice all your former sins. Can you hear him? He begins with your childish faults and your youthful follies. Truly a black memory. He does not let one of your wickednesses drop out. Things that you had forgotten he cunningly revives. He knows your secret sins, for he had a hand in most of them. He knows the resistance that you offered to the gospel and the way in which you stifled conscience. He knows the sins of darkness, the sins of the bedchamber, the crimes of the inner chambers of imagery. Since you have been a Christian, he has marked your wickedness and asked in fierce, sarcastic tones, "Is this a child of God? Is this an heir of heaven?" He hopes to convict us of hypocrisy or of apostasy.

The foul fiend tells out the wanderings of our hearts, the deadness of our desires in prayer, the filthy thoughts that dropped into our minds when we have been at worship. Alas! We must confess that we have even tolerated doubts as to eternal verities and suspicions of the love and faithfulness of God. When the accuser is about his evil business, he does not have to look far for matter of accusation, nor for facts to support it. Do these accusations stagger you? Do you cry, "My God, how can I face Thee? For all this is true, and the iniquities now brought to my remembrance are such as I cannot deny. I have violated Thy law in a thousand ways, and I cannot justify myself."

Now is your opportunity for overcoming through the blood of the Lamb. When the accuser has said his say and aggravated all your transgressions, be not ashamed to step forward and say, "But I have an advocate as well as an accuser. O Jesus, my Savior, speak for me!" When He speaks, what does He plead but His own blood? "For all these sins I have made atonement," says He, "all these iniquities were laid on me in the day of the Lord's anger, and I have taken them away." Brethren, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1Jo 1:7). Jesus has borne the penalty due to us: He has discharged for us upon the cross all our liabilities to the justice of God, and we are free forever because our Surety suffered in our place. Where is the accuser now? That dragon's voice is silenced by the blood of the Lamb. Nothing else can ever silence the accuser's cruel voice but the voice of the blood that tells of the infinite God accepting, in our behalf, the sacrifice that He Himself supplied. Justice decrees that the sinful shall be clear because the accepted Substitute has borne [the sinner's] sin in His own body on the tree (1Pe 2:24). Come, brother or sister, the next time thou hast to do with Satan as an accuser in the heavenly places, take care that thou defend thyself with no weapon but the atonement. All comfort drawn from inward feelings or outward works will fall short; but the bleeding wounds of Jesus will plead with full and overwhelming

argument and answer all. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom 8:33-34). Who, then, shall accuse the child of God? Every accuser shall be overcome by the invincible argument of the blood of the Lamb.

**Still further, the believer will have need to overcome the enemy in the heavenly places in reference to *access to God*.** It may happen that when we are most intent upon communing with God, the adversary hinders us. Our heart and our flesh cry out for God, the living God, but from one cause or another we are unable to draw nigh unto the throne. The heart is heavy, sin is rampant, care is harassing, and Satanic insinuation is busy. You seem shut out from God, and the enemy triumphs over you. You feel very near the world, very near the flesh, and very near the devil—but you mourn your miserable distance from God. You are like a child who cannot reach his father’s door because a black dog barks at him from the door. What is the way of access? If the foul fiend will not move out of the way, can we force our passage? By what weapon can we drive away the adversary so as to come to God? Is it not written that we are made nigh by the blood? Is there not a new and living way consecrated for us? Have we not “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Heb 10:19)? We are sure of God’s love when we see that Christ died for us; we are sure of God’s favor when we see how that atonement has removed our transgressions far from us. We perceive our liberty to come to the Father...Pleading the propitiation made by the blood of the Lamb, we dare draw nigh to God. Behold, the evil spirit makes way before us. The sacred name of Jesus is one before which he flees. This will drive away his blasphemous suggestions and foul insinuations better than anything that you can invent. The dog of hell knows the dread name that makes him lie down! We must confront him with the authority and *especially* with the atonement of the Lamb of God. He will rage and rave even more if we send Moses to him; for he derives his power from our breaches of the law. We cannot silence him unless we bring to him the great Lord Who has kept the law and made it honorable (Isa 42:21).

From a sermon delivered on Lord’s Day morning, September 9, 1888,  
the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

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**Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892):** Influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England, UK.



# ETERNITY IN THE LAKE OF FIRE

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

**THE** misery of the damned is represented as unmixed. The wine of the wrath of God is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation that they may be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment shall ascend forever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night (Rev 14:10-11). They are tormented in a flame that burns within them, as well as round about them, and they shall be denied so much as a drop of water to cool their tongues. And God's wrath shall be inflicted in such a manner as to show His wrath and make His strength known on the vessels of wrath, and which shall be punished with everlasting destruction, answerable to that glory of Christ's power in which He shall appear at the Day of Judgment. [And] He shall come in the glory of His Father, with power and great glory, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Th 1:8)...

There is great evidence that the devil is not the subject of *any* dispensation of divine mercy and kindness, that God is prosecuting no design of infinite goodness towards him, and that his pains are not purifying pains. It is manifest that, instead of any influence of his torments to bring him nearer to repentance, he has been from the beginning of his damnation constantly exerting himself with all his might in prosecuting his wickedness; his violent, most haughty, and malignant opposition to God and man; fighting especially with peculiar virulence<sup>1</sup> against Christ and His church; opposing with all his might everything that is good. [And he has been] seeking the destruction and misery of all mankind with boundless and insatiable<sup>2</sup> cruelty. On [this] account, he is called Satan the adversary, Abaddon, and Apollyon the destroyer. He is represented "as a roaring lion...seeking whom he may devour" (1Pe 5:8), a viper, the old serpent, the great red dragon—red on account of his bloody cruel nature. He is said to be "a murderer from the beginning" (Joh 8:44). He has murdered all mankind, has murdered their souls as well as their bodies. He was the murderer of Jesus Christ by instigating Judas and His crucifiers. He has most cruelly shed the blood of an innumerable multitude of the children of God. He

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<sup>1</sup> **virulence** – extreme bitterness and violent hostility.

<sup>2</sup> **boundless and insatiable** – unlimited and unable to be satisfied.

is emphatically called the evil one, that wicked one, etc. He is a liar and the father of lies, the father of all the sin and wickedness that is or ever has been in the world. He is the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience (2Co 4:3-4). It is said that “he that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning” (1Jo 3:8). And all wicked men are spoken of as his children. He has set himself up as “god of this world” (2Co 4:4), in opposition to the true God, and has erected a vast kingdom over the nations. He is constantly carrying on a war with the utmost earnestness, subtlety, malice, and venom against Jesus Christ and all His holy and gracious designs; maintaining a kingdom of darkness, wickedness, and misery in opposition to Christ’s kingdom of light, holiness, and peace; and thus will he continue to do until the end of the world, as appears by scripture prophecies.

And God’s dealings with him are infinitely far from being those of a *friend*, kindly seeking his infinite good and designing nothing else in the end but to make him eternally happy in love, favor, and blessed union with Him. God is represented everywhere as acting the part of an *enemy* to him that seeks and designs nothing in the final event but his destruction. The grand work of God’s providence, which He is prosecuting from the beginning to the end of the world, *viz.*, the work of redemption, is against him to bruise or break his head in pieces, to cast him like lightning from heaven, from that height of power and dominion to which he has exalted himself—to tread him underfoot, and to cause His people to trample and bruise or crush him underfoot, and gloriously to triumph over him. Christ, when He conquered him, made a show of him openly, triumphing over him. And it is evident, that, as it will be with the devil in this respect, so it will be with the wicked. This is reasonable to suppose from what the Scripture represents of the relation wicked men stand in to the devil as his children, servants, subjects, instruments, and his property and possession. They are all ranked together with him in one kingdom, one interest, and one company. And many of them are the great ministers of his kingdom to whom he has committed authority, such as the beast and false prophet that we read of in the Revelation.

Now, how reasonable and natural is it to suppose that those who are thus united should have their portion and lot together! As Christ’s disciples, subjects, followers, soldiers, children, instruments, and faithful ministers shall have their part with Him in His eternal glory, so we may reasonably believe that the devil’s disciples, followers, subjects, soldiers in his army, children, instruments, and ministers of his kingdom should have their part with him...As the devil’s ministers,

servants, and instruments of the angelic nature, [who] are called the devil's angels, shall have their part with him, we may well suppose for the like reason [that] his servants and instruments of the human nature will share with him. And not only is this reasonable, but the Scripture plainly teaches us that it shall be so. In Revelation 19:20, it is said, "The beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him...[were both] cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." So it is said [in] chapter 20:10: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever," thus expressing both the kind of misery and the duration. Just in the same manner it is said concerning the followers of the beast. It is said [in] chapter 14:9-11, "Saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone...the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night." And [in] chapter 21:8, it is said of wicked men in general, "[They] shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

So, we find in Christ's description of the Day of Judgment [that] the wicked are sentenced to "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mat 25:41). By which it appears most plainly that they share with the devil in suffering misery of the same kind and share with him in suffering misery of the same everlasting continuance.

From *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2 (Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 522-523; [www.banneroftruth.org](http://www.banneroftruth.org).



Oftentimes [Christians] are unaware that it is "the devil" who is attacking them and needs to be resisted. Many suppose that Satan's assaults are confined unto tempting us to sin. Not so! In many cases, his object is to oppose and hinder us in the doing of that which is good. Frequently he makes use of human beings to annoy and harass us. For example, he will send a caller to the door or someone to ring on the telephone when we are engaged in prayer. He will move worldly relatives to visit us on the [Lord's] Day and thus prevent our spending the time quietly with the Lord. Or he will shape our "circumstances" to hinder our spiritual good, multiplying our duties and tasks so that we have no leisure or are too weary for study.

Few of God's children appear to know that it is their privilege and right to be victorious over Satan's attacks. The Lord has not left His people here at the mercy of their great enemy, helpless to overcome him.

—A. W. Pink

# SATAN AND CHURCH UNITY

Joel Beeke

A parishioner called me one day, quite upset. She had sat next to a man on a plane who was praying. When he finished, she asked warmly, “So you’re a Christian?” “No,” he replied briskly. “I thought you were praying,” she persisted. “I was,” he said. After a few minutes, my parishioner asked, “Sir, may I ask, to whom were you praying?” He paused, then said, “I was praying to Satan.” “Why on earth would you pray to Satan?” she asked in amazement. He responded, “I was praying that Satan would be successful in severing the relationship between at least thirty pastors and their congregations in North America this week.” My parishioner was dumbfounded. “The man looked so sincere as he prayed,” she said to me. “He seemed more earnest than I am in most of my prayers.”

Satan delights in divisiveness, in rending the body of Christ. To counteract Satan, the church must strive to realize her unity in Christ. We must strive for good communication and understanding. We must defy Satan’s attempts to split the church unnecessarily.

The Nicene Creed<sup>1</sup> confesses “one church” (*unam ecclesiam*), meaning the church is built upon one rock, one Messiah, one confession. The Westminster Confession says that the church’s unity lies in Jesus Christ: “The catholic or universal church which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.”<sup>2</sup> That the church is Christ’s body and He the head (Col 1:18) implies that Christ and the church are complementary, for a body and a head cannot exist without each other.

Wilhelmus à Brakel said the church and Christ are each other’s

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<sup>1</sup> **Nicene Creed** (A.D. 325) - early profession of faith of the Christian church. It is called “Nicene” because it was adopted in the city of Nicaea by the first ecumenical council that met there. It has been normative for the Anglican Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Oriental Orthodox churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, and many Protestant denominations. The council was called because of the Arian controversy. Arius, a bishop of Alexandria, had declared that although the Son was divine, He was a created being and therefore not coessential with the Father, and “there was when he was not.” This made Jesus less than the Father, which challenged the doctrine of the Trinity. The Nicene Creed explicitly affirms the coessential deity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It was revised and affirmed by the First Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381.

<sup>2</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith, 25.1.



property. Their union is affirmed by the gift of Christ to the church, Christ's purchase of and victory for the church, the indwelling of Christ's Spirit within the church, and the church's surrender by faith and love to Christ.<sup>3</sup> To think of Christ without the church severs what God has wedded together in holy union.

The church is organically related to Christ more profoundly than any organic relationship that falls within the realm of our experience; she is rooted and built up in Christ (Col 2:7), clothed with Christ (Rom 13:14), and cannot live without Christ (Phi 1:21). "The church is in Christ as Eve was in Adam," wrote Richard Hooker.<sup>4</sup>

All the members of Christ's body are united to one another because of their common Head (1Co 12). All true believers who confess Christ as their exclusive Savior are "joined and united with heart and will, by the power of faith, in one and the same spirit," says the Belgic Confession.<sup>5</sup> They are united as members of the household of God, the community of Christ, and the fellowship of the Spirit. There is one gospel (Act 4:12), one revelation (1Co 2:6-10), one baptism (Eph 4:5), and one Lord's Supper (1Co 10:17).

A. A. Hodge said, "There is no doubt if there be but one God, there is but one church; if there be but one Christ, there is but one church; if there be but one cross, there is but one church; if there be but one Holy Ghost, there is but one church."<sup>6</sup> The believers of this one church are described in New Testament images such as salt of the earth, the holy temple, the new creation, sanctified slaves, sons of God, and fighters against Satan. They are many branches in one vine, many sheep in one flock, and many stones in one building. The church is "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1Pe 2:9).

The church's oneness in Christ is indestructible, for it comes from Christ. Her unity can be disrupted, however. When it is, we should feel shame and grief at how divided the church can become because of her unfaithfulness to Christ and her deviation from the apostolic pattern of unity. Sins such as inattention to doctrinal and practical purity (1Ti

<sup>3</sup> Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, ed. Joel R. Beeke, trans. Bartel Elshout (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1993), 2:87-90.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, 5:56, in *The Works of That Learned and Judicious Divine, Mr. Richard Hooker*, ed. John Keble (New York: Appleton and Co. 1844), 1:403.

<sup>5</sup> Belgic Confession, art. 27.

<sup>6</sup> A. A. Hodge, *Evangelical Theology* (1890; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 174.

6:11-21), autonomy (1Co 1:10-17), factionalism<sup>7</sup> (1Co 3), lust for power (3Jo 1:9), unwillingness to seek reconciliation (Mat 5:23-26), failure to maintain church discipline (Mat 18:15-20), and unwillingness to help needy believers (Mat 25:31-46) tear apart the body of Christ.

Still, even the multiplicity of church splits caused by rifts between believers cannot divide the true family of Christ. Brothers and sisters in a family may quarrel and separate, but they remain members of one family. Likewise, the church is one body in Christ with many members (Rom 12:3-8; 1Co 12:27), one family of God the Father (Eph 4:6), and one fellowship in the Spirit (Act 4:32; Eph 4:31-32). As Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (4:4-6).

Rightly understood, the church’s oneness helps us avoid the kind of unity that is had at the expense of her confessions of truth. Some divisions are essential to keep the true church separate from the false. “Division is better than agreement in evil,” George Hutcheson said.<sup>8</sup> Those who support spurious unity by tolerating error and heresy forget that a split based on biblical essentials helps to preserve the true unity of the body of Christ. “The devil’s war is better than the devil’s peace,” remarked Samuel Rutherford.<sup>9</sup>

The church’s oneness helps us avoid splits over nonessential doctrines as well as egotistical differences. Such splits violate the unity of the body of Christ. As Samuel Rutherford warned, “It is a fearful sin to make a rent and a hole in Christ’s mystical body because there is a spot in it.”<sup>10</sup> Such disunity offends the Father, Who longs to see His family living in harmony; it offends the Son, Who died to break down walls of hostility; and it offends the Spirit, Who dwells within believers to help them live in unity.

Church members must realize that they cannot touch any part of the church’s body without affecting the whole body (1Co 12). Disunity affects the entire church, including its work of evangelism. In John 17, Jesus prayed for the unity of the church so the world would believe that God sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. Authentic church unity,

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<sup>7</sup> **factionalism** - splitting of a group into smaller dissenting groups.

<sup>8</sup> George Hutcheson, *The Gospel of John*, Geneva Series of Commentaries (1841; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1972), 209 (John 10:19-21).

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Rutherford, *Trial and Triumph of Faith* (Edinburgh: The Assembly’s Committee, 1845), 403.

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Rutherford, *Quaint Sermons, Hitherto Unpublished* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1885), 126.

which is a startling contrast to the strife of the world, is a sign to the world of the unity that exists between the Father and the Son.

Christians, therefore, should work for unity in the church. As John Murray wrote, “If we are once convinced of the evil of schism in the body of Christ...we shall then be constrained to preach the evil, to bring conviction to the hearts of others also, to implore God’s grace and wisdom in remedying the evil, and to devise ways and means of healing these ruptures.”<sup>11</sup> We need to follow Matthew Henry’s advice: “In the great things of religion be of one mind, but when there is not a unity of sentiment, let there be a union of affections.”<sup>12</sup> Despite unbiblical splits, true believers will continue to be united as members of one body of Christ until the end of time, when every external division will disappear. There will be no divisions in heaven. In heaven, Christ’s prayer that all believers may be one will find true fulfillment (Joh 17:20-26). The unity of the body of Christ will be resplendent (Rev 7:9-17). What we now can hardly believe by faith will become gloriously evident by sight.

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Let no man wonder at the enmity and opposition of Satan to the preaching of the gospel: for it is by the gospel that souls are recovered out of his power (Act 26:18). It is the express work of ministers “to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Satan (as one saith) is a great and jealous prince: he will never endure to have liberty proclaimed by the ministers of Christ within his dominions. And, indeed, what is it less, when the gospel is preached in power, but as it were by beat of drum, and sound of trumpet, to proclaim liberty, spiritual, sweet, and everlasting liberty, to every soul [who is] sensible of the bondage of corruption and the cruel servitude of Satan, and [who] will now come over to Jesus Christ? And oh, what numbers and multitudes of prisoners have broken loose from Satan at one proclamation of Christ (Act 2:41). But Satan owes the servants of Christ a spite for this and will be sure to pay them if ever they come within his reach;

persecution is the evil genius of the gospel and follows it  
as the shadow doth the body.

—*John Flavel*

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<sup>11</sup> John Murray, “The Nature and Unity of the Church,” in *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 2:335.

<sup>12</sup> *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, 6:410 (1Co 1:10-17).