

The Devil



Hosted by the
Southaven Church of Christ
Southaven, Mississippi

Don Blackwell
Lectureship Director

Copyright © 2018
ISBN 1-930999-26-7

Southaven Church of Christ
POWER Publications

This book was printed in the United States of America
by

Sain Publications
Pulaski, TN 38478
(931) 363-6905

Preface

The Bible opens with the devil in the Garden of Eden beguiling mankind (Gen. 3:4). It closes in Revelation 20:2 with God laying hold of “that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan” and binding him for a thousand years (a perfect period of time). In between, we read of his antics, his trickery, his deceit and his all-out war against mankind. Revelation 12:10 calls him the accuser of our brethren. Jesus said that he was a murderer from the beginning, the father of lies, and that there is no truth in him (John 8:44). Peter warns us that he walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

What are we to do? How do we battle this evil one? Thankfully, through the Scriptures, we are not ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:11). God has given us tools whereby we may stand against his wiles (Eph. 6:11). 1 John 5:18 calms our fears with the assurance that a Christian who walks in the light is untouchable by the “wicked one.”

The devil is always watching. He’s waiting, he’s hating, he’s baiting. With these things in mind, we do well to study him.

Great gratitude is expressed to each speaker who has put in countless hours studying, preparing and writing the content of this volume. Thanks is also expressed to the Southaven eldership who supports and funds the annual lectureship. We also express appreciation to all

of the members of the Southaven church who work in various areas, many behind the scenes. Without their efforts, this lectureship would not be possible. A special debt of gratitude is due to Robert Jefferies, who does a tremendous amount of the thankless legwork to make this book and program a reality. He's a blessing to have as a co-worker. Above all, thanks be to God, who makes our escape and ultimate victory possible. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

In Christ,
Don Blackwell
Lectureship Director, 2018

Table Of Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Satan: The Father Of Lies..... | 9 |
| Don Blackwell | |
| 2. The Devil: Real Or Fictional? | 27 |
| Robert Jefferies | |
| 3. Hell: The Destiny Of The Devil | 43 |
| B. J. Clarke | |
| 4. The Origin Of The Devil | 63 |
| Tom Wacaster | |
| 5. The Devil And His Angels: A Study Of Demons | 79 |
| John Moore | |
| 6. The Devil's New Favorite Sin: Homosexuality | 91 |
| Sean Embree | |
| 7. The Rated R Devil: TV, Music And Movies | 131 |
| Russell Kline | |
| 8. The Devil And Job..... | 145 |
| Don Walker | |
| 9. Am I Being Used By The Devil | 159 |
| Cliff Goodwin | |
| 10. Names Of The Devil..... | 173 |
| Chris Perry | |
| 11. The Devil Doesn't Want You To Obey The Gospel..... | 193 |
| Rob Whitacre | |
| 12. The Devices Of The Devil: Ism's In America | 207 |
| Jeff Miller | |
| 13. The Devil And Divorce | 239 |
| Scott Cain | |

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|------|
| 14. The Devil And Jesus | 287 |
| Kevin Ruiz | |
| 15. The Devil Is A Racist..... | 303 |
| John DeBerry | |
| 16. Resisting The Devil..... | 327 |
| Jon McCormack | |
| 17. The Devil Has A FaceBook Account (Social Media)..... | 339 |
| Clifton Angel | |
| 18. The Devil Is A Social Drinker..... | 359 |
| Wayne Rodgers | |
| 19. The Devil In The Workplace..... | 395 |
| Jim Dearman | |
| 20. The Devil And Eden..... | 405 |
| Denny Petrillo | |
| 21. The Devil Comes To Worship | 425 |
| Eric Owens | |
| 22. Disguises Of The Devil | 439 |
| Jake Sutton | |
| 23. Pride: The Darling Sin Of The Devil..... | 451 |
| Tony DeBerry | |
| 24. The Devil In DC: How Satan Works In The Government..... | 459 |
| Jon Mitchell | |
| 25. The Devil And Debt..... | 499 |
| Westley Hazel | |
| 26. The Devil And Judas | 505 |
| John Grubb | |
| 27. The Defeat Of The Devil | 5517 |
| Robert R. Taylor, Jr. | |

WOMEN'S CLASSES

28. Daughters Of The Devil: Jezebel..... 533
Blair Jefferies

29. Daughters Of The Devil: Athaliah..... 551
Courtney Ruiz

30. Daughters Of The Devil: Delilah..... 569
Janis Dearman

31. Daughters Of The Devil: Gomer 583
Shelley Hazel

Satan: The Father Of Lies

Don Blackwell



Don Blackwell was born in Charleston, South Carolina. He grew up attending the North Charleston church of Christ where he obeyed the gospel in 1983. In 1991, he married Sheri Shepard. Don and Sheri have three children, Macy (married to Lee Roland), Lauren (married to Casey Cella) and Brandon. Don is a veteran of the United Air Force where he worked in AF Intelligence as an Imagery Interpreter. In 1994, he separated from active duty military service and moved to Memphis, Tennessee to attend the Memphis School of Preaching. Since his graduation in 1996, he has done local work in Bankston, Alabama, Statesville, North Carolina and North Charleston, SC. Don holds a Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies from Southern Christian University and a Master of Arts from Liberty University. He has made overseas mission trips to Australia, Germany, Africa and India. Don has worked with the Gospel Broadcasting Network since its inception and has served as the executive director since 2010. In addition to his work with GBN, Don preaches for the Southaven church of Christ and serves on the board of directors for World Video Bible School. He is the host of the video series *The Truth About* and the author of the book, *The Truth About Moral Issues*.

When I was a child, I was afraid of the Devil. I can remember people telling me, “If you do so-and-so, you’ll go to the Devil.” I believed that he lived in the ground. My brother and I dug in the backyard, thinking that if we went deep enough, we’d find the Devil. I thought I’d recognize him since he was red and had a tail and a pitchfork. It’s natural that a child would have misunderstandings about the Devil, but in truth,

most adults aren't much better. A Gallup poll done in May 2016 showed that 39% of Americans don't believe in the Devil (Newport). A Barna Research Group poll revealed that "nearly two-thirds of Americans do not believe in the Devil as a living entity." Sixty-two percent felt that Satan is "not a living being, but a symbol of evil" (Niebuhr). The Apostle Peter warns,

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8) (Holy Bible).

In the Bible, the Devil is called by many different names: accuser of our brethren (Rev. 12:10), adversary (1 Peter 5:8), Beelzebub (Mat. 12:24), Belial (2 Cor. 6:15), dragon (Rev. 20:2), enemy (Mat. 13:39), old serpent (Rev. 12:9), prince of this world (John 14:30), ruler of darkness (Eph. 6:12), Satan (Job 1:6), Tempter (Mat. 4:3), wicked one (Mat. 13:19), and several others.

What is the work of the Devil? A long list could be given, but we will notice just a few. He tempts men to sin (Mat. 4:1). He lays snares (2 Tim. 2:26). He takes the word out of the hearts of men (Mat. 13:3-9). He puts wicked purposes into the hearts of men (Eph. 4:27). He blinds men to the light of the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:4). He harasses the righteous (2 Cor. 12:7). He holds the world under his evil influence (1 John 5:19).

Our specific assignment is "*Satan, the Father of Lies.*" This description of the Devil comes from John 8 and was uttered by Jesus Himself as a rebuke toward the Jews. Beginning in John 8:38, Jesus said,

...Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:34-44).

First, observe that Jesus says that the Devil was a murderer from the beginning. His statement looks back to the Garden of Eden, as Satan deceived and lured mankind into evil, and thus brought death upon all of the human race. In this sense, he murdered mankind. Secondly, the Lord likened the Jews to the Devil, calling him their father. In what sense was Satan their father?

SATAN: THE FATHER OF LIES

Their actions were those of the Devil. They possessed his nature. Like father, like son. Guy N. Woods wrote, “It is the desire of the child of the Devil to do what the Devil does because they are of the same disposition” (Woods 176).

From verse forty-four, let’s do a contrast of God and the Devil.

| The Devil | God |
|--|---------------------------------|
| No truth in him (John 8:44). | I am the truth (John 14:6). |
| He is a liar (John 8:44). | The “God of truth” (Psa. 31:5). |
| Father of lies (John 8:44). | Cannot lie (Tit. 1:2). |
| Speaks of his own resources (John 8:44). | His word is truth (John 17:17). |

Considering the above contrast, we ask the question, “When a man tells a lie, is he following God, or is he following the Devil?” To ask the question is to answer it. When someone suggests that it’s sometimes okay to lie, he’s suggesting that it is sometimes okay to follow the Devil.

Our study will be outlined with three words and three questions.

Principles – What does the Bible say?

Problematic – Are there exceptions to the rule?

Proofs – Is it ever right to lie?

Principles -

“What Does The Bible Say About Lying?”

God hates lying. Proverbs 12:22 says, “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly

are his delight.” Proverbs 6 says, “These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him,” and then we have a list of what we might call “God’s top 7 list of sins.” These are morally sickening to God. Of the 7 things listed, lying is mentioned twice: a lying tongue and a false witness who speaks lies. This is particularly impressive considering that most of us would place lying at the bottom of the sin list, if it even made our list at all. We’ve got to start viewing lying the way that God views lying (Blackwell).

God forbids lying. This was true in the Old Testament. Leviticus 19:11 reads, “Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.” Exodus 20:16 lists one of the ten commandments, “Thou shalt NOT bear false witness against thy neighbor.” Lying is also forbidden in the New Testament. Colossians 3:9 says, “lie not one to another.” Revelation 21:8 includes in the list with the abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, and idolaters, “all liars.” The text adds that they “shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

The proverb writer tells us, “A righteous man hateth lying” (Pro. 13:5). Titus 1:2 says that God cannot lie. The Devil is the father of it, but God cannot do it. It is completely in opposition to His nature and character. Revelation 21:27 describes Heaven and says, “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie...”

Upon hearing these principles, that God hates

lying, that He cannot do it, that He forbids it, and that liars can't go to heaven, one would readily conclude that lying is something that a Christian should never do.

Problematic -

“Are There Exceptions to the Rule?”

Though the previous principles show that lying is sinful, there are situations and scenarios that have caused even good-intentioned people to stop and wonder if lying is always wrong. In this section labeled “problematic,” we will take up some of these cases.

Lying to Save Someone's Life

This situation, perhaps more than any other, has caused some to suppose that lying could be justified if it resulted in saving human life. The classic example is that of Nazi soldiers coming into your house, asking whether you are hiding Jews. If you say yes, it is presumed that they will be killed. If you lie, the scenario presumes that their lives will be saved. Advocates argue that surely under these extreme circumstances it would be right to lie. Please appreciate with me, however, that a wrong action does not turn into a right one just because the consequences are severe. Sin doesn't change into righteousness just because of a terrible outcome. Perhaps we could better phrase it this way: “The ends do not justify the means.” To quote scripture, God does not permit us to “do evil that good may come” (Rom. 3:8). This passage alone is enough to show the fallacy of lying to protect life. The idea that God is okay with me lying for the “greater good” is completely without biblical support.

Consider also Matthew 10:28, “And fear not them which kill the body [Nazis, in this scenario], but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [referring to God].” In other words, “Don’t fear men who might kill you, but rather fear and obey God instead, for eternity’s sake.” If there were no other verse, this one would settle the question about lying to protect life.

Those seeking to justify lying to protect human life frequently appeal to the hypothetical Nazi/Jew scenario. Allow me to share an actual true-to-life Nazi story. I’ve abbreviated the account originally appearing in the book, *The Hiding Place*. In the days when Holland was occupied by the Nazis, a woman named Corrie ten Boom had two nephews who were wanted by the Nazis. On a particular day, the nephews burst into the house. They were being pursued by the Nazis. The family quickly hid them in a hole in the floor under the kitchen table, a hole that was intended as a potato cellar. They laid a rug over the trapdoor to the cellar. Within minutes, there was a crash as the Nazis burst into the front door. The soldiers ran upstairs and began searching the house. Two soldiers entered the kitchen with their rifles aimed at the family. They demanded to know the location of the two boys. A young girl in the family, named Cocky, had been taught that it’s always wrong to lie. Her response to the soldiers was, “They’re under the table.” One of the soldiers grabbed the corner of the table cloth and lifted it as another soldier aimed his gun. Upon lifting the table cloth and seeing no boys, the soldier, in a fury, said, “Don’t take us for fools!” and

he left the room. Minutes later, the entire squad left the house (Sherrill 87-88).

With this true Nazi account in mind, here's the question, "What was the right thing to do in this situation?" Normally those posing the Nazi/Jew hypothetical scenario argue that lying will bring the best outcome. We suggest that there are several fallacies in this reasoning. First, we reiterate that we should never "do evil that good may come" (Rom. 3:8). Such would be situation ethics and is wrong. Second, unless you're omniscient (like God), you can't know that lying will bring the best outcome (as this real-life account illustrates). Third, you're relying on your own understanding rather than simply trusting and obeying God. Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." Fourth, you're ignoring God's promise to provide a way of escape. First Corinthians 10:13 promises that:

God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Fifth, you're assuming that life is more important than truth (which can't be substantiated by the Scriptures).

Vern Poythress wrote:

I want to raise the question of whether truth is more important than anyone's life. If the Lord tarries, we will all die physically-some sooner, some later...But life in this world, valuable as it is, is not everlasting. Our life, what is it? 'For you are a mist that appears for

a little time and then vanishes' (James 4:14).
By contrast, the truth abides forever (Mat.
24:35) (Poythress 95).

There's a very interesting thought in 1 John 3:16. It says that "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (presumably to protect them). It is interesting that the Bible says that we should **die** for brethren, but it never says that we are to **lie** for our brethren.

On one occasion, I was talking with a Christian brother who was arguing that it's okay to lie to protect one's family. I asked him, "What if to protect one's family, you had to lie and deny Christ. What if you were required to say, "I do not believe in Jesus!"? He responded, "Well, it would be wrong to do that." I asked him, "Why in one situation do you believe God is okay with you lying to save lives, but in another situation He's not okay with you lying to protect lives?" He said, "Well, this lie would be worse than the consequences." I then realized that he was making it up based on nothing more than his personal feelings on the matter.

Rahab and Lying

It is often asserted that there are situations in the Bible where people lied and their lies were met with God's approval. Perhaps the most commonly appealed-to Bible story is that of Rahab, the harlot. For that reason, we'll examine it. The argument takes this form: Rahab lied to protect the Hebrew spies. Later she is blessed for so doing. In fact, in the New Testament, she is described as being justified, therefore God approved of Rahab's lie.

Do we have in Rahab a case where a person lied and God was pleased with it? I do not believe this for a moment. In any of these scenarios where a person appeals to a Bible story to justify lying, the first question must be, “Did the person actually lie?” Sometimes, the answer is no. In Rahab’s case, she did actually lie. In fact, she tells several lies. The problem, however, is that Rahab’s lie is **never** condoned anywhere in the Bible. The assertion that God was pleased with her lie is merely an assertion. Hebrews 11:31 compliments Rahab because she “received the spies with peace.” James 2:25 says she received the messengers and sent them out another way. Her lie to the soldiers is never mentioned. Wayne Jackson wrote,

The case of Rahab is an example of God honoring a person due to her obedient faith – in spite of a personal character flaw. Admittedly she lied in the process of hiding the spies, and that was wrong. But her faith and obedience allowed her to obtain pardon from her blemished history. It is for the former that she is commended; the latter was never sanctioned (Jackson).

Lying and Deception

Some have struggled with the concept that lying is always wrong because they see cases of deception that they are convinced are not wrong. Before seeking to discuss this issue, please appreciate the following statement “All lying is deception, but not all deception is lying.” Let me give you some examples of deception that clearly do not fall into the category of lying. 1) Consider a basketball game. A player may fake to the

left and go to the right. The move may be deceptive, but it's not a lie. When the game is over, no one would accuse the agile player of dishonesty. 2) Consider a magic show. Magic is, in its most basic form, a game of deception, but it's not lying. 3) Consider what God told Joshua to do as the Israelites attacked the city of Ai in Joshua 8. The Lord told Joshua to set up an ambush. He instructed him to hide 30,000 men on the west side of the city by night. The next day Joshua was to attack the city from the east side. As soon as the army of Ai came out to fight, Joshua was to take his men and flee, as they had done earlier in defeat. When the men of Ai pursued, then the Israelites who were hiding on the west side would come in and attack the city while it was unprotected. Is this a form of deception? I would argue that it is, but it's not lying. God cannot lie, neither can he tempt or direct men to lie. Since God cannot lie, we conclude that there must be a distinction in what God directed Joshua to do and a man telling lies.

So what is the difference? Some people have argued that while God normally opposes lying, He makes exceptions during war activities. I struggle with this reasoning and find it inconsistent with the nature of God. Titus 1:2 says that He **cannot** lie. He hates lying. I find it unfathomable then that a war scenario would change this. The answer then must lie elsewhere. How is a game or a military movement different from an individual lying and telling something that he knows to be untrue? Theologians have offered various potential solutions to this conundrum, none of which have I found to completely satisfy my mind. The following,

however, is one solution to the “deception vs lying” dilemma that I believe has merit.

Vern Poythress argues that there is an important distinction between verbal statements that communicate fact and nonverbal actions which are left to interpretation.

Consider this rather lengthy quote from Poythress:

Grudem describes a situation in which he leaves a light on in his house when he goes on a trip. He intends to mislead thieves, but he is not lying. If a friend sees the light on, he may infer that Grudem is at home. Yet if he later learns that Grudem is in another city, he will take no offense. He knows that he just misinterpreted the meaning of the light. If, however, Grudem tells him that he will be at home, the friend can legitimately hold Grudem to his word. Verbal communication is different from leaving a light on or setting an ambush or feigning a retreat. It is different from a maneuver in sports in which the player with the ball fakes going in one direction in order to draw the defender that way, and then changes course to another direction. So what is different? When no words are involved, physical actions have to be interpreted. They are potentially multivalent in meaning. Does the action of a player charging in one direction mean that he will continue to go in that direction? Maybe, but maybe not. A skilled opponent knows that the player may change direction, perhaps multiple times. Does an army moving back from battle engagement indicate a genuine retreat? Or is it something else? Who knows? The “obvious” interpretation may lie in one direction. But the interpreter must make the decision, and **it is his decision**, not a decision “dictated” by some intrinsic, inalienable

meaning in the physical action itself...**Statements can be true or false**; by contrast, a football maneuver or a military maneuver is neither true nor false. The maneuver does not say anything, except to the extent that an interpreter reads in some significance and “concludes” what it says (Poythress 85-86).

Is this the answer to the “deception dilemma?” Perhaps. Does it completely satisfy? I’m not sure that it does. At the end of the day, there will likely be issues about deception versus lying that remain unresolved in your mind. For now, I conclude that while all lying is deception, not all deception is lying. I know that I never read of God lying. God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). I do, however, read of God directing action such as those in Joshua 8. The action is neither true nor false, but is ambiguous. Whatever the answer is, it cannot be that God: 1) is sometimes okay with that which is contrary to His very nature, 2) is sometimes okay with that which the Devil is the father of, 3) is sometimes okay with that which Revelation 21:27 puts in the category of the defiled and which cannot enter heaven.

Proofs - “Is It Ever Right To Lie?”

Is it ever right to lie? The answer, of course, is no. The following seven points will be useful in proving that lying is always wrong.

#1 - The Bible Teaches that We are be Imitators of God and of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:1 says “Be ye therefore followers of God.” God cannot lie. Paul wrote, “Be ye followers of

me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). Hebrews 4:15 says that Christ was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” In every situation, we simply need to ask, “What would Jesus do?” The answer will always be He would not lie. No matter how emotionally packed the situation, no matter the consequences, Jesus didn’t lie. He is our perfect example. Lying is always wrong.

#2 - Right and Wrong are Not Determined by Earthly Consequences.

Sometimes doing right is very costly. Jesus told the rich young ruler that doing right would cost him all that he had. Doing right cost the Apostle Paul beatings and abuse. When we begin to determine right and wrong based on the earthly consequences, we are going to get off track spiritually. 1 John 3:4 says, “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” This is how I determine right and wrong. When a man lets the law of God determine right and wrong for him, rather than the earthly implications, he’ll realize that lying is always wrong.

#3 - Revelation 2:10 says, “Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.”

The context of this verse is not **until** death, but rather **unto**. The gist of the passage is “Be faithful and do right even if it costs your life.” The truth is more precious than life itself. God is the God of truth (Psa. 31:5). I always want to be like Him. Remember that Jesus said, “Fear not him who can destroy the body,

but rather fear him who can destroy both the body and soul in Hell” (Mat. 10:28). Don’t be afraid of physical death. Be afraid of sinning and losing your soul. Lying is always wrong.

#4 - Revelation 21:8 says, “All liars shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

It doesn’t say some liars. It doesn’t say all, except those who were put in really tough situations. It doesn’t say all, except those who lied to protect human life. It simply says all. Lying is always wrong.

#5 - Titus 1:2 says that “God cannot lie.”

We would ask the question, “If lying were sometimes okay to do, then why can’t God do it?” It would be assumed that God could lie, at least under those limited circumstances. That is not, however, what we find. God can never lie. Why? Because lying is always wrong. Why did Jesus never lie? If mercy justifies lying, why can’t the God of all mercy of lie? The answer is that lying is inherently evil. It is “of the Devil.” Lying is always wrong.

#6 - Satan is the Source of Lying.

We’ve covered this point in great detail. The New King James says of Satan in John 8:44, “When he speaks a lie, **he speaks from his own resources**, for he is a liar and the father of it” (NKJV). Matthew 5:37 says, “Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is **from the evil one**” (NKJV). When

a man lies, he doesn't get it from God. Lies are "from the evil one." He's the father of it. To suggest that it is sometimes all right to lie is to suggest that it's sometimes all right to stop following God and to follow the Devil. I reject that with every ounce of my being. Lying is always wrong.

#7 - God Will Provide a Way of Escape.

It was suggested by someone trying to defend lying that sometimes one simply must choose the lesser of two evils. First Corinthians 10:13 says differently. It reads,

God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

We can rest assured that God's way of escape will not be trading one sin for another. Lying is always wrong.

Conclusion

The more I study lying, the more I am convinced that it is a very serious error for a Christian to hold that lying can sometimes be right. It is a misunderstanding of God Himself. Proverbs 6:17 says, "God hates the lying tongue." Psalm 31:5 calls God the "God of truth." The Psalmist wrote, "For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth." (Psa. 33:4). Perhaps the biggest lie of the Devil has been to convince men that God is actually okay with lying.

Works Cited

- Blackwell, Don. *The Truth About Moral Issues*. Maxwell, TX: World Video Bible School, 2014.
- “Holy Bible.” *King James Version with Strong’s Numbers* (KJVS). OakTree Software, Inc., n.d.
- Jackson, Wayne. “Does the Bible Sanction Rahab’s Lying?” n.d. <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1324-does-the-bible-sanction-rahabs-lying>. 14 April 2018.
- “New King James Version with Strong’s Numbers (NKJVS).” OakTree Software Inc., n.d.
- Newport, Frank. “Most Americans Still Believe in God.” n.d. <http://news.gallup.com/poll/193271/americans-believe-god.aspx>. 13 April 2018.
- Niebuhr, Gustav. “Is Satan Real? Most People Think No.” 10 May 1997. <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/05/10/us/is-satan-real-most-people-think-not.html>. 13 April 2018.
- Poythress, Vern. “Why Lying is Always Wrong: The Uniqueness of Verbal Deceit.” *The Westminster Theological Journal* (2013): 83-95.
- Sherrill, Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizabeth. *The Hiding Place*. Carmel, NY: Guideposts, 1971.
- Woods, Guy N. *The Gospel According to John*. Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, 1989.

The Devil: Real Or Fictional

Robert Jefferies



Robert Jefferies is a native of Memphis, Tennessee. He is married to the former Blair McCall, also of Memphis. They have three children: Aylin, Hilton and Weston. Robert served as minister for the Smyrna congregation in McMinnville, Tennessee from 2002-2007. He also taught Bible and coached high school basketball and baseball for Boyd Christian School. Since 2007 he has served as one of the ministers for the Southaven Church of Christ.

INTRODUCTION

Do you believe the devil is real or simply a figment of one's imagination? Is he some made-up fictional character or is he a real being? According to an article in the New York Times written by Gustav Niebuhr, he cites a poll taken by George Barna, that notes the following, "after polling 1,007 Americans who claim to be religious, two-thirds of the individuals polled, said they do not believe the devil is a real being" (Niebuhr). Why is this the case? Perhaps, it is because of the pictures that come to mind when we think of the devil.

What image comes to mind when most people think of the devil? On television the devil is pictured as a cartoon character that is red, has a pitchfork in his hand, horns on his head, and hooves on his feet. Often times, there will be a contrasting character that will rival the devil in the form of an angel. One representing good

and the other representing evil. Did you know this view of the devil cannot be found in the Word of God? In fact, it is believed the origins depicting the devil this way can be traced back to paintings in Greek and Roman Theology, as well as the literary works of *Dante's Inferno* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* where certain images are blended together that have heavily influenced the way people picture the devil. Consider the following images from one source online... 1) The cloven hooves, horns, tail, and pointed beard can be traced to a Satyr in Roman mythology. A Satyr was a man with a goat's ears, legs, tail, horns, and cloven feet. He was associated with lust, cruelty, and bad behavior. 2) The pitchfork is a part of Greek mythology. Pluto was a Greek god who always had a pitchfork in his hand. He was believed to be the ruler of the underworld. 3) In many images the devil is red. Red is associated with blood, violence, passion, and fire. In times past, red haired people were considered evil because of this connection. It is interesting to note the devil is not always painted in the same color. Sometimes, he will be painted in black. Black is associated with darkness. He is pictured opposite of the God of Heaven who is associated with light (*Christianity stackexchange*).

Unfortunately, this has resulted in many people believing that the devil is just the figment of one's imagination. This thought has also caused many to believe the same thing about the place called Hell.

This manuscript is designed to lay the foundation for the rest of the lectureship and to serve as an overview to help us have a better understanding of the devil.

What Does It Matter?

Why does it matter whether I believe the devil to be real or make believe, fact or fiction? Should it really matter to the Christian one way or the other if the devil is real or not? In writing to Timothy, the Apostle Paul wrote, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). The Apostle Peter wrote God has given us all things that pertain to “life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). The book we possess that we call the Bible, reveals words that come from the breath of God are given for a purpose. That purpose is to give us everything we need to know that will be profitable for what we need in this life. Jesus said “he that hath ears, let him hear” (Luke 8:8). Did you know in both the Old and New Testaments God has vital information we need to hear? Throughout the Scriptures, He has given us vital information regarding the Devil.

It matters, because the Bible treats him as a reality.

For years, there was an administration in the White House that refused to take a strong stand admitting that the Islamic terrorism truly existed. “Consider what retired Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn (who also served as the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency) said, ‘You can’t defeat an enemy that you don’t admit exists and I think that we have to clearly define what the enemy is. That’s number one.’ Christians have an enemy; his name is Satan – he is real!” (Scherffius 390-391). We have to admit that he exists.

In the Word of God the name “Satan” is found fifty-six times and “Devil” is found sixty-one times. Even if his name was only referenced on one occasion

that would prove his reality. If we do not believe Satan is real based upon the evidence found in the Word of God, then why would we believe anything God says about any other subject?

Let's notice just a few passages that directly describe him in both the Old and New Testaments. In what may be the oldest book in the Bible, Satan's name is found fourteen times, all of which appear in the first two chapters of the book. Chronologically, the very first time the devil is referenced in the Scriptures is as the serpent in the Garden of Eden when he lies to Eve and tempts her through the lust of the flesh, eyes, and pride of life.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Gen. 3:1-6).

In the New Testament, Jesus speaks of His reality. In Matthew 4, Jesus is fasting in the wilderness. In the midst of his forty days there, the devil goes to work,

tempting him through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Each time Jesus fights against him with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Eph. 6:17-18). The Apostle Peter, speaks of his reality, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). In this passage, not only does Peter acknowledge the reality of his existence, but also tells us we need to be extremely mindful of him and watch for him.

It matters, because we need to know whom we are fighting. Whenever a military goes into battle, it is important to know who their enemy is. In sports, it is important to know the opponent one is facing. In the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, Paul pictures Christians in a fight and the Devil is our enemy. “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). In knowing who we are fighting, it will also influence the way we fight.

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. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:12-17).

If he is not real, would that not change the manner in which we fight?

Is Satan Real?

Satan has real origins. Although there is not a single passage to which we can turn that gives us the exact origin of Satan, there are some conclusions we can note pertaining to his origin.

Wayne Jackson has written the following information pertaining to the origin of Satan.

First, it is certainly clear that Satan is not of the nature of deity. Deity cannot be restrained (Job 42:2), and is all-powerful (Gen. 17:1). On the contrary, the devil is clearly not omnipotent as evident by the following: (a) His power to afflict was limited (Job 1:12; 2:6); (b) When rebuked by the messenger of Jehovah, he had to remain silent (Zech. 3:2); (c) His authority over the world kingdom was “delivered” to him (Luke 4:6); (d) He had to “ask” for the apostles (Luke 22:31); (e) He can “snatch” no one from the Lord’s hand (John 10:28); (f) When resisted, he flees (James 4:17); and, (g) When cast into hell he will be powerless to resist (Rev. 20:10). To sum it up: (1) Deity is all-powerful. (2) But Satan is not all-powerful. (3) Thus, Satan is not deity.

Second, since the devil is not of the nature of deity, it is obvious that he is a created being, for all things and beings (outside of the class of deity) are the result of creation – “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities,

or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Col. 1:16); this would include Satan as he originally was. It might also be mentioned at this point that all created things had their origin at some time during the creation week of Genesis 1.

Third, the Bible reveals that all things, as they were originally created, were good. “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Gen. 1:31). This means that the being known in the Bible as Satan was not created as Satan, i.e., as an adversary. He was created good, but he became bad (Jackson 107-108).

Satan has real occupations. Satan has real goals that are stated in the context of a real being attempting to carry them out. What are his occupations? 1) **To accuse us.** In the book of Revelation, John records this about the Devil,

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).

The word Satan, literally means “accuser, slanderer” (Thayer). He makes false charges about God’s people. It was Satan that accused Job of only following God because of what Job would get from Him. He is only following you because he has been blessed financially, and lives in a nice area and feels protected (Job 1:3, 10). In essence, Satan was saying Job did not really love God nor did he have a desire to serve Him. Satan said if you remove all of Job’s blessings, he will curse

you (Job 2:11). Job will turn his back on you. Did you know Satan still accuses the people of God today? Have you ever had someone say something about you that is not true? Perhaps accused you of this or that and there was no truth to it. Maybe someone has slandered you because they are jealous of all the good you have done. Please understand, the source of this behavior goes back to the Devil. Mark Turner makes this observation, “He uses various individuals to accuse God’s people of being legalistic, when they are simply trying to obey Him. Sometimes people are accused of being five steppers and Campbellites” (Turner 125). Satan uses these accusations to slander and discourage the people of God, and sometimes people just give up.

What are his occupations? 2) **To deceive.** When we turn back to the opening pages of the Word of God we are taken to the Garden of Eden. It is there God has created a beautiful place for Adam and Eve to live. There was only one restriction given to them.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Gen. 2:16-17).

However, shortly thereafter, the devil comes on the scene in the form of a serpent and begins to sow his seeds of deception into the mind of Eve.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye

shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die (Gen. 3:1-4).

Two points to consider from this passage. First, the Bible uses the word “he” to describe him, which indicates a real personality was and is active in his work. Second, the devil used the Word of God, but he also added one word. That one word changed the entire message. The message was designed to deceive mankind. During our Lord’s ministry, Jesus spoke about this very occasion when He spoke to the religious leaders of His day,

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44).

When Jesus describes him as the father of lies, He is telling us the devil is the source of lies. Lying begins with him. He was the one that introduced lying to mankind. In addition to the Garden of Eden, we can also see the deception of the devil as he tries to tempt Jesus in the wilderness. Jesus knew through every temptation the devil was simply deceiving him and would not be able to deliver on the declarations he made. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul sheds light upon the event in the garden describing the devil’s work this way,

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:3).

What does Paul fear? That they would be beguiled by the devil. The word “beguile” means “to deceive” (Strong’s). Satan is ready to take advantage through one of his crafty schemes just as he did with Adam and Even (2 Cor. 2:11). Later in this same chapter, Paul wrote, “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14). Albert Barnes shares the following information concerning this passage,

...we are not to expect that Satan will appear to man to be as bad as he is. He never shows himself openly to be a spirit of pure wickedness; or black and abominable in his character; or full of evil and hateful. He would thus defeat himself. It is for this reason that wicked people do not believe that there is such a being as Satan. Though continually under his influence and led captive by him at his will, yet they neither see him nor the chains which lead them, nor are they willing to believe in the existence of the one or the other (Barnes).

At the end of God’s Holy Word, the Apostle John gives the Devil this description, “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Rev. 12:9). When a person lies, they take on this characteristic of the Devil. Jesus said “Ye are of your father, the Devil” (John 8:44). Luke recorded

this about Ananias, “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” (Acts 5:3).

What are his occupations? 3) **To influence others to be lost.** Consider once again the Apostle Paul’s statement to the Corinthians, “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3). According to the *English Standard Version*, the word “simplicity” carries with it the idea of “pure devotion.” Jesus wants His followers to be completely devoted to Him and His cause. Notice what Luke records, “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). Consider what Matthew recorded,

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon...He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad (Mat. 6:24; 12:30).

We are either on the Lord’s side or the Devil’s side. If we are not on the Lord’s side, we will be lost eternally. In writing to the Galatians Paul wrote,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

The devil wants nothing more than to see us turn our back on Christ and to be lost eternally (Gal. 5:4).

What are his occupations? 4) **He Tempts.** He tempts us in three ways. The lust of the flesh, eyes, and pride of life (1 John 2:16). Each of those ways can be seen in the wilderness in the life of Jesus.

Robert Whittmore said on one occasion, “A person’s life can be divided into three realms; social, business, and religious” (Whittmore 219).

Many sins that people engage in often times are social in nature. Meaning they engaged in this sin because someone else they knew was doing it too. How many people use bad language, drink, smoke, or steal, because they saw or heard someone else using it?

In the business world, how often have there been individuals that have lied and cheated to work their way to the top?

In the religious world, how many people have given into the temptation to do things according to their wants and desires instead of God’s wants and desires. Many people live by the philosophy of the people of old, “Every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:25) as they served God.

Satan has a real ordination. That is, he is ordained to a real fate. What is his fate? Notice the word spoken by Jesus, “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat. 25:41). Consider the words of John,

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 (Rev. 20:10).

Would a fancy restaurant hold a reservation for a fictional guest? Would God have a reservation for a fictional being?

What Now?

Once I know that Satan is a real being, what do I do about him? Imagine you are taking measures to protect your house from a burglar. You and your spouse are discussing it, but you did not feel the need to do anything because you believe “we will not get robbed.” Then someone breaks in. Now it’s real. What measures would you take to protect yourself in the future?

1) *Protect the perimeter.* In the 1970’s when my dad lived in the Memphis area, he came home one day and noticed that his house had been broken into and several items were stolen from his home. The first thing he did to protect himself in the future was to put in an alarm system. That alarm and the noise it would make is designed to cause would-be burglars to think twice before breaking in. How do we keep Satan away? First, let consider what the wise man Solomon wrote, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). The word “keep” means to “guard” (Strong’s). We have to be on guard and protect ourselves. We have to be diligent about it. Meaning that it is going to require some effort and we have to stay at it. Second, we need to surround ourselves with godly people. Growing up, my parents always told me to choose my friends wisely. That was good advice then and now. Everyone, young and old, needs to be careful in choosing their friendships. The Apostle Paul

wrote, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33). In the Old Testament, the wiseman, Solomon, offers these inspired words of wisdom, “The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray” (Prov. 12:26 NKJV). Another proverb to consider is found in Proverbs 18:24, “A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (ESV). A person who makes many friends may invite destruction. In order to make friends we have to reach out to others, but if we do so indiscriminately we invite problems. It is not the number of friends a person has, but the quality of the friends. Friends are designed to bring blessings to our lives, but sometimes they can lead us down the wrong path. It is better to have no friends than bad ones. Unfortunately, some are so starved for friendships, that they make friends with anyone who will give them any kind of attention. Even to the point of becoming friends with the Devil. Many sins people engage in often times are social in nature. Meaning they engaged in this sin because someone else they knew was doing it too. Let’s make sure we protect ourselves from the Devil and his devices, which could possibly be our friends. Why surround myself with godly people? They want what is in my best interest. The same cannot be said about the Devil.

2) *Arm ourselves for intrusion.* There are some who personally protect themselves in one way or another. For some, it may be pepper spray and for others it may be a gun. However, when a Christian goes up against the

Devil, only one weapon will work, the sword of the Spirit. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Eph. 6:18). What did Jesus use as His armor before the Devil? The Word of God. Every single time the Devil challenged Him to sin, Jesus replied, “it is written” (Mat. 4:4, 7, 10).

3) *Prepare to resist.* When I have a showdown with the Devil, how can I get him to leave me alone? First, I understand that he is real (as previously noted). Second, I understand how he works (as previously noted). Third, I need to meditate upon God’s Word, so I can know what I am supposed to do in this situation or that situation, just as Jesus did (Mat. 4:1-10). Fourth, I need to look for the way of escape. I cannot use the excuse, “the Devil made me do it.” Consider the words of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians,

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13).

Fifth, ask for help. Pray for wisdom in dealing with the Devil and temptation.

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him (James 1:4-5).

Sixth, think on things that are pure. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8). Seven, remember I am not alone. You have heard it said, “there is strength in numbers.” Notice what the Hebrews’ writer penned, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:5-6).

Works Cited

- Barnes, Albert. *Commentary on 2 Corinthians*. E-sword.
<https://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/11468/what-is-the-origin-of-the-devils-red-pointy-costume-and-pitchfork>.
- Jackson, Wayne. *The Book of Job*. Quality Publications. 1983.
P. 107-108
- Niebuhr, Gustav. <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/05/10/us/is-satan-real-most-people-think-not.html?mcubz=1>.
- Scherffius, Ronnie. *Military Intelligence: Knowing Our Enemy And His Devices*. *Soldiers of the Cross*. Don Blackwell. 2016
- Strong’s James. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. E-Sword.
- Turner, Mark. *Satan: Diabolical Ruler of the World and Enemy of God and Man*. Pulaski: Sain Publication, 2002. Memphis School of Preaching.
- Whitemore. Ronnie. *Living For The Master*. Lebanon: Sain Publications. 1987. Garfield Heights Lectureship.

Hell: The Destiny Of The Devil

B. J. Clarke



Bradley Joseph (B.J.) Clarke was born in Canton, Illinois, the son of Ted and Sherrie Clarke. His father is also a Gospel preacher and educator of preachers. B. J. married the former Tamela (Tish) Hall. He earned a BS and an MA in New Testament Text from Freed-Hardeman University. He is also an honorary alumnus of the Memphis School of Preaching. B. J. delivered his first sermon at age 9. He began full-time preaching in 1983 and has preached in numerous youth rallies, gospel meetings, and lectureships. He has done local work in Tennessee, Mississippi, and Arkansas. For 16 ½ years, he served as a preacher for the Southaven congregation in Southaven, MS. During that time, he edited the *POWER* Magazine, directed the annual *POWER* lectureship, and edited the annual lectureship book. He was a member of the adjunct faculty of the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions from 1989-1990. Currently, he serves as the Director of the Memphis School of Preaching. He is also the Director of FOUNDATIONS.

What will happen to me when I die? Will I continue to exist? If so, where will I be? Will I be conscious of my existence? Is there really a heaven? Does hell truly exist? If so, what is it like, how long will it last, who is going there, and is there any way I can avoid going there? These types of questions are on the minds of human beings across the world, including the so-called “Christian” nation of America.

So, how does the American population view the subject of the afterlife? According to George Barna's website, 8 out of 10 Americans (81%) do believe in an afterlife of some sort. Another 9% said life after death **may** exist, but they were not certain. Just one out of every ten adults (10%) contend that there is no form of life after one dies on earth. Moreover, a large majority of Americans (79%) agreed with the statement "every person has a soul that will live forever, either in God's presence or absence." 79% of Americans believe in Heaven while, interestingly, only 71% believe in hell.

What do Americans believe about hell? Barna's research discovered that four out of ten adults believe that Hell is "a state of eternal separation from God's presence" (39%), while almost one-third (32%) say it is "an actual place of torment and suffering where people's souls go after death." A third perspective, believed by one in eight adults, is that "Hell is just a symbol of an unknown bad outcome after death" (13%). Other respondents were "not sure" or said they that they do not believe in an afterlife (16%). (All of the preceding statistics come from the George Barna website, www.barna.com April, 2018).

Of course, the polls of uninspired men and women are not authoritative in determining the facts of the afterlife, and will judge no one in the last day. Rather, the words that Christ has spoken will judge men in the last day (John 12:48). We find the words that Christ has spoken in the books of the inspired Word of God. Jesus said that God's Word is truth (John 17:17) and the judgment of God is according to truth (Rom. 2:2),

and that truth is found in the inspired Books of the Bible (Rev. 20:11-12). So, what is the truth about hell as recorded in God's Word?

It Is An ACTUAL Place

Jesus regarded hell as an actual place. Many doubt the existence of hell, but Jesus spoke of it as an actual place. The words of Jesus Christ carry the ultimate weight because He is God the Son (Mat. 16:16; John 6:68). His words have the authority of heaven behind them (Mat. 24:35; 28:18-20; John 6:63). Some are surprised to discover that Jesus actually said more about hell than He did about heaven. Passage after passage records the fact that Jesus believed in the existence of hell. Even prior to Jesus, John the Baptizer, the forerunner of Jesus, predicted that Jesus would baptize some of his hearers "with fire...and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Mat. 3:11-12).

There was an actual place, known to Jesus and the Jews, that Jesus used to describe the actual place of punishment known as Hell. Louw and Nida's Greek Lexicon explains, "The Greek term translated Gehenna is derived from a Hebrew phrase meaning 'Valley of Hinnom,' a ravine running along the south side of Jerusalem and a place where the rubbish from the city was constantly being burned" (5). Knowing that His hearers would be familiar with this place, where the fires were burning constantly, Jesus employed this image to warn of a place in the afterlife where lost souls would experience a punishment which He likened to the perpetually burning fires in the Valley of Hinnom.

In fact, Jesus often employed the image of fire to describe the punishment of the wicked in the afterlife. He taught that “whosoever shall say, Thou fool, **shall be in danger of hell fire**” (Mat. 5:22, emp. mine throughout, BJC). He told His 12 disciples, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mat. 10:28). He labeled the Pharisees as “serpents” and a “generation of vipers” and asked them, “**how can ye escape the damnation of hell?**” (Mat. 23:33). On the Day of Judgment, Jesus will “say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, **into everlasting fire**, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat. 25:41).

The Holy Spirit regarded hell as an actual place. In addition to the words of Christ, which the Holy Spirit revealed to the inspired writers (John 16:12-15), the Holy Spirit also inspired a number of men to affirm the existence of hell.

Paul believed in hell. Although Paul does not use the word “gehenna” in any of his writings, he taught most definitely the concept of punishment after physical death. He taught that “**the wages of sin is death**; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). He had spoken already a few chapters earlier of the contrast between the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the disobedient:

Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that

are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, **indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil**, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile (Rom. 2:6-9).

He affirmed “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1), thus implying there **would be** condemnation for those not in Christ.

He anticipated a time when all would appear “before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). In the very next verse he wrote of the terror of the Lord, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences” (2 Cor. 5:11).

Paul’s inspired view that a time of wrath and punishment is coming for the wicked was made clear when he wrote that...

...no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience (Eph. 5:5-6).

Speaking of the Day of Judgment, Paul described it for the wicked as being a time when “sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (1 The. 5:3). In his second epistle to the Thessalonians he affirmed that a time is

coming “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 The. 1:7-9).

Paul warned that younger widows, if they began “to wax wanton against Christ” (1 Tim. 5:11), would suffer “**damnation**, because they have cast off their first faith” (1 Tim. 5:12). If indeed Paul is the author of Hebrews, the following passages clearly evidence a belief in hell:

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:26-31).

James believed in hell. He wrote of how lust leads to sin, and sin, when it is full grown, leads to death (James 1:13-15), undoubtedly a reference to the second death, which is depicted as the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). James also described the connection between the fiery

damage the tongue can cause and how it is “set on fire of hell” (James 3:6).

Peter believed in hell. He reminded his readers of how God “spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;” (2 Peter 2:4). The word “hell” here is not “gehenna.” It is a form of the Greek word “tartarus,” but since all souls in “tartarus” end up in “gehenna,” in the verses leading up to verse 4, Peter minced no words regarding the damnation that awaits false teachers:

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in **damnable heresies**, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves **swift destruction**. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and **their damnation slumbereth not** (2 Peter 2:1-3).

Peter closed out this same chapter by lamenting that if someone has escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour, and then goes back into sin, “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Peter 2:20). Their punishment will be even more intensified.

Peter concluded his epistle with a confident affirmation of what will happen on the Day of Judgment:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? (2 Peter 3:10-12).

Jude believed in hell. The following two verses are packed with meaning:

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in **everlasting chains under darkness** unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are **set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire** (Jude 6-7).

Jude also reminded his readers that when we seek to save the lost we are “pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 23).

John believed in hell. In his first epistle he made it clear that “He that loveth not his brother **abideth in death**. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that **no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him**” (1 John 3:14-15). In the Book of Revelation, he was even more specific about the reality of hell, when he described how “the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with

which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. **These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone**" (Rev. 19:20). In his inspired description of the Great White Throne Judgment scene, he affirmed the reality of hell:

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And **death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire** (Rev. 20:11-15).

In the very next chapter he informed his readers that "the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the **lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death**" (Rev. 21:8).

Notwithstanding the skepticism of our modern world, the testimony of Scripture is uniform – hell is an actual place. But who will populate hell? Once again, the only way to know the answer to this question is to investigate the Scriptures.

It Is An APPOINTED Place

According to Jesus, hell was prepared as a place for the devil and his angels (Mat. 25:41). However, the Bible teaches that hell is a place appointed for more than just the devil and his angels. It has also been appointed as the eternal dwelling place for the lost. To say that it is an appointed place does not mean that God has appointed people to go there against their will. It is to say that God has appointed a place of punishment for those who choose to live in sin, and that appointed place is hell.

Some believe in God, but mistakenly conclude that He is too loving to punish them in hell. They have forgotten Romans 11:22, wherein Paul beckoned his readers to “**behold the goodness and severity of God.**” They have forgotten God’s holiness! God is love (1 John 4:8), but He is also holy and therefore must punish sin (1 Peter 1:15-16; 2 Peter 3:9-12). Who are the specific residents that will live in this place?

It is a place appointed for the wicked. Jesus spoke of what would occur at the end of the world, “So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and *sever the wicked from among the just*” (Mat. 13:49).

It is a place appointed for the hypocrites. Jesus did not sugarcoat His warning to the religious leaders of His day, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, *ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves*” (Mat. 23:15).

It is a place appointed for those who do not do the will of the Father in heaven. Jesus addressed this very

subject at the close of the Sermon on the Mount. The modern religious world seems to believe that anyone who is religious will go to heaven, but Jesus taught otherwise.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Mat. 7:21-23).

It is a place appointed for those who obey not the Gospel. This is precisely the point affirmed by Paul in his correspondence to the Thessalonians:

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, **In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:** Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 The. 1:7-9).

It is a place appointed for the unrighteous. This is admittedly a broad term, but the Bible supplies a number of lists, cataloging the unrighteous souls who will populate hell. In fact, Paul's inspired pen provides some of the most comprehensive lists of those impenitent sinners whom God has appointed to live in hell:

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; **Being filled with all unrighteousness**, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that **they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them** (Rom. 1:26-32).

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you

before, as I have also told you in time past, that **they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God** (Gal. 5:19-21).

For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, **hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God**. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for **because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience** (Eph. 5:5-6).

John added an inspired list also when he wrote that “the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, **shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death**” (Rev. 21:8).

Some do not follow the Scriptures when it comes to identifying those who will be lost. Sadly, some are more than willing to accept the fact that the murderers of this world will go to hell, but some of these same folks reject the truth that adulterers will also go to hell. We must go by God’s list of the lost and not presume to come up with our own list. What kind of place will hell be for those who are on the list of the lost?

It Is An AWFUL Place

The Bible minces no words in its description of hell. It is absolutely an awful place. What makes it such an awful place?

It is described as a place of fire. Jesus explained that just as tares are gathered and burned in the fire, “so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man

shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And *shall cast them into a furnace of fire*: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth (Mat. 13:42).

It is described as a place of **unquenchable fire**. Some fires burn for a while, and then burn out. According to Scripture, this is not the way the fire of hell is portrayed. Jesus said,

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into **the fire that never shall be quenched**: Where their worm dieth not, and **the fire is not quenched**. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into **the fire that never shall be quenched**: Where their worm dieth not, and **the fire is not quenched**. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and **the fire is not quenched** (Mark 9:43-48).

Jesus could not have said any more clearly than He did in the above passage of Scripture that the fire of hell is unquenchable. Five times in these six verses Jesus characterized the fire of hell as unquenchable. In other passages, Jesus used the term “**everlasting fire**” (Mat. 18:8).

This concept of **eternal** punishment seems to elicit the biggest objection to hell. Many have argued that sinners will go to hell, but that they will be annihilated, i.e., completely burned up and extinguished from existence. Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that the wicked

absolutely cease to exist at death. They equate hell with the grave. An increasing number of denominational theologians argue for something they call “conditional immortality.” This view affirms that the wicked will be raised to suffer a punishment that is equivalent to their wickedness. After they have received adequate punishment for their sins, they will be annihilated.

Even in our own brotherhood, there are those who deny that hell is eternal. Edward Fudge, who served for several years as an elder in the Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston, Texas, wrote a book entitled “*The Fire That Consumes*,” wherein he endeavored to affirm that the judgment of God against sinners will be eternal extinction rather than unending conscious torment.” F. LaGard Smith and John Clayton have publicly endorsed the views of Edward Fudge.

Despite the denials to the contrary, the Bible still teaches that hell is eternal. On the Day of Judgment, when Christ sits on His judgment throne,

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand,
Depart from me, ye cursed, into **everlasting fire**,
prepared for the devil and his angels... And these
shall go away into **everlasting punishment**: but
the righteous into **life eternal** (Mat. 25:41, 46).

The plain teaching of Scripture is that the punishment of hell lasts just as long as the pleasure of “eternal life” enjoyed by those who go to heaven. In fact, the same Greek word is used to describe the duration of both heaven and hell! This is not a pleasant doctrine for those who are hell bound, but it is a Bible doctrine. It is also a motivational doctrine.

It is described as a place of outer darkness. Our Lord repeatedly characterized hell as a place of outer darkness. While many would come and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, those on the outside of the kingdom of heaven “shall be *cast out into outer darkness*: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mat. 8:12). In the Parable of the Wedding Feast, Jesus told of how the king saw a man without a wedding garment, and said to his servants, “Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and *cast him into outer darkness*; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mat. 22:13).

Speaking of the destiny of false teachers, who had forsaken the right way and gone after the wages of unrighteousness, Peter wrote, “These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; *to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever*” (2 Peter 2:17). The Book of Jude, which is very similar thematically to that of 2 Peter, speaks of how “the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath *reserved in everlasting chains under darkness* unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6). Just a few verses later, Jude describes the covetous false teachers as “raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, *to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*” (Jude 13). Heaven is the brightest place imaginable because “the *Lamb is the light* thereof” (Rev. 21:23)...“and there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for *the Lord God giveth them light*” (Rev. 22:5). Contrariwise, Hell is the darkest place imaginable

because God is not there!

It is described as a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. One of the most vivid and sobering descriptions of hell is embodied in its identification as a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Those who miss out on the kingdom of heaven, will not only be in outer darkness, but will also experience “*weeping and gnashing of teeth*” (Mat. 8:12; 22:13). “The wailing indicates suffering, the gnashing of teeth, despair” (Rienecker and Rogers 23). When the wicked are separated from the righteous on the Day of Judgment, the angels “shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be *wailing and gnashing of teeth*” (Mat. 13:42, 50). When the Lord comes back to judge His servants, He will take the evil servant “And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be *weeping and gnashing of teeth*” (Mat. 24:51).

This is also the destiny of the unprofitable servant. He will be cast “into outer darkness: *there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*” (Mat. 25:30). For that matter, for anyone who remains on the outside of the kingdom of God, “*There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out” (Luke 13:28).

It is described as a place of eternal separation from God. This is the very worst thing about hell. The best thing about heaven is the opportunity to live in the presence of an Awesome God! The very worst thing about hell is that God is not there! Those who are lost

will be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 The. 1:9).

It Is An AVOIDABLE Place

This is part of the good news of the Gospel! We do not have to die lost and go to hell. The sacrificial and atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross has made hell an avoidable place (Eph. 1:7; 2:11-18; Col. 1:14-23)! Jesus experienced the pain of the cross so that we would not have to experience the pain of an eternal hell! Of course, He provided a way of escape from hell but we have to be willing to avoid the behaviors that would lead us to hell. A number of texts contain implications that hell is an avoidable place. For instance, Jesus once said, “But *I will forewarn you* whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him” (Luke 12:5). The implication is clear – if we fear Him (respect Him with reverential obedience and awe) we will not be “cast into hell.”

Likewise, Jesus taught in very memorable imagery that it would be better to cut your hand or foot off, and cast them from you, and enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire” (Mat. 18:8). It would be better to pluck out an offending eye and cast it from us and enter into life with one eye than it would to have two eyes cast into hell fire” (Mat. 18:9). Of course, Jesus is not speaking of the need literally to hack off, or pluck out, the members of our bodies that are involved in sinful

behavior. Rather, He is teaching that if we will control the impulses of the flesh by denying self, we will be able to avoid going to hell (Cf. Mark 9:43-47).

The account of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) is proof that hell is an avoidable place, for Lazarus avoided going there. Even though the Greek word “hades” is used here, those who go to the torment compartment of Hades will certainly end up in “gehenna.” The rich man could have gone to Abraham’s bosom also if he had made different choices upon the earth. He was not destined to go to torment – his choices landed him there. Likewise, Lazarus was not guaranteed a ticket to the comfort of Abraham’s bosom – his choices on earth determined his eternal destiny!

The apostle Paul instructed the Colossians, “*Mortify* therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience” (Col. 3:5-6). The very first word of his admonition is proof positive that hell is an avoidable place. We do not have to experience the wrath of God upon us for our disobedience. If we mortify (put to death) fleshly lusts then we can avoid the wrath of God, assuming of course that we have been saved by His blood via our obedience to the gospel.

Conclusion

It matters not what the latest polls say about who believes in hell. What matters is that God still believes in it and has warned us in the Bible about its existence.

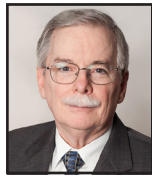
Since we will be judged by the Bible on the last day (John 12:48), let us be more impressed with what it says about hell, than what the opinions of man might be! Moreover, let's not just believe that hell exists – let us avoid it at all costs! The world will continue to vacillate and change in its view of hell. Let us never veer from the truth of God's Word! Let us make sure that we are ready to go to heaven!

Works Cited

- Barna, George. www.barna.com (Accessed April, 2018).
The Holy Bible: King James Version. Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version. Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2009. Print.
- Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* 1996 : Electronic Ed.
- Rienecker, Fritz. *Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Regency, 1980. Print.

The Origin Of The Devil

Tom Wacaster



Tom began preaching in 1972 after graduating from Brown Trail Preacher Training School in that year. He is married to Johnnie Ann. They have two children and five grandchildren. After graduating from Brown Trail, he attended East State University in Ada, Oklahoma. He has done local work in Oklahoma and Texas. In addition to local work, the Wacasters have done mission work in South Africa and Ukraine. Tom is actively involved in work and raising funds for the Kakinada School of Preaching in Kakinada, India. He has written thirteen commentaries, including a seven volume series on the book of *Psalms*, and his most recent two volume commentary, *"The Magnificence of Jesus: A Commentary on the Gospel of John."* He maintains a website where he writes a weekly column, and has built database systems for churches and preachers, at 'www.churchsoftwareplus.com.' He is now working on a two volume commentary on the *Gospel of Matthew: "The Majesty of Jesus."* He presently serves as Dean of Admissions at the Memphis School of Preaching and he and his wife live in Olive Branch, MS and attend at Forest Hill.

A good knowledge of the devil and his devices will go a long way to arming us for the battle. One author put it this way:

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle (Sun Tzu, www.goodreads.com).

My assignment is to address the origin of the devil. Theories abound as to exactly where the devil came from. In fact, most modern day “theorists” actually deny the very existence of the devil. To the skeptic and ill-informed, the devil is but the figment of one’s imagination. I say the ill-informed, because a large segment of the Western world no longer has a working knowledge of the only source that can answer the questions with regard to the devil’s origin, existence, mission, and methodology. In the absence of knowledge a void is created in the minds of men, and unfortunately, that void is being filled by the vain imaginations of men. That source of which we speak is, of course, the Bible. Apart from the Bible, men would be completely ignorant of any specifics regarding the devil, including the knowledge of his existence. If one wants a concise list of verses that speak of the existence of the devil let him consult such passages as Job 1:7-12, Matthew 4:8-9, John 14:30, John 16:8-11, 2 Corinthians 2:10-11, or 1 Thessalonians 2:18. The problem with regard to disbelief and/or ignorance regarding the Bible is not because we do not have abundant information; it is rather because men do not take the time to consult the only reliable source available to them.

The ill-informed may ask, “What difference does it make? Why is it so important to know about the devil, or even whether or not the devil exists? What if he is nothing more than a ‘myth’ or figment of someone’s imagination?” The late Isaac Asimov, who served as President of the American Humanist Association until his death in 1992 wrote:

The Jews developed the legend that Satan had been the leader of “fallen angels.” By the time this legend was developed the Jews had come under Greek influence and they may have been swayed by Greek myths concerning the attempts of the Titans, and later the Giants, to defeat Zeus and assume mastery of the universe. But whether Greek-inspired or not, the legend came to be firmly fixed in Jewish consciousness (Thompson 73-74).

There are also those who reason that belief in the existence of a real, living devil is not essential to following Christ. Those who have adopted this position fail to realize that a rejection of any doctrine of the Bible is a reflection on the integrity of the Scriptures. If God did not think a good knowledge about the devil was necessary, then why provide us so much information at all? Also, if the Bible is wrong with regard to the matter of the devil and his existence, then how could men trust the Bible to be right about anything? They could not!

Some years ago Paul Harvey broadcast what became one of his better known essays. That broadcast was later put into print, and was titled, *“If I Were The Devil.”* I do not recall where I came across my copy, but a search on the internet will provide the reader with a number of sources.

“If I Were The Devil”

By Paul Harvey

If I Were the Devil I would gain control of the most powerful nation in the world; I would

delude their minds into thinking that they had come from man's effort, instead of God's blessings; I would promote an attitude of loving things and using people, instead of the other way around; I would dupe entire states into relying on gambling for their state revenue; I would convince people that character is not an issue when it comes to leadership; I would make it legal to take the life of unborn babies; I would make it socially acceptable to take one's own life, and invent machines to make it convenient; I would cheapen human life as much as possible so that the life of animals are valued more than human beings; I would take God out of the schools, where even the mention of His name was grounds for a lawsuit; I would come up with drugs that sedate the mind and target the young, and I would get sports heroes to advertise them; I would get control of the media, so that every night I could pollute the mind of every family member for my agenda; I would attack the family, the backbone of any nation; I would make divorce acceptable and easy, even fashionable, for if the family crumbles, so does the nation; I would compel people to express their most depraved fantasies on canvas and movie screens, and I would call it art; I would convince the world that people are born homosexuals, and that their lifestyles should be accepted and marveled; I would convince the people that right and wrong are determined by a few who call themselves authorities and refer to their agenda as politically correct; I would persuade people that the church is irrelevant and out of date, and the Bible is for the naive; I would dull the minds of Christians, and make them believe that prayer is not important, and

that faithfulness and obedience are optional; I guess I would leave things pretty much the way they are.

In later years someone added one single line to Mr. Harvey's original essay: "I would convince men that the devil was not real, but merely a figment of the imagination of men." Yes, the devil is real. It is good therefore to study such a theme as this for this year's *Power* Lectureship. In this particular study we will examine the origin of the devil with regard to (1) his existence, (2) his rebellion and fall, and (3) his mission and work in the world.

The Origin Of The Devil With Regard To His Existence

The Bible gives no specific details with regard to the origin of the existence of the devil. This does not mean that God has left us in the dark as to the matter. Sufficient information is provided that will enable us to make an "educated guess" – what we might call circumstantial evidence. Here are some talking points relative to this part of our study for the hour.

First, we can know for certain that Satan does *not* possess the nature of deity. Deity cannot be restrained or limited except by its own will or nature. For example, God is absolutely holy. He cannot, by His very nature, lie, fail to achieve what He sets out to accomplish, be evil, or deny Himself (to name just a few). Regarding God, Job said, "I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can

be restrained” (Job 42:2). Yet it is clear from Job 1:12 and 2:6 that God did restrain the devil with regard to the harm that he desired to do toward Job. Zechariah 3:2 tells us that Satan had to remain silent when he was rebuked by the messenger of God. In the New Testament Satan had to “ask” Jesus that he might sift the apostles (Luke 22:31). James tells us to “resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Does that sound like someone with unlimited power, characteristic of deity?

Second, seeing that the devil is not divine, then he must be a created being since all things not being divine are things that have been created. We know from Colossians 1:16 and John 1:1-3 that Jesus created all things, and “without him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:3). The inescapable conclusion is that Jesus created the devil *as he was in the beginning*. This is an important point to note, and I will come back to it later.

It is also clear that the devil had to have been created in the first six days of creation since the Bible tells us, “for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and *all that in them is*” (Exo. 20:11, emphasis mine, TW). We will address the fall of the devil in our next point, but we must confess the limitation of our knowledge as to the precise point *in time* that the angels were created during that six day period, and how long it was before Satan took the plunge into rebellion. Such information is simply not provided in Scripture, nor does it matter insofar as our assessment of the devil is concerned.

Third, seeing that the devil is a created being, and in the absence of any Scripture to the contrary, we must conclude that the devil is a *spiritual being*, and more specifically an *angel*. He is not a physical entity that can be confined by earthly restraints. You will not find him literally “walking” upon the earth in some form of embodiment, and no Scripture so affirms that to be the case. It also seems apparent that the devil is not confined to some of the same limitations of mankind and the animal creation. There is a passage in Job that might help us here: “Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner-stone thereof, When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:7). Who were these “sons of God” who “shouted for joy” when God laid the foundations of this earth, if not the angelic host created to do His bidding? There is so much we do not know about the angels. Consequently that lack of specific details limits our knowledge of Satan, if indeed he were among the angelic host. Eric Owens, in his lecture at the Memphis School of Preaching this year (2018), made a significant observation:

There are four natures revealed to us in scripture in descending order; they are: the Divine nature, angelic nature, human nature and animal nature. Each nature has distinct characteristics that distinguish it from the others while connecting it to those who share the same natures. The devil (unless he has a nature not revealed in scripture) must have one of the four natures. The devil is not divine, he is not human

and he is not animal. He must therefore have been an angel, for there is nothing else for him to be (Owens 368).

There is one more point that begs consideration having to do with whether or not the devil was an angel. In Jude 9 we find the record of an incident that took place between Michael the archangel and the devil:

But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

The point to be made here is the apparent equality that existed between the devil and Michael. Neither of the two appears to be inferior to the other, as was the case in Job 1-2 when the devil confronted God. In the latter case it is rather obvious that Satan was subservient to God at all times. It should also be noted from Jude 5-9 that the context is describing the state of angels who had left their proper habitation, and are now kept in “everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6).

We are now ready to formulate a statement regarding the origin of the devil: He is a created being of the nature of the angelic host created by God to do His bidding. He was created good, but within a brief period of time, he rebelled against God, and became evil. This, quite naturally leads us to our second thought regarding the origin of the devil.

The Origin Of Satan With Regard To His Rebellion

That Satan was created good seems evident from a number of passages. “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day” (Gen. 1:3). Two words stand out relative to our study. First, “God saw everything that he had made.” Since the word “everything” is quantitative, then this would include both the physical and spiritual realms. It would include the angels, including Satan. The second word is “good.” Attached to that is the superlative “very”! The angelic host, therefore, was “very good.” This would not have been true had the devil been created “very bad”!

Consider also 1 Timothy 3:1-7, where the apostle Paul sets forth the qualifications of an elder. Pertinent to our discussion, the seventh verse reads, “Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” At some point the devil was condemned, implying that prior to that “condemnation” he, like other angels, stood in full fellowship with the Father. His “condemnation” is described in John’s vision on Patmos:

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with

him. And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night (Rev. 12:7-10, ASV).

Note especially that the “great dragon” (a clear reference to the devil) was “cast down” and that “his angels were cast down with him” (verse 9).

One more passage begs consideration. Peter informs us: “God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment” (2 Peter 2:4). Once again inspiration uses the words “cast down.” In all such passages there is the concept of condemnation. From these passages we can draw some obvious conclusions. First, since God created all things “very good,” then we must conclude that Satan was originally good. To suggest that God *intentionally* created the devil as an evil being whose sole purpose was to tempt men to sin would produce a serious problem with James’ observation that “God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man” (James 1:13). Had God created the devil evil then critics could rightfully say God is culpable in the temptation of men. In the words of Paul, “God forbid!”

Second, at some point Satan fell into condemnation. It is superfluous to ask, “Who tempted Satan?” We acknowledge that there are some things that will remain a mystery until our Lord comes again. Even then, when all of God’s children have gone home to be with the Father, I suspect that there will be some

questions that will remain unanswered, or that we will no longer have a desire to know the answer. It seems clear that since our Lord said relative to the devil that “he abode not in the truth” (John 8:44), that at some point Satan did abide in the truth. To put it another way, “Satan abode in the truth until such a time as he ‘abode not in the truth.’”

Third, there does not appear to be any means available for fallen angels to be *redeemed*. We recall from 2 Peter 2:4 that upon their rebellion, angels were “cast into pits of darkness to await the judgment.” Do not ask me how Satan can continue to “go about like a roaring lion” if he is said to be confined to pits of darkness. I do not know. Jude tells us: “And angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6). I am confident that the Gospel is the chain that binds Satan at this present hour. The devil does not dwell in light, nor does he walk in the light. To that extent he is “kept in everlasting bonds” by the power of God’s Word.

One more observation is in order before we move to our final point for this hour’s study. The evil nature of the devil, and his certain condemnation, are reflected in the various names and titles that inspiration has attached to this evil being. He is called “Beelzebub,” or “Lord of the flies” (2 Kings 1:2). In the New Testament he is called “the evil one” (Mat. 13:19), the “serpent” (2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9), the “prince of this world” (John 12:31), the “prince of the powers of the air” (Eph. 2:2), the “tempter” (Mat. 4:1), the “deceiver” (Rev. 12:9), a

“murderer” and the “father of lies” (John 8:44), and “a roaring lion...seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Such terms are never used in connection with faithful, godly beings who are subservient to the will of the Father. At the same time, these verses do describe someone active in the sphere of God’s creation, whose sole purpose is to destroy all those created in the image of God. This leads us to our third point.

The Origin Of The Devil Relative To His Operation On The Earth

Satan’s first sphere of operation in his rebellion against God took place in heaven (Rev. 12:7-11). Consequently he was cast out of heaven into the earth. John also tells us that he not only attempted to destroy our Lord *prior to His arrival upon this earth* (Rev. 12:1-2), but continues to fight against God and His divine purpose even to this day.

And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman that brought forth the man child...And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 12:13, 17).

Genesis 3:1-17 contain a record of what appears to be Satan’s first attempt at the destruction of the souls of men. Unfortunately he was successful in his attempt to seduce men to sin. Precisely how long after the creation this took place we are not told, but I get the impression it

was within a short period of time – a few days, perhaps weeks, or at the most, only a few months. Regardless of the time it took to turn the hearts of Adam and Eve away from God, the sin of the original pair occurred, and the consequences thereof continue to exist in every generation. Satan’s mission is clearly revealed in that divine record. Very simply, that mission is to destroy the human race in hell. Consider, then, the following aspects of his mission as it originated in the Garden, and will continue until Jesus comes again.

First, it is a *mission* to which the devil is committed. There is no indication that he will repent. To the contrary, he, and all of his angels will be cast into that “eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat. 25:41).

Second, as to his *method*, it is through the means of deceit and deception. The devil does not have miraculous powers by which he can force men to sin. Those who claim “the devil made me do it” contrary to their will have been deluded and deceived into thinking that passing the buck is a legitimate excuse. Many years ago a South African preacher observed, “Adam blamed the woman, the woman blamed the snake, and the snake didn’t have a leg to stand on!” The ability of Satan to deceive and seduce men to sin is clear from a wide array of passages such as 1 Timothy 4:1-3, 2 Timothy 4:2-4, 2 Corinthians 4:4, 2 Corinthians 11:14-15, and Luke 8:12.

Third, knowing the devil’s mission and his method, we must be cautious that we not *underestimate the cunning and wiles of the devil*. He is a “roaring lion” (1

Peter 5:8), and we must be on our guard at all time. At the same time we must not overestimate him. He is a coward, and he will flee if we resist him (James 4:7). We have the whole armor of God, including the sword of the Spirit so that we might engage the battle (Eph. 6:10-17). When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He did not fail to use the same weaponry given to us. “It is written” were words spoken in His effort to repel the darts of the wicked one, and after three attempts by the devil, utilizing “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life” (1 John 2:15-17), our Lord was victorious in His first recorded battle with the devil. We too, can be victorious if we will but use the word and always remember, “It is written!”

Conclusion

It has been the purpose of this study to consider the origin of the devil with regard to (1) his existence, (2) his condemnation, and (3) his sphere of operation. Knowing the origin of the devil helps me appreciate the fact that his power, and his time, is limited. It helps me realize that victory shall be mine if I but stay faithful unto the end (Rev. 2:10). All I need to do is fight the fight, and heaven will eventually be my home. Some years ago the late Bobby Key wrote the following:

Theodore Roosevelt owned a little dog that was always getting into fights. The little fellow always took a beating. One day he tackled a mangy cur and took a real whipping. A man standing nearby said, ‘Mr. Roosevelt, your dog isn’t much of a fighter.’ Teddy replied, ‘He is a good fighter, but

he is a poor judge of dogs.’ Could it be that some of us underestimate our adversary, the devil? As a school boy I read a number of books. I had a habit of reading the last page first to see what happened to the villain. I wanted to be sure he got what was coming to him. Going to the beginning of the book, I would often find my hero in a lot of trouble. Could the good guy make it to the next page or even to the next chapter? Since I knew the end I wasn’t worried. No matter how the villain swaggered and seemed in perfect control, I knew his end was coming - his goose was cooked. I have a Bible that tells me where we came from and where we are going. At times it seems as if ‘Truth is forever on the Scaffold; and Wrong is forever on the throne.’ The devil acts as if he has the upper hand. He brags, boasts, and struts; after all he has education, politics, Wall Street and entertainment in his behalf. I have read the last pages of the Bible, and he is not in the picture. He is gone. I like the ‘no mores’ of Revelation. No more death, no more sorrow, no more crying, no more pain, and no more night. These things have passed away (Rev. 21:4). As we read the final pages of the Bible, everybody is right where he belongs. The devil is in the pit, and the Lamb is on the throne. Wicked men and women are in hell, and the righteous are at home with the Lord. We have the blessed assurance that everything will turn out all right in the end (Key 2).

When our Lord comes again, what a glorious day that will be! We will have all eternity to praise our God, and the origin and existence of the devil will only be a fleeting memory, if we remember him at all. What a wonderful day that will be!

Works Cited

- The Holy Bible*, American Standard Version of 1901.
Key, Bobby. *The Devil*. Four State Gospel News, July 1994.
Thompson, Bert. *Satan – His Origin and Mission*. Apologetics Press, October 1998: Montgomery, AL.
Owens, Eric. *The Enemy Who Brings The Fire: MSOP Lectures 2018*. Sain Publications, Pulaski, TN.

The Devil And His Angels: A Study Of Demons

John Moore



John is a native of Dripping Springs, Texas. John has served as an evangelist, teacher, preacher and minister of the gospel for over 30 years. He and his wife Carla work with Bear Valley Bible Institute International, and serves as the director of Bible Passages. Prior to his work with Bible Passages, John served as the pulpit minister for the Dripping Springs church of Christ, an instructor at the Southwest School of Bible Studies in Austin, and as a campus minister and director of the Bible chair at the University church of Christ in San Marcos, Texas. He is a certified public school teacher and a graduate of Southwest Texas State University, where he earned both a B.S. in Education and a Masters in Education in the department of Counseling and Psychological Services. He has done postgraduate work at the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, Jerusalem University, Austin Graduate School of Theology, and Abilene Christian University where he was enrolled in the Master of Arts in Religious Studies program. He has worked extensively in educational programs of the church and has years of experience in assisting and directing youth church and leadership camps. He is the narrator and author of *Searching For Truth*, and served from 2005 through 2008 as a co-editor of the monthly periodical *The Gospel Journal*. John is also the narrator and instructor of *Learning to Use the Greek New Testament*, a thorough study of New Testament Greek presented in 35 lessons on 13 DVDs.

Gargoyles, demon possession, and satanic incarnations have been the subject of many nightmares, fantasy books, and horror films. In the early 1970's they certainly captured my attention when the infamous television movie "Gargoyles" made its debut. Grotesque

monster-like figures used in the medieval church as symbols for evil were brought to life by Hollywood, and unfortunately they lived on in the memory of many a child who became afraid of anything that went bump in the night. While some may not always associate a gargoyle with a demon, these monster-like figures serving as downspouts in many ancient buildings have put a foreboding face on an ancient subject.

What are demons? What do they look like, and do they really exist? Sadly, the lines between fact and fiction or myth and reality are often blurred and confused. Much of what is said about the devil and his angels cannot be found in the Bible, and yet many have either become paralyzed by a pseudo-reality of the occult on one hand, or have a feverish fascination with it on the other. Thankfully, the powers of darkness and the fantastic myths of the human imagination do not have to imprison the human mind. Peace and liberty can be found in the light of the gospel when a proper understanding of demons is realized and viewed from within the framework of a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as Savior and King.

Do Demons Exist?

Found only in a few passages like Deuteronomy 32:17; Leviticus 16:8, and Isaiah 13:21, demons are little discussed in the Old Testament, and seem to be mentioned in association with Israel's idolatry and used to mockingly refer to the heathen gods (Brown 451) . Nevertheless, by the time of the New Testament, many

cultures and sources make some references to demon-like figures, and of course the gospel accounts make reference many times to their existence. According to the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, belief in demons was quite prevalent:

In Greek popular belief the world was full of demons, beings between gods and men which could be appeased or controlled by magic, spells, and incantations. They were first of all spirits of the dead, especially the unburied (an animistic concept), the ghost which could appear in varying forms especially at night... The work of demons could be seen in the disasters and miseries of human fate. Through natural catastrophes they shook the cosmos. Above all, they made men sick, or mad.

This, in my estimation, would account for a rather prolific reference to demon existence in the gospel accounts with little reference regarding their origin. Now whether or not the “demons” of Greek culture were real or imagined by Greek citizens is not important, for the New Testament clearly reveals their reality at the time of Jesus. Likewise, whether or not they existed in an overt form before or after the New Testament continues to be the subject of much debate. What is not refuted is whether or not Jesus had/has more power than the devil and demons, to which the Bible emphatically affirms that He does.

What are Demons?

The basic form of the Greek word *daimonion* (demon) is found no less than 79 times in the New

Testament (mostly in the gospel accounts) and should be translated as simply “demon.” Several translations use the word “devil” or “devils” for *daimonion* and thus many overlook the numerous references to demons, or may even assume the Bible is referring to the devil when it often it is referring to demons. To be sure, Satan is different from the demons, and yet they both are equated with evil and sinister desires (Mark 4:12), and the latter appears to be subservient to the former (Mat. 12:24). So what are they?

Demons appear to be of the same essence and classification as angels (i.e. messengers), and are even alluded to as such in Matthew 25:41 where “angels” seem to be used instead of demons (i.e. the devil and his messengers/servants). Guy N. Woods says that demons are “wicked spirits, under the direction of Satan, opposed to God, and capable of causing much misery to man” (232). The Bible reveals that they are personal beings characterized as morally wicked (Mat.10:1; Luke 7:21). They are deceitful (1 Tim.4:1-3; 2 Cor.11:13-15) and immoral (Gen. 6:4; Jude 6-7). Demons are invisible but also able to appear (Rev. 16:13-16). Demons are intelligent, for they knew Christ’s identity and power (Mark 1:14, 34; Mark 5:6-7). They know their own future judgment (Mat. 8:28-29), and attempt to predict the future (Acts 16:16). They are also filled with strength (Mark 5:3; Acts 19:16; Luke 10:17-18) and once had the ability to afflict people with various maladies both physical and emotional (Mat. 9:32-33; Mat. 12:22; Luke 8:26-36). Demons are recorded as “speaking” (Luke

4:33-37; Luke 8:30-36); “recognizing Christ” (Luke 4:41); and “trembling” (James 2:19), all of which are characteristics of personality.

Regarding their origin, efforts have been made to explain them as (1) superstition; (2) an accommodation to cultural ideas present at the time of Christ; (3) mental illness; (4) fallen angels; (5) wicked women; (6) or disembodied spirits of wicked men. The latter is referenced in *Questions and Answers* by Guy N. Woods as a view belonging to Alexander Campbell:

An induction of statements will reveal that (1) they were intelligent beings (Mark 1:24; 5:7-8); (2) they were wicked and were ultimately to face judgment (Rev. 9:11); and (3) they came from the “abyss.” These considerations have led thoughtful men to conclude that there were disembodied spirits of wicked men who in some way escaped from Tartarus of Hades and afflicted persons whom they seized. So strongly did Alexander Campbell believe this that in his lengthy and intricate discussions of the theme in his Lectures and Addresses he wrote, ‘We conclude that there is neither reason nor fact—there is no canon of criticism, no law of interpretation—there is nothing in human experience or observation—there is nothing in antiquity, sacred or profane—that in our judgment weighs against the evidence already adduced in support of the position that the demons of Pagans, Jews and Christians were the ghosts of dead men, and as such have taken possession of men’s living bodies, and have moved, influenced and impelled them to certain courses of action’ (Woods, 232)

Woods goes on to reveal that similar views were held in the first century by Philo (and other Jews), along with modern scholars like J.W. McGarvey. I mention these only to remind us that views regarding the origin of demons are numerous and varied.

It seems to me that the most likely answer regarding their origin lies in what is revealed in Matthew 25:41; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15, and Matthew 9:34. In all three passages, it is clear that Satan has ministers, angels, and demons that are his subordinates. If one can assume that all three of these designations are synonymous, then explaining the origin of any one of the three can explain the origin of all. Since, according to 2 Peter 2:4, some of the angels sinned and were cast down (which is a plausible explanation for Satan's origin) it seems likely that the origin of demons could be explained on this basis as well. Therefore, we may conclude that demons are angels that rebelled against God and "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation" (Jude 6), and are now serving as ministers and messengers of Satan.

Demons and Their Work

In Psalm 106:36-37 we learn that demons (here probably more closely linked to the idea of a pagan god) were agents of idolatry bent on turning Israel away from the true and living God. While it is true that a manifestation of a demon as characterized in the New Testament is nowhere seen in the Old Testament, we should not therefore conclude that they were not still at work. Perhaps they were working in a way similar

to how Satan and his angels are working today, not overtly visible or unrestrained. As we will see, the literal and visible manifestation and work of demons during the time of Christ appears to be a very limited and highly unique event. As mentioned above, the belief that demons were directly responsible for maladies, calamities, etc., though false, was embraced by many long before demons were actually released and allowed to torment and maim. Perhaps it is because of this widespread belief of a direct influence of demons that God allowed them to be released (similar to the imagery of Rev. 20) and work in an overt and visible fashion, so that Jesus could demonstrate His power over all elements of both the natural and spirit world. Anyone plagued and imprisoned by a belief in demonic powers (real or imagined) could therefore know the means and the One by whom these powers could be resisted and overthrown.

In the New Testament, much more is seen of the universal role and work of demons, especially as it relates to Satan himself. According to 2 Corinthians 11:15 they are used to implement Satan's evil plans. For example, in working for the rulers of the world, they are active in hindering the spiritual progress of believers, and in utilizing all the weapons of the evil one (Eph.6:10-12). While being in subjection to Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44), they are the originators of false teaching and promote it among brethren (1 Tim.4:1-3), even seducing them to believe a lie. During the first century, demons were allowed to wreak harm and hurt, inflicting people with physical ailments (dumbness – Mat.

9:32-33; blindness – Mat. 12:22; convulsions – Mat. 17:15-18; Mark 9:20; self-mutilation – Mark 5:5; Mark 9:22). They also caused mental disorders and irrational behavior (Luke 8:27-29; Mark 9:22). They inflicted problems upon God’s people giving them a “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:7). They also promoted selfishness and division within the church (James 3:13-16; 1 Cor. 10:19-21) and as ministers of Satan, they seek to do his will, devouring and destroying anything that is holy and righteous.

Demon Possession

Because there are no instances of demon possession in the Old Testament, it seems this was allowed for a unique time and place (as mentioned above). With the exception of four occurrences found in Acts 5:16; Acts 8:7; Acts 16:16; and Acts 19:13-16, all of the references to demon possession are found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In each of these cases, it must be emphasized that a demon possession did not force someone to sin. The victims of demon possession were never told to repent. Thus demon possession as revealed in the New Testament must not be seen in the way that Satan might work or tempt a believer then or now. Demon possession as revealed in the Bible inflicted its victim by gaining control of his body, creating both mental and physical abnormalities (e.g. Mat. 17:14-21; Luke. 8:26-38). Demon possessed individuals were struck with diseases and disabilities such as loss of speech, blindness, seizures, and mental disorders (Mat. 12:22). However, it must be emphasized that not all of these maladies were always the

direct result of demon possession. The Bible does seem to indicate, based on the reaction of witnesses, that many disorders resulted from natural causes.

Do Demons Exist Today?

Are demons working today? Just as Satan is working today and going about seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8), so the demons are seeking to destroy the church. According to James 3:14-16 they are the root cause behind “bitter envying and strife.” How they work, in what sphere, and to what degree is something that I cannot answer any more than I can explain the full extent to which Satan is allowed to operate. However, I can say that during the first century the work of demons was somehow expanded and allowed to proceed outside their normal sphere of influence, but their work and distinguishable characteristic were for that period alone. Neither before nor after the period of Jesus is the work of demons seen in this unique way.

Still further, no examples of their work in this unique and overt manifestation are found in the epistles. With the exception of the four times mentioned in Acts, all the examples of possession are found during the time that Christ lived on the earth. It must also be added that in the list of spiritual gifts for believers (1 Cor. 12:8-10) “casting out demons” is conspicuously absent. Also, as revealed by one commentator, “In Zechariah 13:2, the scripture seems to indicate that at the same time the miraculous gift of inspired prophecy was removed, unclean spirits would also be removed. Therefore, when the New Testament

was fully revealed and confirmed, the need for these miraculous signs no longer were needed, 1 Corinthians 13:9-10.”

The Power Of Jesus

While it must be concluded that demons exist today, were manifested in a one-time unique way during the time of Jesus, and at one time were allowed in a literal way to take up residence in human bodies, Christians must always remember the Jesus is greater and more powerful than Satan and his angels. Consider the words of the following author:

Attention in the New Testament is not focused on the demons themselves, but on Christ and His power to cast them out. What is important to know is that no matter what demons are, where they came from, nor how great their power, Jesus is greater and more powerful! He brings complete deliverance from evil in all its forms. The superiority of Christ's power was confirmed through his mighty works; works that included the casting out of demons. In order to be truly the Redeemer, Jesus had to engage in strife with demon-possession and prove He had power to overcome the power of the evil one, Mat. 12:28-29 (Harkrider, 2)

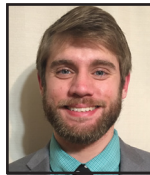
Another way of emphasizing this point is to remember that casting out demons was a “sign.” His ability to cast out the demons not only helped to demonstrate his Divinity, but His authority and power over unclean spirits (Luke 4:36). Power over the demons was also a sign that the rule and reign of Christ was and

is a present reality (Luke 11:20).

Finally, while there has always been a fascination with the occult, the devil and his angels among some, it must always be remembered that “the center of interest in the Gospels is the person of Jesus, the sufferers and the cures” (ISBE, 828). This is where we should make our stand and give our attention. Whatever demons may or may not be, whatever power they may or may not have, whatever we may or may not attribute to their work, they are nothing more than rebellious entities that cannot resist nor overcome the power of Jesus, who is “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Eph. 1:21).

The Devil's New Favorite Sin: Homosexuality

Sean Embree



Sean Embree graduated from the Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies in 2014. In 2015, he married Marley. Sean has been working with the Blanchard congregation in Blanchard, LA since 2014.

Is the Devil's *new* favorite sin homosexuality? In some ways the answer is yes, in other ways no. First, we will address how homosexuality is an old tool of Satan used in years gone by. The preacher wrote,

That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, 'See, this is new?' It has already been in ancient times before us" (All scriptures are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted, Eccl. 1:9-10).

The "inventors of evil things," then, are really taking the same old sinful practices but labeling them with new names, branding them with more appealing arguments, and disguising them as something good (Rom. 1:30). "And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14).

The Devil has been using homosexuality to ensnare the hearts of mankind for millennia. Consider that the

first mention of homosexuality in the Bible is in the first book, Genesis, where the destruction of the city of Sodom took place approximately 4,000 years before our time (Gen. 18:16-19:29). In Genesis 19:1-7, two male angels came to lodge in Lot's house for the night. Here, the men of the city of Sodom illustrate for us that this sin was not even a new sin in their day because of its already common acceptance among "all." "[T]he men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house" in order to know the angels "carnally" (Gen. 19:4-5).

When we come to the book of Leviticus (approximately 3,500 years ago) the Israelites were solemnly warned:

According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances (Lev. 18:3).

According to *Strong's Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary of the Old Testament*, the Hebrew word for "ordinances" (*chuqqa*) means "appointed, custom, manner, ordinance, site, statute" (para. 2722). What exactly was Canaan's "custom" or commonly accepted rule of living? Among other things, it was homosexuality. God commanded, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination" (Lev. 18:22). God explains,

You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you (for all these

abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled) (Lev. 18:26-27).

As we come to the book of Judges (approximately 3,000 years ago) we find that sodomy was alive and well, only this time in Gibeah which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin (Judg. 19:14). Lamentably, some in Israel had learned the customs of Canaan and acted accordingly:

As they were enjoying themselves, suddenly certain men of the city, perverted men, surrounded the house and beat on the door. They spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying, 'Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him carnally!' (Judg. 19:22).

The story is no different as we approach the New Testament where, approximately 2,000 years ago, Paul penned Romans 1:20-27:

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature

rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

Those who were coming out of the world and into the church had backgrounds no different than those doing so today; homosexuality being no exception. We should take courage in the fact that the struggle we are facing today with the influx of homosexual practice has been a struggling long fought – and won in many cases – by examples in years gone by.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you.** But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11; emphasis added).

Yes, homosexuality is an old sin, but the old remedy for it still works to create a new man: “you were washed, ... you were sanctified, ...you were justified” (1 Cor. 6:11). (cf. John 3:3-5; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 3:9-10).

However, despite the oldness of the sin it is relatively new in America in terms of its common

acceptance and positive appeal. In 1997, Hawaii became the first state to affirm homosexuality statewide, offering homosexual couples domestic partnership benefits. Since that time, 36 states and the District of Columbia legalized homosexual marriage until the landmark decision of the Supreme Court of the United States to legalize homosexual marriage nationwide on June 26th, 2015. Shockingly, according to the Pew Research Center, in 2001 57% of Americans opposed same sex marriage with only 35% approving it but in 2013 – just 12 years later – popular opinion shifted, now showing a 50% approval rating with only 43% opposed. Just 5 years later, a Gallup poll conducted in May of 2017 showed a 72% approval rating for the legality of gay and lesbian relationships.

But, is homosexuality really a sin? In 2015, a Pew Research poll showed that 63% of white mainline protestants said there is “‘no conflict’ between their religious beliefs and homosexuality.” Before we jump on that bandwagon, however, consider that Jesus said,

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it (Mat. 7:13-14).

The real question is not whether society at large approves of homosexuality – even religious society; the question is whether God approves of it.

Consider that the very first recorded acts of sexuality in the Bible between a married man and woman were blessed: “Then God blessed them, and God

said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it’ (Gen. 1:28). Further, God said, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:24-25). Although this one flesh union between Adam and Eve may have encompassed more than just the sexual union, clearly the sexual union was involved. Consider 1 Corinthians 6:15-16: “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For ‘the two,’ He says, ‘shall become one flesh.’” This “one flesh” relationship between Adam and Eve was given God’s unreserved approval.

In stark contrast to this blessed union, the very first recorded acts of homosexuality were condemned. Sodom and Gomorrah, the two infamous cities of Genesis 18-19, were explicitly accused of sin when the Lord said “their sin is very grave” (Gen. 18:20). Abraham, pleading with God to spare Sodom from destruction if He found enough righteous people in it, said, “Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?” (Gen. 18:23). (cf. Gen. 18:25). What then was their “grave sin” and “wicked” deed?

Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. And he said, “Here now, my lords, please turn in

to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." And they said, "No, but we will spend the night in the open square." But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally." So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, and said, "Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof." And they said, "Stand back!" Then they said, "This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them." So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door.

The only sin that explicitly matches Abraham's description of "wicked" is the sin that Lot, likewise, called wickedness: "And they called to Lot and said to him, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally.' So Lot... said, 'Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly!'" (Gen. 19:5-6). Homosexuality is, therefore, the grave sin condemned from the very first mention.

Some, however, have said that the sin condemned

in Sodom was not homosexuality but a lack of hospitality or some other sin. Sodom was certainly guilty of a lack of hospitality as well as attempted gang rape and doubtless other sins also (compare the analogy of Eze. 16:46-50). However, the only sin explicitly connected with its destruction by being named for us as “wickedness” by both Abraham and Lot was homosexuality. This did not excuse the other sins of the city but it most certainly did not excuse the sin of homosexuality as some attempt to do. Furthermore, the other two sins specific to the narrative of Sodom and Gomorrah’s destruction do not suffice to explain its destruction by themselves. As it pertains to their lack of hospitality, non-hospitality is incidental to homosexuality. That is, they would not have been concerned with hospitality because they were so concerned with fornication. And when we consider the other sin, attempted rape, there is no doubt this was heinous in the sight of God and abhorrent to the surrounding peoples but it still wasn’t what Lot called “wicked” because he was willing to let his daughters be raped at the hands of these cruel men. It is assumed that “righteous Lot” (2 Peter 2:7) knew giving his daughters over to this crime was wicked. However, rather than condemning that sin, he endorses it to protect the angels from homosexual sin.

However, there are many who wish to hold onto God with one hand and homosexual practice with the other. They contend that homosexuality was not condemned per-se, only the misuse of it (e.g. rape). But do the Scriptures teach that even consensual homosexuality is acceptable as long as it at least abides by

that boundary? Consider Romans 1:27. “Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.” The phrase “in their lust **for one another**” clearly involves a consensual relationship, yet it is still condemned by God.

Were rape and other sexual sins at least part of the downfall of Sodom and Gomorrah? To be clear, Jude, in verse 7, mentions God’s condemnation of their “sexual immorality” (“fornication” in Greek). So to say that rape, etc., had nothing at all to do with their destruction is not necessarily a fair statement. However, we do know two things: 1) The **only** act of fornication mentioned in the destruction narrative that the men of the city desired was homosexual fornication, and 2) we know that homosexuality cannot be denied as the cause for its destruction as Jude 7 says: “Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” One need only to harken back to the story of Sodom to see that the flesh they went after was of the same sex. So, while other sins of Sodom and Gomorrah may have played a part in their downfall, homosexuality is the preeminent sin of the list.

Remember, Jude said that Sodom and Gomorrah are “set forth as an example” (Jude 7). We would be wise to heed their example of punishment for their sin of homosexuality. In the forty-nine times the word

“Sodom” or the phrase “Sodom and Gomorrah” appears in Scripture it is without fail negative in its thrust and (either implicitly or explicitly) condemns the cities of sin. Consider a sampling of words connected with these cities:

- 1) God’s “anger,” “wrath,” or “vengeance” (Deut. 29:23; Jude 7)
- 2) “sin” (Isa. 3:9; Lam. 4:6)
- 3) “evil” (Isa. 3:9)
- 4) “wickedness” (Jer. 23:14; 2 Peter 2:7)
- 5) “abomination” (Eze. 16:46-50, cf. Lev. 18:22-30)
- 6) “iniquity” (Eze. 16:46-50)
- 7) “ungodly” (2 Peter 2:6)
- 8) “filthy conduct” (2 Peter 2:7)
- 9) “lawless deeds” (2 Peter 2:8)
- 10) “unjust” (2 Peter 2:9)

Equally as pointed are New Testament Scriptures about homosexuality. According to the New Testament, is homosexuality righteous or unrighteous?

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

According to Scripture, we would be deceived to believe that homosexuality could be righteous. Note how there are two terms for the sin of homosexuality: “homosexuals” and “sodomites.” *The Greek Dictionary*,

Louw and Nida, defines “homosexuals” (*malakos*) as “the passive male partner in homosexual intercourse.” However, it defines “sodomites” (*arsenokoites*) as “a male partner in homosexual intercourse” with the further comment that “It is possible that [*arsenokoites*] in certain contexts refers to the active male partner in homosexual intercourse in contrast with [*malakos*], the passive male partner.” This would not be a surprising conclusion since they say “other languages also have entirely distinct terms for the active and passive roles in homosexual intercourse” (pg. 772). Is homosexuality unrighteous? Yes, no matter what sexual role one fulfills in the act, the very act itself is sinful.

It is hard to argue that the New Testament affirms homosexuality, since every word used to describe it and every word connected to it in 1 Timothy 1:8-11 is starkly disapproving:

But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

“Yes, but **Jesus** did not condemn homosexuality,” someone will say. If this were true, would it be significant? Psalm 119:160 says, “The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous

judgments endures forever.” Therefore, even if it were true that Jesus remained silent about homosexuality, if it is condemned elsewhere in God’s Word (specifically the New Testament) we can be assured of that truth.

But, the Bible has more to say on this point. By way of illustration, if Jesus wrote a letter to be read by an apostle, would that letter be considered Jesus’s words? Of course. What if He dictated His words to the Holy Spirit who in turn delivered those exact words to the apostles? Would those words be considered Jesus’ words? Of course. With that in mind, Jesus said to the apostles,

These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you (John 14:25-26).

In whose name would the Holy Spirit be sent? Jesus’ name. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to teach the apostles “all things” and to make them remember all the words He had spoken to them while on earth. Would it not stand to reason that when an apostle condemned homosexuality that it was taught to Him by the Spirit who had permission to teach it from Jesus? Would it not stand to reason that the apostles were only teaching the words of Jesus that had been brought to their remembrance? In fact, one of Jesus’s apostles, Paul, condemned homosexuality in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and in the same book affirmed Jesus’ words about the Holy Spirit’s guidance. He said, “My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but

in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:4-5). Again, he affirms:

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor. 2:12-13).

Now consider John 16:12-15:

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

What the apostles declared was declared by the Spirit. But since the Spirit declared Jesus's words, the apostles declared Jesus's words – even about homosexuality. It has been contended that the apostles were products of their culture and commanded things that are henceforth irrelevant to a much distant and advanced society like ours. But the Spirit would not guide them into “all opinion” or “all culturally appropriate practice” but into “all truth.” The truth, according to Jesus and spoken through His apostles is that homosexuality is a sin.

But, did Jesus ever directly speak about homo-

sexuality? Sometimes it is contended that He did not speak about the topic, yet the following Scriptures say otherwise. After Jesus sent out His apostles to preach to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mat. 10:5-6), He instructed them,

And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of **Sodom and Gomorrah** in the day of judgment than for that city!" (Mat. 10:14-15; emphasis added).

In the next chapter, Jesus made a similar condemnation:

Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for **the land of Sodom** in the day of judgment than for you."

Obviously, the point of Jesus's statements was not to explicitly condemn homosexuality. The thrust of His message was the condemnation of the unrepentant cities of His day, yet the very fact that Sodom and Gomorrah

are placed in comparison with these unrepentant cities (as unrepentant cities themselves) tells us that Jesus did not approve of homosexuality. The day of judgement, though more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, will not be favorable as they will “suffer the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7). The cities are implicitly condemned from the very mouth of Jesus for the aforementioned cause of homosexuality. Is homosexuality a sin? The Scriptures say yes.

So, if homosexuality is a sin, what are we to do about it? If souls will be lost for the unrepentant practice, how can we reach them? How can we defeat Satan's new favorite sin while prompting the sinners' new birth? How can we love and save the sinner trapped by it? It should be our constant aim and prayer that “they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will” (2 Tim. 2:26). If we desire to help the homosexual there are several things we need to consider.

We Need To Start Talking About It

The reason the devil is gaining ground on the cultural battlefield with homosexuality is not a secret; in fact its very public. Therein lies the problem. He talks about homosexuality incessantly and a key part of his strategy has been to use media. The only problem is, when the devil talks, the devil lies. “When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44). He presents a destructive lifestyle as funny, heartwarming, and normal. Just a small sampling of popular T.V. shows from the '70s

until present, which have portrayed homosexuality in a positive light (either sporadically or routinely,) will suffice to show the devil's hand. These shows include the following: *All in the Family*, *M*A*S*H*, *Soap*, *Cheers*, *Friends*, *Ellen*, *Will and Grace*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Glee*, *Doctor Who*, Disney Channel's *Andi Mack*, TeenNick's *Degrassi*, etc. And this only covers **some** of the many television programs not to mention the movies, gay subscription cable channels, music videos, and music. Of great concern, according to GLAAD (a gay rights advocacy group,) the aforementioned Disney Channel show *Andi Mack* (as of February 23rd, 2018), was Disney Channel's "most popular series and a top 10 series on all of cable TV among kids and girls aged 6-11." This show made history for the Disney Channel by its main character "coming out" as gay (Deerwater). Impressionable minds all over this country are being impressed upon by the devil.

It has become such a cultural norm in Hollywood that in *The Homosexual Agenda*, Michael Medved is quoted as saying, "A Martian gathering evidence about American society, simply by monitoring our television, would certainly assume that there were more gay people in America than there are evangelical Christians" (qtd. in Sears and Osten 29). Michael Brown, author of *Can You Be Gay and Christian*, continued the thought with his own words: "The Martian would also conclude that gay people were, with rare or no exception, incredibly nice, family-oriented, creative, and considerate, while evangelical Christians were all mean-spirited, judgmental, dull, greedy, and hypocritical" (35). In

other words, the devil has used media to teach the masses that homosexuality is glowingly positive in every way, whereas Christians are homophobic, hypercritical, and hateful. The devil is doing what he does so well: making evil look praiseworthy and desirable. "Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (1 Cor. 11:14). "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isa. 5:20)! The proponents of the homosexual cause have done that very thing.

On May 21st, 2015, Gallup News released an article stating that (at that time) 3.8 percent of the American population identified as LGBT. However, would you believe that the same article reported that the American public **believed** on average that the estimate for how many people were homosexual was 23% (Newport)? Americans do not see almost 1 out of 4 people on the streets being homosexuals in real life. But where do they see a disproportionate amount of homosexuals? How did America become so indoctrinated were it not for grossly misrepresented media coverage?

The devil's nefarious use of the media is just one example of the broader concept of talking about homosexuality as often as possible and in any mode available. The issue is that with saturation comes imitation. John Berger, a star of *Degrassi: The Next Generation* who played a homosexual character, said: "People grow up now with the idea of coming out and stuff like that. It's not such a surprise when they do. Our generation is growing up seeing it happen" (qtd. in

Sears and Osten 41). Notice, it's "not such a surprise" when someone chooses the gay lifestyle. Why? Because they grow up seeing it. How does this work? Let us let homosexual activists Kirk and Madsen tell us from their book *Overhauling Straight America*: "The principle behind this advice [talking about homosexuality as loudly and as often as possible] is simple: almost all behavior begins to look normal if you are exposed to enough of it at close quarters and among your acquaintances" (qtd. in Sears and Osten, 18). Of course, if homosexuality begins to look normal, it begins to look acceptable. All of this talking has achieved not just more people flirting with homosexuality but also more acceptance of the practice by non-homosexuals. Paul speaks of those "who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things [see v.18-31] are deserving of death, not only do the same **but also approve of those who practice them**" (Rom. 1:32; emp. added).

So, why do we need to start talking about this issue? Consider this: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Mat. 10:16). At the beginning of mankind there was a cunning serpent in the garden of Eden who deceived Eve into sin (Gen. 3:1-7; cf. Eph. 6:11). We are to be as wise, as cunning, as shrewd as that serpent. If unashamedly lying about the gay lifestyle as loudly and as often as possible is working (and it clearly is), then perhaps we should take a page from his book. This time, however, we should be "harmless as doves," "not willing that any should perish but that all

should come to repentance” (2 Peter 2:10). We should unashamedly tell the truth because we are “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). We should be preaching from the housetops (Mat. 10:27)! Why should we let the devil win so many when we can defeat him at his own game and snatch souls out of his grasp? “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21).

In what ways do we need to start talking about this issue? **First, we need to start talking about it in our pulpits.** One should not make a hobby horse of preaching against homosexuality, just as one should not make a hobby horse of any Biblical topic. We are to preach “the whole counsel of God” and not shun some topics in favor of inordinate teaching on just one topic (Acts 20:27). By the same token, however, we cannot shun declaring God’s counsel about homosexuality. Although we are not to make homosexuality a hobby horse we are in danger of making it a Trojan Horse by letting it creep in our churches and sitting with our arms folded as the church crumbles from within. “Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober” (1 The. 5:6).

To be sure, this topic is not always easy to discuss. We have families in our very pews reeling over loved ones who have come out, struggling to find answers to their pressing questions and desperately looking for solutions to mend their broken souls. It is a topic to be handled with great love and sensitivity (2 Tim. 2:24). However,

we must realize that we also have those in our pews who are struggling with same sex attraction who need to know that their struggles are not new and that they are not alone in what they are facing with their Christian family supporting them (Mark 3:32-35; John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:10; Rom. 14:9). Likewise, there are those in our midst who have committed acts of homosexuality who need to know that repentance and forgiveness is possible; that no sin is too big or too sticky for Jesus to forgive (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:15-16; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Yes, this topic is difficult, but did not God command us to preach even in when it is difficult? “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2). In other words, preach the truth “whether it is convenient or not” (*New English Translation*, 2 Tim. 4:2).

But to demonstrate what will happen when we don't talk about this issue, consider pornography. For years, it seems, the church was all but silent about the issue while church members sat silently struggling with it without being offered any hope or strategies to overcome the sin from the pulpit. A 2016 study by the Barna Group concluded that “32% [of teens and young adults] say viewing porn is “usually or always wrong” compared to 56% who say not recycling is “usually or always wrong” (Kinnaman). Yes, not recycling is somehow viewed as more abhorrent than sin. Surely they did not get this idea from our pulpits – but did this idea develop because of our silence from the pulpit? It has also been reported by *Christianity Today* that “about 27 percent of Christian men and 6 percent of Christian women actively look for porn [at least once or twice a

month]” (Lee). The elephant in the room wreaks havoc when we pretend it is not there. Is staying silent about homosexuality *really* going to work any better? If we are being honest, perhaps we have given Satan a louder voice by not using our own. Remember, darkness is simply the absence of light. Are we wearing the armor of light, ready to conquer the darkness (Rom. 13:12)? Or are we wearing a bushel over our head, trying to hide from our wicked society (Mat. 5:14-16)? The devil is not hiding; neither should we hide our light-giving influence.

Second, we need to talk to our friends and loved ones. Consider 1 Cor. 6:9-11.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

How did these brethren become our brothers and sisters in Christ? Someone had to tell them that their homosexuality was unrighteous. Someone had to tell them that they needed a Savior. Someone had to tell them that the Lord would wash them with His blood, sanctify, and justify them upon obedience. Are we doing the same (and are we really being any more righteous than they if we do not)? Would we be surprised if we let the powerful gospel work powerfully in the lives of homosexuals (Rom. 1:16)? Consider the example of

Emily Satterfield. Although she is not a member of the Lord's church (that I am aware of), her testimony of repenting from homosexuality proves that the Word of God has the power to change lives (c.f. YouTube video: "From 'Christian' to Lesbian to Born-Again Christian"). After attending a friendly Bible Study, listening to the impactful conversations of the women around her, and reading through her Bible class book, the Word of God began to prick her heart. She said:

I Googled verses on homosexuality. Those who practice homosexuality, which was me, and also drunkards and a bunch of other things that I would have been... I realized that I was in the 'will not enter the kingdom of God' line up. And it scared me, really really bad. And then I read verse 11 [1 Cor. 6:11]. And it says, 'and such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified.' I realized that there were people in the same place and they were saved and they were changed and that God could do that for me too and that I needed that. I could hold on to my sin and reject God, or I could turn to Him. All the debt that I'd racked up living like I lived didn't have to be mine if I could trust Him. So that was it. I knew what I wasn't going to do because it was right there; It was black and white. I had twisted those scriptures before, I'd argued them down, I'd said 'judge not' to them like that mattered. And then that day it was like my eyes were really opened. I was amazed at the grace He'd shown me. ("Powerful Coming Out Story!!! LOVE IS LOVE")

Those who have given themselves over to homosexuality are searching for happiness in places

that will not give them happiness. They are just like any other person living in sin in that regard, only they have chosen a different avenue to find happiness than others who choose other vices (drugs, alcohol, fornication, materialism, etc). Consider the testimony of Becket.

And then after college I moved to L.A. And I got in with a group of friends who were all like minded. We lived our lives always kinda just wanting two things. And it was success in career and to find true love. I think I had a total of five, five serious relationships and they were all very intense and very real, and every time I was in one of these relationships it was like, 'ok this is the one,' like, 'this is the guy who's gonna give me meaning in my life, this is the person that's gonna save me.' Like, I seriously saw them as almost like a Messiah, like, 'this person will give my life meaning. I'll have a reason to live.' And I put so much pressure on these relationships. And so during all this time in Hollywood I did everything. I went to all the premiers, I went to the Oscars, the Emmys, the Grammys, and I went to the Governor's Ball after the Oscars. And that life I was living: it was satisfying, it was fun, and it was – I kinda felt, like, high from it. I was at one of the after-parties one night and... everyone was dancing and all the people of the fashion world were there and it was, like, very glamorous. And I just remember – just looking out over the sea of people all having the times of their lives and I just felt so empty and dead inside. I was like – I felt so alone and just empty ("Homosexuality Was My Identity").

Thankfully, this man was invited to a church from a random coffee shop encounter. Despite religious

misunderstandings, one thing he understood very well: homosexuality did not have the power to fill his emptiness. He shows us powerfully what it is like to be “empty and dead inside” without God. Knowing that this kind of human idolatry does not satisfy and does not heal the wounds they have, do we have the solution they are longing for? Ecclesiastes 3:11 says God “has put eternity in their hearts.” The chasm in the sinner’s heart spans as wide as eternity and only the eternal God can fill that hole and give them satisfaction. Jesus said “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John. 10:10). Are we content watching Satan steal, kill, and destroy our friends and loved ones? Or might we like Philip say “come and see” as we invite them to see Jesus living in us (John. 1:46; Gal. 2:20)? Will we bring them to Jesus who alone can give the abundant life? Will we show them the “blessed” (Greek: *makarios* = “happy”) way of life that only obedience to God can give (Mat. 5:2-12)? Will we show them that they have a God given purpose in life but must follow the Lord to fulfill it (Mat. 5:13-16)? Will we show them that they can weather the storms of life with the solid foundation (Mat. 7:24-27)? Will we show them that incomprehensible peace is possible with a relationship with the Father (Phil. 4:6-7)?

Third, we need to start talking to our children. We are naive if we think our children are somehow exempt from being tempted by the devil. Surely we do not believe that Satan will take it easy on our children just because they are “good kids,” raised in a good Christian

home. If anything he will hit them the hardest. It is my judgement that we have created an unnecessary and painful stigma around the temptation of homosexuality by treating it like the temptation only the devil himself could possibly be tempted by or acting as if only circus freaks could experience it. When we refuse to talk to our children about it, our silence betrays that we somehow believe that **normal** people do not struggle in this way, so why bother talking about it.

“But they are too young” some parents say. They may legitimately be too young, and that is up to the parents’ discretion to decide. However, they are not too young for the devil to reach out to them with children’s television programs like *Andi Mack* on the Disney Channel. While we must certainly use discretion, we cannot remain silent indefinitely while Satan talks incessantly. We must arm them against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11). “My kids already know it is wrong,” may be the objection of some parents. Of course they know it is wrong, but do they know that their parents will be there for them no matter what they struggle with – even same sex attraction (Gal. 6:2)? Do they have the parents’ encouragement that temptation always has a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13; James 4:7)? Have their parents told them that Jesus is able to aid them in times of temptation (Heb. 2:18)? Do they know their parents struggle with sin just like they do and will, therefore, be compassionate (Rom. 3:23; 1 Peter 3:8)? Do they know without a doubt that the temptation to lust after the same sex is, according to the Bible, a temptation common to man: “No temptation has overtaken you

except such as is common to man” (1 Cor. 10:13)? Or do they feel like they would be judged by the ones who should love them the most for having a temptation that they do not even desire to have? “But **my** kids would never **struggle** with that!” some parents will proclaim. Well, why would a child tell his parents he struggles with it after hearing them say things like that? If they are tempted because of same sex attraction, make no mistake, they are already ashamed of their temptation. They would not go out of their way to make their parents feel ashamed of them, too. Are we providing a loving and welcoming atmosphere for our children to talk to us? The Bible says of Jesus that “the common people heard Him gladly” (Mark 12:37) and that He “ate with tax collectors and sinners” (Mat. 9:10-11). Even people living in sin wanted to hear what the Lord had to say and were drawn in by His love – can we say as much for our children?

We can be sure the world will talk to our children about homosexuality, and already is. Where is the counter-balance? The very ones our children should be most comfortable talking through their struggles with are their parents and church family – not the world. So, are we encouraging sin by discouraging our children from talking to us about it?

I was curious to know in some small way how much the temptation of same sex attraction really does manifest itself among the Lord’s church, so I conducted a poll in a group of gospel preachers, in another group of bloggers in the church of Christ, and in another group of personal Christian friends. I asked this question: “If you

have attended a Christian School (K-12) or a Christian College or University (from the 1980s and onward) did/do you know of anyone with same sex attraction?" The choices were a simple "yes" or "no."

88% of the respondents said "yes." (I should note that several of the respondents said they knew multiple people in this category). Make no mistake, it is not the fault of Christian education. Public schools would make no effort to help strugglers, but Christian professors and students actively do (and one such story was relayed to me.) But I specifically asked the poll the way I did (1) to apply to Christians, (2) to apply specifically to young Christians, (3) for the strugglers to be in such an environment where they could be honest about their struggles (e.g. around many other young Christians), and (4) to encompass a general time frame where sympathies to talk of homosexuality was on the rise. Can you see just an inkling of why we should be talking to our children? Just because a child does not tell his parents of his struggle does not mean he is not struggling. It may very well mean that he is struggling silently and all alone.

With this in mind, how many sitting in the pews on an average Sunday struggle with same sex attraction? How will we know unless we talk about it? And if we don't talk about it, how will we give them the edification they need (Eph. 4:29)? How will we bear one another's burdens and fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2)? How will we "comfort the fainthearted" and "uphold the weak" (1 The. 5:14)?

There is simply no way for our brethren, our loved

ones, or our children to defeat this sin in their lives or for us to save souls without collectively and compassionately talking about this issue. So, if we need to start talking about it, what would help us to truly be helpful to our struggling brethren and lost sinners alike? If all we can do is tell someone that homosexuality is a sin without being able to help them overcome the sin, have we not neglected the good news aspect of the gospel? Before we spit deadly venom with our words (James 3:8), we need to have a gracious heart to speak from (Col. 4:6). “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Mat. 12:34; cf. Luke 6:45). We must speak the truth, but we must do it in love (Eph. 4:15) – so what would help us to be better lovers of our struggling brethren and lost sinners alike; what would help us to have the right words and say them in the right way?

A Temptation Does Not a Sinner Make

Do we call someone tempted to murder a murderer? No, we only call them a murderer after they have committed the crime. Do we call someone tempted to commit fornication a fornicator? No, in fact we are very grateful they did not go through with the act. Do we call someone tempted to drink alcohol a drunkard without drinking? No. Do we call someone tempted because of same sex attraction a homosexual?

We need to be careful not to charge someone with a sin that they have not committed. May I share with you my experience? When I was in middle school there were two individuals in my small school (one male and one female) who were not as masculine and feminine,

respectively, as the other kids thought they should be. You can be sure they heard their fair share of whispered criticisms from the other kids because that is what kids are good at. And with all the speculations and implications of homosexuality from their peers, where are they now? They are both, last I knew, homosexuals. The point that I am making is that we unwittingly encourage sin when we wrongfully accuse someone of that sin. We make them think they really are a sinner, so, constantly bombarded with the accusation, they lose all hope of being anything different and become the very thing we accused them of.

Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." This is such a beautiful verse, but only if temptation does not equal sin! Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses because He was tempted, but He can save our souls because He did not sin!

It gives great hope to know that same sex attraction itself does not lock us into the gay box, sealing a dismal destiny. We are what we make of ourselves by the grace of God. We can choose to live for God no matter what temptations stand in our way. Yes, those who unrepentantly live out their sinful desires should be condemned. But those who are resisting the devil and drawing near to God must be commended and encouraged (James 4:7-8). After all, we want them to be in Heaven with us!

Christ-likeness Demands Compassion and Compassion Demands Christ-likeness

In *A People To Be Loved*, Preston Sprinkle relays the story of Maddie. Maddie grew up in a severely broken home and after suffering through years of sexual abuse from her father, she is now a lesbian. But listen to her own explanation: “I’m not attracted to girls, but no man will ever touch me again” (qtd. 20). Or what about another story that was relayed to me – a young man who was Valedictorian of his high school class who came out of the closet a year after graduation? What happened? In his youth, his mother would dress the young boy in female’s clothing, desperately wanting a girl instead of him. The point is not that one sin justifies another; far from it – it is a personal choice to sin and nothing can be used to justify it (Lev. 20:13; Rom. 1:27; 1 Sam. 24:13). But the point is that these and so many others like them are not circus freaks or monsters. They are broken people in desperate need of a Savior.

When we treat homosexuals as less than human, we do much more than question their humanity; we “curse [them], who have been **made in the similitude of God**” (James 3:9; emp. added). Ezekiel 18:23 says: “‘Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?’ says the Lord God, ‘and not that he should turn from his ways and live?’ ” If we derive pleasure from what God hates, have we not done the very thing God hates?

“Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” the Pharisees asked the Savior’s disciples. Jesus replied, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn

what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Mat. 9:11-13). When we find ourselves relating with the Pharisees, we have found ourselves out of step with Jesus. They were utterly repulsed that Jesus would share food with these vile heathen. Jesus was utterly repulsed that **they would not**. When it comes to the homosexual, do we contribute to their pain – do we give them a cold shoulder, withhold a tip at the cafe, stare at them, make fun of them behind their backs, call them hateful names, make jokes at their expense? Or do we bring them to the Great Physician who can heal their soul? Do we sit down with them, get to know them, sympathize with their pain, and offer them a better life with an open Bible?

Consider the words of one faithful brother in Christ who struggles with same sex attraction, "I know the church has done very poorly responding to those who struggle... there are lots of members of the church that still treat people like me like I have the plague." While we unwittingly treat men like him (even faithful brethren) like wolves, the Lord would treat them as sheep and shepherd their weary souls. "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd" (Mat. 9:35-36). Jesus did not just come to save the lost, He came to

actively seek them out (Luke 19:10). If we want to have compassion like Jesus, we must be filled with passion like Jesus. A passion for saving the lost must fill our hearts!

Self-Righteousness Will Help No One To Be Righteous

Galatians 6:1 says, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” Are we spiritual? If we are, we will acknowledge the fact that we are subject to temptation just like they are. Our temptations might be different, but all of us have them and they all lead to the same place if we are overtaken by them. Likewise, are we servants of the Lord? A “servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will” (2 Tim. 2:24-26). We must correct those in opposition but do so “in humility.” In other words, we must acknowledge that we were once lost like them, taken captive as Satan’s slave. Self-righteousness will never rear its ugly head when we remember that we were once unrighteous, without God, without Christ, and without hope, too (Eph. 2:12). The fact that we all need grace, no matter the sins we commit, means, apart from Christ, we are no better than the ones we are trying to save.

In August of 2017, Cathy Miller of Tastries Bakery in Bakersfield California refused to make wedding cakes for two same sex couples. As a result, she was taken to court in a discrimination lawsuit. Since that time, she won the lawsuit in February of 2018, but what really makes her a winner is something else. In an interview with AFR (American Family Radio), she explained that although she received her fair share of criticism (even death threats) from the LGBT community, many from the LGBT community came into the bakery to show their **support** for her (Miller). Although they knew her religious beliefs, they knew she loved them, regardless. Can people look at our lives and see that “I must live differently than you” does not mean “I think I am better than you?” If they can, they can see how much we love them and ultimately how much Jesus loves them.

Practicing Homosexuals Are Saved By Practicing Love

One man's misguided life choices led him near suicide and to the point of saying these words: “I wish that somehow, rather than ending up in the arms of [an] anonymous man, I could have found myself in the arms of the church... I wish in the church I had found myself loved” (qtd. in Sprinkle, 20-21). Not all Christians are guilty of making people like this man feel this way. In fact, if one has spent any time at all reading angry comments from the gay community or gay sympathizers on the internet, he will find out that broad-brush accusations are commonplace against Christianity. However, we must not let one extreme (“all

Christians are bigots!”) push us to the other extreme (“Christians have **never** mistreated homosexuals!”). Just as we must self-evaluate ourselves spiritually in every other way, we must self-examine how we treat others and how much love we really show when no one is looking. “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you are disqualified” (2 Cor. 13:5).

Is it always easy to show love to homosexuals? Although certainly not all homosexuals are like this, some of them are not easy to love. Sin makes it so. Ask the young man whose gay peers openly kiss in front of him just because they know he disapproves. Ask the people who have been openly mocked for their faith in public forums, received blame for things they were not guilty of, or worse yet, had their lives threatened. It is not always easy to show love in the face of such spite. Perhaps some perspective can help us to love even our enemies as Jesus commanded: “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you” (Luke 6:27-28). One man who struggled with same sex attraction growing up said this about practicing homosexuals: “While I still disagree with people in homosexual relationships, I no longer hold resentment toward them. They too have struggled like me and have been rejected, ignored, scapegoated, and cast out. I can understand why they have rejected the church and traditional sex ethics in droves” (Heffron). Can we see the underlying feelings

that make some homosexuals so angry? If we had been rejected, ignored, scapegoated, and cast out, would we not be angry?

In this discussion of love, we must not buy into the notion that calling sin what it is is not loving. We must be prepared to hear the unrepentant say “he keeps acting as a judge” (Gen. 19:9), but we must also be prepared to love them enough to tell them the truth and warn them of impending spiritual destruction. Does a doctor hate his patient if he tells them they have cancer? Of course not. In fact, it would be entirely unloving to not give them the opportunity to consider treatment or say goodbye to loved ones. Likewise, we must inform the sinner that their life choices are cancerous to their soul and that there is a cure. Famed magician and atheist, Penn Jillette (of Penn and Teller fame), described it this way:

I've always said, you know, that I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there's a heaven and a hell, and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life... and you think that it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward—and atheists who think people shouldn't proselytize [and say] “just leave me alone and keep your religion to yourself”—how much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? I mean, if I believed, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that a truck was coming at you, and you didn't believe it, that that truck was bearing down on

you, there is a certain point where I tackle you. And this is **more** important than that. (“Not proselytize”)

A formerly gay man said it this way:

This is the issue; the deal-breaker. Homosexuality is the deal-breaker for the LGBT community when it comes to Christianity. And I felt the same way. People always say “Well isn’t it unloving to say that homosexuality is a sin.” And I’m like, “No, it’s unloving to let people spend eternity apart from God. And that’s unloving.” This life is a vapor; this life is a mist. It’s like two seconds long. Eternity is a long time. And whether you believe it or not we’re all going to face Christ on the last day. And we’re either going to be under His mercy or under His wrath. That’s the bottom line. And whether you believe that or not, that’s going to happen. That’s what’s at stake is eternity. That’s what’s at stake. Do you want just this kind of temporary pleasure right now, or do you want eternity with God? Do not let this one issue – and I know its a very powerful, strong issue – but do not let this one issue prevent you from eternity with God (“Homosexuality Was My Identity”).

What reason do we have not to preach the gospel to the homosexual community? What reason do we have not to invite our gay friends to church? We must realize that even if we were not religious we would have compelling reason to oppose the homosexual lifestyle:

According to the Youth Risk and Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) 2015, among high school students who identified as LGB [Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual], 60.4% felt sad and hopeless, 42.8% seriously considered suicide, and 38.2%

planned how they would attempt suicide; 29.4% attempted suicide one or more times” ... LGBTQ youth are four to six times more likely to attempt suicide, which results in injury, poisoning, or overdose that requires treatment from a doctor or nurse than heterosexual youth (*Suicide Risk Factors among LGBTQ Youth*: Review, 1-2).

That being said, here is what we need to remember: As heartbreaking as hopelessness and suicide are, eternal hopelessness away from God and spiritual destruction are **worse**. Jesus said “do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mat. 10:28). We must remember that it gave God joy to reconcile all His enemies to Himself through the blood of Jesus. Are we striving to give the Lord joy by bringing those who were once enemies of God, like us, to His Son?

For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight (Col. 1:19-22).

I asked a faithful brother in Christ who is tempted by the sin of homosexuality, but who steadfastly resists, what he wanted the church to know most in order to truly help people like him or even practicing homosexuals. Here was his response:

I think above anything else, they need to be reminded of the Golden Rule. Treat others the way you want to be treated. It's amazing how cruel members of the church can treat members of the gay community without even realizing they're doing it. If you were struggling with SSA [same sex attraction or gay yourself, would you want to be given the evil eye? Avoided in the workplace while your Christian coworkers talk and pursue relationships with everyone else? These people are hurting human beings - most who do not have the Christian worldview do not realize they are hurting [because] they see homosexuality as a perfectly normal thing, but I can guarantee they are indeed hurting emotionally. They are not disgusting, and you will not catch the "gay virus" from being near them, nor will they drag you into sin. Pursue relationships with them; show them the love of Christ as you would any straight friend or coworker.

[Note: He is not equating same sex attraction with unrepentant homosexuality, only noting that both groups struggle with some of the same treatment in the workplace, etc.]

Is our Golden Rule in need of polishing to bring back the shine? Or do we find ourselves acting exactly as the sinners do yet using Christ as our scapegoat? Jesus did not give us an excuse to mistreat others. He gave us the Golden Rule (Luke 6:31-36):

And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And

if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

It is only by practicing the golden rule that homosexuals will be touched by Jesus' love, pricked by the Word of God, and obey the gospel to one day walk the streets of gold with Him.

WORKS CITED

- Aranmolate R, Bogan DR, Hoard T, Mawson AR (2017) *Suicide Risk Factors among LGBTQ Youth: Review*. JSM Schizophr 2(2): 1011, pdfs.semanticscholar.org/65e6/642013b2c552d63df25a69469edc2eab2646.pdf, Accessed 31 Mar. 2018. Brown, Michael L. *Can You Be Gay and Christian?: Responding with Love and Truth to Questions About Homosexuality*. Frontline Charisma Media/ Charisma House Book Group, 2014.
- Criss, Doug. CNN. *Judge Rules California Baker Doesn't Have To Make Wedding Cake For Same Sex Couple*, 8 Feb. 2018, cnn.com/2018/02/08/us/wedding-cake-ruling-trnd/index.html. Accessed 28 Mar. 2018.
- Deerwater, Raina. GLAAD (formerly Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation). *Don't miss tonight's 'Andi Mack' on Disney Channell*, 23 Feb. 2018, glaad.org/blog/dont-miss-tonights-andi-mack-disney-channel. Accessed 14 Mar. 2018.
- Gallup News. *Gay and Lesbian Rights*, news.gallup.com/poll/1651/gay-lesbian-rights.aspx. Accessed 3 Feb. 2018.
- Heffron, Eugene. Your Other Brothers. *I Used To Hate Gay People*, 8 Feb. 2018, yourotherbrothers.com/2018/02/08/hate-gay-people/. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018.
- "Homosexuality Was My Identity." *YouTube*, uploaded by Anchored North, 28 Dec. 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8a510yv0Dw.
- Kinnaman, David. Barna Group. *The Porn Phenomenon*, 5 Feb. 2016, barna.com/the-porn-phenomenon/. Accessed 19 Mar. 2018.

-
- Lee, Morgan. Christianity Today. *Here's How 770 Pastors Describe Their Struggle With Porn*, 26 Jan. 2016, christianitytoday.com/news/2016/january/how-pastors-struggle-porn-phenomenon-josh-mcdowell-barna. Accessed 19 Mar. 2018.
- Louw, Johannes P. and Eugene A. Nida, eds. L&N. 2d, Accordance electronic edition, version 4.1. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989. Accessed 5 Mar. 2018.
- Masci, David and Lipka, Michael. Pew Research Center. *Where Christian churches, other religions and on gay marriage*, 21 Dec. 2015, pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/12/21/where-christian-churches-stand-on-gay-marriage/. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.
- Miller, Cathy. Interview with Steve Jordahl of AFR, 8 Feb, 2018.
- Newport, Frank. Gallup News. *Americans Greatly Overestimate Percent Gay, Lesbian in U.S.*, news.gallup.com/poll/183383/americans-greatly-overestimate-percent-gay-lesbian. Accessed 18 Mar. 2018.
- "Not proselytize." *You Tube*, uploaded by Rich Maurer, 13 Nov. 2009, www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=53&v=owZc3Xq8obk
- Pew Research Center. *Same-Sex Marriage, State by State*, 26 June, 2015, pewforum.org/2015/06/26/same-sex-marriage-state-by-state/. Accessed 3 Feb. 2018
- "Powerful Coming Out Story!!! LOVE IS LOVE." *You Tube*, uploaded by Anchored North, 27 Dec. 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7ldWxTFyw.
- Sears, Alan and Craig Osten. *The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today*. B&H Publishing Group, 2003.
- Sprinkle, Preston. *People To Be Loved: Why Homosexuality Is Not Just An Issue*. Zondervan, 2015.
- Strong, Augustus H. Strong's Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary of the Old Testament. Accordance electronic edition, version 2.9. Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 1999. Accessed 5 Feb. 2018.
- The Bible*. New King James Version. Accordance electronic edition, version 2.3. Thomas Nelson, Inc. 1982.
- The Bible*. The NET Bible, First Edition (New English Translation). Accordance electronic edition, version 3.3. Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. 1996-2005.
- Valkanet, Rich. *Bible Timeline*, 2010, biblehub.com/timeline/. Accessed 3 Feb. 2018.

The Rated “R” Devil: TV, Music And Movies

Russell Kline



Russell Kline was born in California and raised in eastern Ohio. He is married to Tracy, and together, they have one son, Kevin. He graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching in 1989, the Southwest Graduate School of the Bible in 2000, and has a Bachelor’s Degree from the International College of the Bible in 2009. He has been the preacher for the Madisonville congregation in Madisonville, KY for over 20 years.

Once upon a time, in the United States of America, there was illicit sex, there was violence, and there was drug abuse – but it was not nearly so prevalent as it is today. Mass media is not entirely to blame for the moral decline of American society, but it has certainly been a contributing factor. The movies and television programs we watch, the music we listen to, and the images and ideas to which we are exposed in other forms of media have helped to shape our culture into the warped state of depravity that is so readily evident today. For many years, older generations have lamented the loss of our innocence, as a people. Once upon a time, radio was seen as a thief of family togetherness. Then, it became television. Now, it is the veritable smorgasbord of entertainment that is available literally in the palms of our hands. These technological marvels of the modern age have made us more connected to the world than we have ever been before, but at the same time, they

have made us more disconnected from each other, and most importantly, from God. TV, music, and movies are neither inherently good, nor evil. They are merely tools with which we may accomplish a great deal of good in this world. But, if we can use TV, music, and movies for good purposes, you can be sure that the devil is using them for evil purposes.

It may be virtually impossible for us to imagine a time when there was no such thing as recorded music, or movies, or television, but all of those things are, in reality, very recent inventions. Although numerous attempts to record sound were made beginning as far back as the ninth century, it was Thomas Edison who invented the first practical and affordable phonograph, which was capable of recording and playing back sounds in 1878. Before that time, songwriters made money from their work through the publication and sale of sheet music. The sale of phonograph cylinders and discs of recorded musical performances changed everything and truly created what we now call the “music industry,” which generates billions of dollars all over the world. The invention and development of radio communications paralleled that of sound recording, and the two formats came together near the dawn of the twentieth century. Broadcasting from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, KDKA is recognized as the first broadcast radio station to go on the air, which it did on November 2, 1920, when the results of the presidential election between Warren Harding and James Cox were announced. From that point, radio went on to become the primary source from which Americans got their news and entertainment.

In rapid succession, radio stations sprang up all over the country and people everywhere spent whatever disposable income they had to purchase a device that could provide them with seemingly endless information and entertainment. For more than 50 years, radio reigned supreme, as the nation's preferred format of home entertainment.

As recorded music and radio began to establish themselves in American culture, another new form of entertainment emerged from the laboratories of Thomas Edison – motion pictures (we know them as “movies,” today). From the time that photography was invented in 1822, people realized that if you could take a series of photographs in rapid succession, and then figure out a way to view them in an equally rapid succession, you could capture the movement of objects on film. A practical and affordable way to do each of those things eluded inventors until Thomas Edison came up with the solution to the problem in 1897. Early in the twentieth century, movie studios and movie theaters began to pop up everywhere. The first motion pictures made for entertainment purposes were primitive, by today's standards, and had no sound to be played back with the video recording. But, the new format advanced quickly, with new inventions and new techniques making bigger and better film productions possible. It was a relatively cheap form of entertainment, which got people out of their homes and away from their radios. Recorded music, radio, and films did not directly compete with each other, and there seemed to be plenty of room for all three

to grow, until everything changed again, at the end of the Second World War.

As far back as the early 1800s, inventors were working on ways to mechanically scan and transmit graphic images. This research into an early concept of fax machines led others to pioneer ways to do the same thing electronically, which led others to develop techniques for filming and then broadcasting motion pictures, using radio waves. When the first practical and affordable television sets hit American markets, in the 1940s, there were already several television stations on the air in major cities all over the U.S., with more being added every day. The major radio networks and production companies became the major television networks and production companies, with many popular radio shows and radio stars making the jump to television simultaneously. By the end of the 1950s, television had begun to supplant radio as America's preferred medium for news and entertainment. From the 1950s onward, the technology of recorded music, radio, television, and movies progressed at a rapid pace. The way that sounds and images were recorded, played back, and stored changed dramatically in the second half of the twentieth century. With the advent of personal computers, cellular telephones, and the Internet, the way in which Americans record, transmit, receive, and interpret sounds and images transformed once again. As technology continues to advance, there is no telling what new developments will change again the way we look at the world!

Recorded music, radio broadcasting, movies, and

television were all hailed by their creators, as amazing technological advances, which would benefit mankind with their limitless potential. Certainly, all of these forms of mass communication have benefitted humanity in many ways. The Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, and other archival specialists are working right now to preserve phonograph recordings of languages that are no longer spoken in the modern world, as well as songs, poems, and oral traditions of people who never developed writing systems of their own. Without such technology, these things would be lost forever in antiquity. The United States National Archives, along with the National Radio Hall of Fame, is working to collect and preserve recordings of famous radio broadcasts, which have become viewed as national treasures. The National Film Preservation Foundation is working hard to collect and preserve every movie that has ever been made, for the benefit of future historians. The Television Academy is doing similar work with recordings of the earliest television broadcasts. All of these things constitute a record of the past, which is vital and irreplaceable to the historical narrative of us, as a people. In the centuries to follow this one, people will be able to hear and to see what life was really like in the age of sound recording, radio, movies, and television. Imagine if we had such records of the first century...a recording of one of Jesus' own sermons...a video of Saul's baptism...the sights and sounds of a bygone era.

When these technologies were new, our brethren

began to think of ways to use them for God's glory. Recordings of sermons on phonograph cylinders and discs were very popular, in the early twentieth century. For a time, they were sold in record stores alongside popular music recordings. The most popular recording of a sermon is known to have sold over 87,000 copies. African-American preachers used this medium more than others, because most radio stations would allow only white preachers to broadcast from their facilities. The noted Gospel preacher, Marshall Keeble, is known to have published LP records of some of his best-known sermons, including: "There's Water in the Plan" and "The Doctor Who Never Lost a Case." With the advent of audio cassette tapes and compact discs, churches all over the brotherhood recorded and distributed copies of nearly every sermon that was preached from their pulpits. Today, recordings of sermons are so ubiquitous that they are, for the most part, given away to anyone who wants one.

The medium of radio became a wildly popular way for preachers to reach the masses with the Gospel of Christ. Some denominational preachers became nationally-known celebrities, because of their popular radio programs. In the churches of Christ, programs like *The International Gospel Hour*, which went on the air in 1934, and *Herald of Truth*, which went on the air in 1952, are still going strong. As radio aged, it became a relatively inexpensive format that still has the potential to reach thousands of people at a time. For more than 60 years, the church of Christ in Madisonville, Kentucky has sponsored a weekly radio broadcast, which I have

had the privilege to host for about 20 of those years. It remains the most inexpensive form of mass evangelism in which our congregation engages. I am always amazed by the number of people who tell me that they listen to the program regularly. Many such local radio programs have been produced by churches of Christ for many decades. Some churches even maintain their own radio stations, which broadcast singing, prayer, and Bible study to their respective communities on a continuous basis.

Movies are a format of mass communication into which the churches of Christ have only recently ventured. Even a 90-minute movie tends to be very expensive to produce, but there have been many notable attempts to bring the story of the Bible to the silver screen. *The Ten Commandments*, *Jesus of Nazareth*, and *The Passion of the Christ* were all Hollywood productions of Biblical accounts, which proved to be very popular with movie goers, at the time of their release. Of course, when Hollywood production companies make movies, their primary concern is entertainment value, rather than accuracy, so watching movies like these is no substitute for reading the Bible. In 2011, World Video Bible School screened a movie called, *Bound* at the Seguin Film Festival, where it was awarded, Best Feature Film. It is presently available for sale at the WVBS website and is considered an excellent tool for evangelism.

The medium of television was embraced by the Lord's church as readily as was radio, as a means of spreading the Gospel across the country. In the 1970s, *Herald of Truth* made the jump from radio to television,

with great success. In 1979, *In Search of the Lord's Way* went on the air in Ada, Oklahoma, and has since grown to 210 television markets, as well as 150 local cable television markets, reaching the continental United States and many foreign countries. Numerous other television programs have been produced and broadcast in local markets by members of the Lord's church in various parts of the United States. Thousands of hours of television programming have been created in service of the cause of Christ. In 2006, *The Gospel Broadcasting Network* became the first and, so far, the only source of television programming created by members of the churches of Christ, broadcasting 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Lord willing, His church shall continue to harness new technology in mass communication for the purpose of spreading the Gospel message all over the world!

Of course, the devil has been hard at work, seeking to harness the potential of mass communication technology for his own nefarious purposes. In the first half of the twentieth century, the mediums of recorded music, radio, movies and television did a good job of policing themselves, when it came to standards and practices in their respective industries. They were driven to do so by the perceived expectations of consumers, who simply would not purchase anything that was thought to be vulgar and offensive. Today, such is no longer the case, as the music industry continues to produce more and more sexually explicit and violently insightful content, radio is altogether too eager to play anything that is controversial. The movie and television

industry has followed the same path, as it has offered to the public more and more sex and violence. Truly, the devil has come into his own, in the twenty-first century, as the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2) and his domination of the airwaves is unrelenting.

If there was a "tipping point," at which standards and practices in recorded music, radio, movies, and television began to decline, it must have been during the so-called, "Cultural Revolution" of the 1960s. During that fateful decade, family-oriented forms of entertainment began a steady decline, as the glorification of sex and violence came into the mainstream. It was not the case that some cultural cabal secretly decided to feed America's appetite for the lusts of the flesh, but rather that the largest, and most economically powerful generation of Americans demanded it. When what was demanded was presented, American consumers of entertainment showed their support for it by spending record amounts of money on it. From that point, everyone involved in the various facets of the entertainment industry knew that sex and violence would make them more money than anything else. Since then, no one has looked back, as American culture has plunged headlong into the devil's domain. Every generation that has come along since the 1960s has pushed the proverbial "envelope" further and further, until we have now come to the point at which there no longer seems to be an "envelope" at all. Nearly every genre of music is populated with top-selling hits that glorify illicit sex, drugs, and violence. Some of the most

popular mainstream movies and television programs are indistinguishable from what was once classified as pornography. Even some of those movies and television programs that are marketed to children contain images and references that are unseemly.

It is no wonder at all that many foreign cultures view the United States of America as decadent and worldly. We, as a society, have become like the very people that Paul wrote about, in Romans 1:

Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful (Rom. 1:29-31).

Concerning these same people, Paul wrote that they, “knowing the judgment of God, which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Rom. 1:32). The problem with our modern culture of gratuitous entertainment is that every American has been complicit in creating it and is complicit in sustaining it. To be sure, the devil has worked very hard to turn recorded music, radio, movies, and television into some of the most powerful sources of temptation in his arsenal, but he had a great deal of help from the American people to get the job done.

So, what can we do about this problem? What can Christians in the twenty-first century do to stand

against the rising tide of immorality that threatens to drown us in illicit sound and imagery? Can the soul of our nation be saved? Yes, it certainly can! It starts with each of us, as individuals, doing what we can to make a difference. Our culture did not change into what it has become overnight, and it will not change back to what it once was overnight, either. It did not change with just one person, or even one group of people making a single decision, and it will not change back so easily, either. But the road back to a more godly country begins with individual Christians coming to the conclusion that "enough is enough."

I am not about to suggest a wholesale boycott of the entertainment industry, but I would like to suggest that we, as Christians, make smarter choices about what we put in front of our eyes and ears (Job 31:1). Tune out the profanity-laced, sexually-suggestive, and morally-inappropriate programming that currently dominates the airwaves and tune into programming that will entertain and inform without appealing to the baser instincts of our nature. Morally guided music, movies, and television programs exist, but we have to search for them. It may mean rejecting new music, movies, and television in favor of older programming, but if enough of us will hold ourselves to a higher standard, the business side of the entertainment industry will take notice. The recent success of privately-funded movies and television programs, which are oriented to appeal to families, rather than to "adults only" is already challenging the status quo. Also, the success of services like TV Guardian and VidAngel have further proven

that there are people who want new entertainment productions that are free from profanity and vice. When we, as Christians, hold ourselves to Biblical standards and demand as much from our entertainment, we can transform the world around us, instead of allowing the world to transform us (Rom. 12:1).

As Christian parents, it is also important for us to protect our children from the ungodly influence of music, movies, and television. That means that we may have to do some things with our children that we might not be so comfortable doing. For one thing, it means that we are going to have to monitor the things that our kids watch on television. Too many parents have made television a kind of electronic babysitter. We plop the kids down in front of it, and we trust that, as long as they are watching a cartoon, or a show with puppets, or a certain channel, everything is going to be just fine, and perfectly appropriate for their viewing. Parents simply cannot assume such things in the twenty-first century! A great deal of what passes for “children’s programming” is completely inappropriate for children. The only way that you can be sure that what your kids are watching is okay for them to watch is if you watch it too. The same thing applies to the music your kids listen to. There are a great many inappropriate themes and words in songs that are marketed directly to young people. The only way you can be sure that the music your kids listen to is okay for them to listen to is if you listen to it yourself. Be just as aware of what entertainment your kids are consuming as you are of the entertainment you are consuming, and you will be doing your duty, as a

Christian parent (Eph. 6:4). Your kids will not like it. In fact, they will hate it. But, you must do it, for their protection.

Another way in which Christians can effect change in the culture is to be activists for change. For a very long time, in the history of the United States, the majority of the people who lived here identified themselves as "Christian." Such is still the case, yet the majority of people who live in this country are relatively "silent," when it comes to issues relating to morality. The so-called, "silent majority" can no longer afford to remain silent! We must use every public forum that we can to let the whole world know what is right and what is wrong according to the standards that God has set for us. Whenever there is an opportunity for us to make our voices heard through the ballot box, we must turn out to vote. If we have an opportunity to protest against immorality, then we must take up our pickets and protest. Edmund Burke is credited with saying, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing," and that statement certainly applies in this situation. Stand for what is right. Stand against evil. But, no matter what, stand (Eph. 6:13-16).

The advent of new forms of communication technology is not cause for Christians to grieve. We must always be in search of new ways to more effectively communicate the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a world that is lost and dying in sin. By the same token, we must stand vigil against the devil's attempts to use that same technology to undermine our faith and

steal away our eternal home in Heaven. Our adversary is relentless and we must be equally vigilant, if we are going to succeed in resisting his designs against us (1 Peter 5:8-9). One of the surest ways we can resist the devil and put him to flight from us is to turn off the music, turn off the television, and open up the pages of God's Holy Word (James 4:7)!

WORKS CITED

The Holy Bible, King James Version, Print.
www.wikipedia.org.
www.nps.gov.
www.history.org.
www.loc.gov.
www.si.edu.
www.archives.gov.
www.filmpreservation.org.
www.emmys.com.
www.source.wustl.edu.
www.internationalgospelhour.com.
www.heraldoftruth.org.
www.wvbs.org.
www.searchtv.org.
www.gbntv.org.
www.tvguardian.com.
www.vidangel.com.
www.forum.wordreference.com.

The Devil And Job

Don Walker



Don Walker is married to Jackie, and together they have two sons and two daughters. Don has done local work in AZ, CA, NM, and TX. In addition to local work he has taught at the California School of Evangelism, Brown Trail School of Preaching, Memphis School of Preaching, and Southwest School of Biblical Studies, where he currently serves as director.

It is with great joy that I present the material for this chapter in the book that accompanies the Annual *Power* Lectures. We are thankful for the fellowship that we have had over the years and count it a great spiritual blessing. I have the greatest respect for the Southaven elders, deacons and every member and appreciate the work that goes into providing such a work as this which will be a blessing to the Lord's church now and in generations to come as long as time continues. May our Lord continue to bless this and every congregation that continues faithfully in the stand against "the adversary." Let us not lay down our sword or shield until they carry our bodies off on the shield at the end of our days.

Introduction

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is

no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). Most will recognize these as the words of our Lord to the religious leaders who claimed to be Abraham’s seed. However, for our study our focus is upon the description given concerning the devil. He is a murderer, the father of lies and there is **no** truth in him. He is a creature of complete evil and darkness.

When he is first introduced in Scripture, his evil wickedness is seen clearly as are his desires.

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? (Gen. 3:1).

Note the first thing we know about the evil one is, he is subtle. He begins by trying to raise doubt in the mind of innocent Eve toward her Creator. After Eve explains the instructions of God, the serpent responds within the boundaries of his nature by lying. “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). Next, he follows with an even stronger, more detailed approach in indicting Eve’s God and sowing doubt in this innocent mind. First he raised a question, “Is God holding something back from you?” (Gen 3:1). Then he accused God of lying to Eve (Gen. 3:4). But he was not finished there because he said, “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). The lie is developed even further, the trap is baited and the temptation is in place. We are all aware of the results. The attack was manifested in three areas just as

it was with Jesus Christ in Matthew 4. John exposes the three areas of attack powerfully and clearly. John wrote,

For all that is in the world, the **lust of the flesh**,
and the **lust of the eyes**, and the **pride of life**, is
not of the Father, but is of the world (1 John 2:16).

With Eve and Adam submitting to the serpent, and transgressing the law of God or sinning, they introduced death into this world. Paul wrote, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12). Thus man began to die. The paradise known as the Garden of Eden was closed to our first father and mother and to all that would follow. The tree of life was no longer available.

Continuing through Scripture we see the devil very active. Before the flood, “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). In the Book of Numbers, we see a whole generation with the exception of two, die in the wilderness not being allowed to enter the promised land because of “unbelief” (Heb. 3:19). Unbelief was developed because they gave in to temptation. So there was a tempter. James wrote, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (James 1:13). James continues, “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:14). So there is a trap baited and it is baited by the tempter. That tempter is the devil. When Jesus went up into the wilderness He went up to be “tempted

of the devil” (Mat. 4:1). “And when the tempter came to Him” he began his task of tempting (Mat. 4:3). Sin comes when we give in to the temptations that Satan sets before us. Throughout time Satan has been relentless in laboring in the three categories of which we wrote earlier and he has taken whole generations.

The Book of Judges can be summed up very well with just one verse. “In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 17:6). It is one of, if not the saddest time in the history of Israel.

Though we have not exhausted what Scripture reveals about our “adversary, the devil” (1 Peter 5:8), we will now turn our attention to “The devil and Job.” We will first explore principles revealed and develop lessons from Chapters 3 – 50. Then we will turn our attention to Chapters 1 – 2 and consider the details and see what we may learn about the evil one.

The Devil And Job In Summary

In beginning our study we will first speak to the devil’s use of false doctrine to tempt men away from their God. In Bildad’s first speech, which began in Job 8:1, Job is charged with sin based upon his suffering. Verse 20 Bildad said, “Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers” (Job 8:20). It appears this was a prominent belief in Job’s day and Job may have even believed along these lines. However, it was not a doctrine reserved only for men of Job’s age. In Jesus’s day the wicked of the time pointed to those that calamity fell

upon and indicated they were sinners above others. Consider Jesus' answer.

At that time some people were there who told Jesus about the Galileans whom Pilate had killed while they were offering sacrifices to God. Jesus answered them, "Because those Galileans were killed in that way, do you think it proves that they were worse sinners than all the other Galileans? No indeed! And I tell you that if you do not turn from your sins, you will all die as they did. What about those eighteen people in Siloam who were killed when the tower fell on them? Do you suppose this proves that they were worse than all the other people living in Jerusalem? No indeed! And I tell you that if you do not turn from your sins, you will all die as they did (Luke 13:1-5).

As we continue to study, we learn it was not a false doctrine only for the sinful of that day. In John 9 the disciples of Jesus show the same thought. As Jesus passed by a man that had been born blind the disciples questioned Jesus concerning the man. "And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2). Not only did Jesus answer that neither had sinned, but He emphasized that this man was born blind for that moment "that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:3). There are those even today who would make the same arguments when calamity falls upon someone. Yet, those who know the teaching of God's Word realize that the bad things that happen to men today happen because man introduced sin into the world and with that sin came the illnesses,

diseases, and bad things along with death. Had man never transgressed God's Word he would still be in the paradise in innocence and none of these things would have befallen any.

Next we will turn our attention to what is probably the most prominent discussion in the Book of Job and that is the problem of pain and suffering. First, we will consider the arguments of the atheist. Though, our time nor space will allow a detailed study by any means, we will consider this discussion in a general way and hopefully provide some benefit for our study. The atheist argues that if the God you describe in the Bible actually exists, that being a God of love and all power, then why does He allow sin and suffering to exist? If He were "love" (1 John 4:8), He would desire to remove the suffering, and if He were "all powerful" He would have the ability to remove suffering. Since suffering still exists, then your God must not exist. In beginning we would remind the atheist it was not God that introduced these upon man His creation. It was man's sin that brought these things upon man. When we see man before the serpent arrives on the scene in Genesis 3, we see what God intended for man all along. Joy, happiness and paradise with no sorrow, pain or suffering. Man spoiled that for himself, not God. It is the height of arrogance to stand and accuse God of this atrocity. Next we would say that this view assumes there is no value in suffering. But, if there is value we can see why God who loves us would allow it to exist for our betterment. James wrote, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing

this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:2-4). The testing of our faith through trials, tribulation and suffering are of great value when it comes to helping Christians grow in maturity. Therefore, there is value there and it is a loving thing to allow it for the benefit of man. Consider for a moment the child who reaches up on the stove and sets his hand in the fire. Because of the pain and suffering, he knows to immediately remove his hand before there is greater damage. Second, we would point out that God has been working to remove pain and suffering and He has done that by offering His Son on the cross so that we could be cleansed by His precious blood and have a home with Him in heaven where all suffering will be removed and every tear will be wiped away. God has provided a means by which the paradise which He created for man in the first place can be restored. Just because it may not satisfy the atheist’s expectations concerning when it should be done is arrogance on his part and a failure to recognize the sovereignty of our God. Third we would note that when a man suffers it can be for one of two reasons. It may be because of his righteousness as we see in the case of Job and in the end man will always be better than in the beginning if he approaches it with reverence for God and in the way God reveals for us to overcome. Another reason for suffering may be because we have sinned and are not right with God. Our Lord is wanting us to stop and consider our ways. In other words, it gives man an opportunity to examine himself to see if he is

still walking “in the light, as he is in the light” (1 John 1:7). If man does it honestly, not deceiving himself, he can make the necessary corrections and be right with God again. Both of these are immense blessings for the Christian.

Third, in our consideration of the devil’s work in Job we will turn our attention to a more subtle transgression of which, years ago, brother Johnny Ramsey said in a sermon on “Worldliness in the Church” was acceptable worldliness in the Lord’s church. That would be the lack of compassion and love for our brethren and assuming the worse and not the best. Job expresses his thoughts on the ill behavior of his “so called friends.” “To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend” (Job 6:14). Add to that the assumption that Job must be some kind of sinner and even the most heinous of sinners would show an arrogance and lack of love in a most harmful way. Zophar is very bold and even caustic in his accusations against Job. After Job reveals the battle that is raging in his mind concerning the tragedies that have befallen him and the inconsistency he perceives in God because he knows he has not sinned nor been unrighteous, Zophar speaks these words:

Should not the multitude of words be answered?
And should a man full of talk be justified? Should
thy lies make men hold their peace? And when
thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?
For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I
am clean in thine eyes. But oh that God would
speak, and open his lips against thee; and that
he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that
they are double to that which is! Know therefore

that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity
deserveth (Job 11:1-6).

Zophar even has the audacity to assume how God would respond to Job. However, we have the luxury of knowing how God views Job in the very opening of this book. So we have Job being falsely accused by Zophar and not even blinking an eye nor considering he may not know all the facts. Again it is a common problem, sadly, found much too often in the church. We know from God's Word that our dealings with one another will have an effect upon our relationship with our God. Where there is no mercy shown, there should be no mercy expected (James 2:13). When we fail to be longsuffering and comforters we ignore the very qualities extended by our God toward each one of us. These and other qualities that are overlooked by Job's friends and even by members of the Lord's church today are qualities each one of us desperately need and each have benefited tremendously. Now we will turn our attention specifically to chapters one and two.

The Devil And Job In Chapters One And Two

First we will consider Job's character. God confirms, not once, not twice, but three times, that Job is a man of character. In Job 1:1 the Holy Spirit confirms it by inspiration and in Job 1:8 and Job 2:3 the Father speaks of Job's character to Satan. The description is clear. "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed

evil” (Job 1:1). However, Job’s righteousness did not give him immunity against the devil’s assault. We will see that Satan is ruthless, and will push to the very limits that God laid before him as he approached Job. In Matthew 4:1ff Satan had the audacity to tempt the very Son of God in an attempt to draw Him away from the Father. It is important to understand that Jesus was tempted and could have chosen the path that all accountable men and women have chosen. That is to give into the temptation and allow lust to be conceived. However, He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). It is interesting to consider that in Matthew 4:9-10 Jesus was tempted to worship Satan. He overcame the temptation magnificently, but He was tempted none the less. Consider the scenes surrounding Jesus from the taking of Jesus in the garden to the crucifixion which included the mocking, abusing, and mutilation of our Saviour. We must understand that ultimately, the devil was behind it all. It was one last ditch effort of Satan as he realizes he is being defeated. The devil will tempt everyone, but he will focus strongly on the stronger and the more faithful.

Second, we will note Satan’s audacity will even be seen in the presence of God. Satan’s response to Jehovah concerning Job’s character is this:

Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance

is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face (Job 1:9-11).

Satan makes two implications in this statement. One is against God, in that He must bribe men to be faithful to Him, and the second against Job in that he is so shallow his service and loyalty to God is only to get what he can get out of it.

In chapter two after Satan has been unsuccessful in his first attempts to extinguish Job's faith and trust in God, his response is predictable and even more pointed as he brings implication against God and Job a second time.

The third lesson that we will emphasize is Satan is under the control of Jehovah. Though God allows Satan to be active against Job on two specific occasions revealed for us, both times He tells the devil how far he may go. First, it is do not touch Job personally, and then He tells Satan to spare the life of Job. Though Satan pushed it to the limits, he did not overstep the command of God. The question that must be asked and considered is why did the devil follow the command of Jehovah? Was it because he is honorable and desires to work within the boundaries set? Or is it because he has no ability to usurp the authority of God and cannot step beyond the boundaries God has set for him. Of course we recognize it is the latter rather than the first statement. If Satan could have gone beyond the first command and touched Job personally I am confident he would have, and even taken his life in the second assault on Job and his righteousness. He simply did not have the

ability. It is also significant God did not deny building a hedge “about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side” (Job 1:10). It is encouraging that we are God’s “peculiar people” (Titus 2:14; 2 Peter 2:9), which in the original language means a possessed people and could be illustrated perfectly by stating that God has built a hedge around His people. God’s power and protection and His ability to protect His people is without question, even against our adversary the devil.

Our fourth lesson comes from Job 2 and Satan’s continued assault against Job. Satan will **never give up** as long as we are alive. Not only are we given an inside view of his activity in chapters 2 and 3, but we are confident he continues activity behind the scenes throughout the book. Satan will not give up. Every day when we rise from our sleep we must be very aware that he will seek our souls, he will continue to bait traps, and he will continue to actively oppose us in our pursuit of holiness. As long as we are in this earthly tabernacle we will be pursued by the roaring lion who seeks “whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Next, we should be clear in our minds that Satan uses men and women to tempt us. In Job 2:9-10, Job’s wife comes to him with her counsel. She said, “Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die” (Job 2:9). Fortunately, Job recognizes the counsel exactly for what it is worth. He responded, “Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh” (Job 2:10). Even later we would conclude that the friends were being used by Satan rather than the Lord.

Finally, we would note that the devil’s work is

done behind the scene. Even though you and I have the privilege of seeing behind the scenes in the first chapters, we have no indication that Job ever knew exactly what was going on in the circumstances that brought him to the end when Jehovah blessed him with even more than in the beginning. You and I are warned the devil is very real and he is very active. Long after Job lived Jesus spoke to the apostles and told of the devil's desire and accusations. Jesus said, "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). The Greek word translated "desired" is much stronger than the English translation. That was spoken to all the apostles. Basically, Jesus is saying, "Satan is demanding you and he will sift you to prove there is nothing of value there and thus you belong to him." Peter warned later, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8). Satan is still very active behind the scenes. We must ever be vigilant.

Conclusion

Though we have surely not exhausted the topic, each chapter in this book will most certainly build upon the others to increase our knowledge of Satan and how he works. He is the deceiver "of the whole world" (Rev. 12:9). Thus we must be very careful each day and strong to overcome. To be victorious we must follow Peter's admonition as found in 1 Peter 1:13. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the

end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Basically he said, control your mind, keep it sharp and stay focused on the goal before us. The goal is the rest, but it will only come when we have finished our fight here. May we each be more determined, vigilant and active in our fight against the devil. Let us learn the lessons from the Book of Job and each one of us study our Bibles more and more.

Works Cited

Brother Ramsey also mentioned a number of other sins that are prominent in the world and church that seem to be overlooked among our brethren. Gossip, covetousness and materialism, immodesty, are but a few among others.

Am I Being Used By The Devil?

Cliff Goodwin



Cliff and his wife, Beth (Williams), are native Alabamians. They are blessed with a son, Cade (17), and two daughters: Kinley (16) and Lakelyn (13). Cliff is a graduate of Memphis School of Preaching and Faulkner University. Over the last twenty years he has labored with the Ironaton church of Christ, located outside of Talladega, Alabama. During this time he has done extensive television evangelism – initially in the local market and recently on Gospel Broadcasting Network (GBN). As of 2012, Cliff is the host of Searching the Scriptures and Preaching the Gospel—both of which can be seen on GBN.

This is a chilling question. The very thought that I could be an instrument in Satan’s hand – for my own self-destruction and the destruction of others. No one likes this thought, but all children of God need to ask this question of themselves.

Satan is a real being who works through the agency of evil people in the world. For this reason the apostle Paul could provide us with such inspired statements as these.

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ (Phi. 3:18).

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of

the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh
in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2).

When Satan succeeded in getting sin into this world, he defiled this earthly realm (Gen. 3:4-6). Since that time there have been two opposing forces at work in this world. God is the Author of all that is good and beneficial to man (James 1:17), while Satan is the murderer responsible for the sin, suffering, sorrow and death that has plagued the human race (cf. John 8:44). Through sin Satan was able to bring man into bondage of death (cf. Heb. 2:14-15). Through the deeds of evil people he has perpetuated sin in every generation, spreading it far and wide across the globe.

When a child of God practices sin, he is part of the world's problem. God intends that His children be part of the solution.

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the
sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a
crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye
shine as lights in the world (Phil. 2:15).

Our goal as Christians should ever be to contribute to the spiritual illumination of this world, and not to darken it in any way. This is why it is vital that we are careful to heed the Bible's warnings and to follow its instructions. If we do otherwise, we are "playing into the devil's hand."

Let us notice some specific areas in which the heedless child of God will certainly be used by Satan.

RESISTING God's Pattern

From the very beginning, Satan has challenged the Lord's authority (Gen. 3:4). He greatly desires that man likewise resists God's authority and pattern. As the all-knowing, all-powerful and infinite God, the authority is solely His to direct the steps of man. His Divine guidance is in man's best interest (Jer. 10:23). Satan knows this. Thus, in his hatred toward God and man, he seeks for man to resist the heavenly pattern.

It seems that man seldom realizes the gravity of his actions when he resists God's pattern. As mentioned earlier, man is playing right into the devil's hand without ever pausing to consider the full impact of his willfulness or neglect. A Biblical example of this very error would be the impulsive Peter.

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men (Mat. 16:21-23).

At least a couple of things from the above passage are quite shocking. First, consider the audacity of the apostle Peter. He actually laid hands on the Savior, rebuking Him for the very idea of submitting to the murderous schemes of the Jewish leaders. Who did Peter

think he was? Will the disciple teach the Master? Peter was not at his finest in this moment of willfulness and audacity. Second, the Lord's words in response to Peter might shock the reader as well. Yes, Peter had greatly overstepped his bounds, but why would Jesus call him "Satan?" This example greatly helps us in understanding the present point. Though Peter was well-intentioned in resisting Christ's plan, he was actually being used by Satan! It was God's plan – and in man's eternal best interest – that Christ die for the sin of the world (cf. Acts 2:23; John 1:29). For Peter to discourage or detract from that plan would align him with the adversary, not with God.

It is always foolish and futile for man to challenge, resist or reject God's plan (pattern). All such departures please only the devil – not the good Lord. Modern examples sadly abound. When men resist God's pattern of baptism, they are being used by Satan. The apostle Paul was inspired to explain the wisdom and purpose of baptism. He pointed out that one is united with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3-5). Paul goes on to write,

But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you (Rom. 6:17).

The "form" of doctrine was the "pattern" of teaching that had been delivered unto them. This teaching specifically included the pattern of death, burial and resurrection. The Romans had obeyed that pattern in being baptized, and the result was newness of life. Given the clarity of

the Bible doctrine of baptism, it is hard to understand why so many resist this Biblical truth. One thing is for sure: Satan is using all those who distort this simple but essential doctrine.

What about God's pattern for the church? The modern religious world certainly resists the unity and singularity God intends for His church. This, too, must delight the devil. Jesus promised to build only one church – His church (Mat. 16:18). As souls are saved in obedience to the gospel, they are simultaneously added to that church (cf. Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 12:13). This is the identity of the church – it is comprised of the saved. When Christ returns, in fact, it will be the church (body) that He will take home to heaven (Eph. 5:23-27). Nonetheless, in the face of all these foregoing passages, so many belittle and even deny the importance of the church. They claim that one is saved by Jesus Christ, without any connection to or involvement with the church whatsoever. It is true that Christ saves, but such a claim as a whole does not square with Scripture. When Christ saves a person, He does so in keeping with His revealed plan and pattern (cf. 2 Tim. 1:8-10; 2 The. 1:8-9). The New Testament knows nothing of saved, accountable persons outside of Christ's spiritual body, the church.

Many others seek to include a distorted and divided church in God's plan of salvation. They claim that the "universal" church is composed of the various denominations and religious groups that abound in the modern world. Sincere believers are supposedly saved in various sects, or bodies, under the labeling of various

religious names. Again, this is in clear contradiction to Biblical teaching. The inspired Paul unmistakably taught that God's plan for the church does not include denominationalism or even a denominational mindset.

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul (1 Cor. 1:10-13)?

Denominationalism perpetuates division, and is itself the result of religious division. The above passage clearly refutes division among God's children. Further, the apostle Paul condemned the breaking off of God's people into various sects, aligning themselves under the names of human leaders. Could the Biblical refutation of modern denominationalism be any clearer?

Satan uses those who resist God's plan. This is true of those who resist God's plan of salvation and of those who resist His plan for the church. It is also true of those who resist God's pattern for true worship (John 4:23-24; cf. Heb. 11:4). Virtually no one would blatantly claim to know better than God, yet that is the inescapable conclusion when men resist God's pattern.

REFUSING Forgiveness

Sin is like a cancer. Left unchecked, it grows and spreads. This is true in an individual's life (cf. Gen. 4:7); it is true in a congregation (1 Cor. 5:6); and it is even true in society at large (cf. Eccl. 8:11). In personal relationships, Satan often uses sin to provoke more sin. One man wrongs another, and the wronged party soon becomes guilty himself by reacting with vengeance and malice. An observer to such a scenario can witness sin spread from person to person – a sad thing to see, indeed. Paul wrote, “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men,” (Rom. 12:17). And again, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good,” (Rom. 12:21).

The malignancy often does not end with vengeance. Sin often continues to fester even after the exchange of “blows.” The spiritual corruption is further perpetuated by the unwillingness to forgive. When sin jeopardizes and even ruptures a relationship, repentance and forgiveness are the spiritual balms that facilitate healing. Satan knows that as long as bitterness and contempt prevail, sin can continue its corruption.

God is very forthright in His insistence that man be willing to forgive those who sin against him. After providing such instruction in the model prayer (Mat. 6:12), Jesus reinforced this concept with additional teaching.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Mat. 6:14-15).

Later in His ministry, the Lord used the powerful parable of the wicked (unforgiving) servant to punctuate His teaching on forgiveness (Mat. 18:23-35). The conclusion is undeniable: the forgiving can be found pleasing unto God, while the unforgiving simply cannot.

Even worse, an unforgiving person is being used by Satan to do as much harm as possible. This harm is not limited to the unforgiving person himself. His bitter harshness can greatly discourage others as well. Paul brings out this fact as he addresses the matter of the penitent brother in ancient Corinth.

Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:6-11).

The discipline of the Corinthian church had obviously produced its desired effect: the penitence of the delinquent brother (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1-6). Paul then urged the importance of the members' forgiving this brother and confirming their love toward him. To withhold such forgiveness from one who had done all he could to correct his sin would result in a soul's being swallowed up by sorrow. Satan would surely use such grief and

discouragement to plunge this soul into deep despair and to do as much other harm as possible.

How many precious souls through the ages have simply given up due to the unwillingness of their brethren to forgive? Satan delights to wreak this kind of devastation anywhere he can, and he will use hard-hearted, carnally-minded people to do so. True children of God must remain kind and tenderhearted. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," (Eph. 4:32). A child of God should realize what a life-giving stream forgiveness can be. After all, it was the refreshing fount of God's forgiveness that had revived his own soul.

In writing to the Christians at Colossae, Paul made the beautiful connection between God's forgiveness and the forgiveness between brethren. He wrote in Colossians 2:13, "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having **forgiven** you all trespasses," (emp. mine, CG). Later, in Colossians 3:13, the apostle used the same word in describing forgiveness between brethren, "Forbearing one another, and **forgiving** one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ **forgave** you, so also do ye," (emp. mine, CG). This is not the usual word for forgiveness. Nonetheless, it is a beautiful word in its own right. It means "to grant as a favor; to forgive out of grace." This is the manner in which God has forgiven His children, and this is the way He would have His children to forgive each other. When such is the case, love covers a multitude of sins

(cf. 1 Peter 4:8) and healing can begin. When forgiveness is withheld, however, Satan is using those who refuse such to further his wicked works.

RETAINING Overconfidence

Satan must delight in an unsuspecting target. Peter clearly warns, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour,” (1 Peter 5:8); nevertheless, many act as though this warning does not apply to them. It is helpful to remember that this very warning was written by an inspired man who had once thought himself beyond the limits of Satan’s reach.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me (Luke 22:31-34).

It is the height of overconfidence (if not arrogance) for one to be directly and personally warned by the Savior, only then to brush it off as unnecessary. Peter had basically done this in his younger years. Near the end of his life, however, an older and wiser Peter was inspired of God to write his brothers and sisters, warning them of the devil’s mission. He urges a child of God to be watchful and to keep his spiritual faculties about him. A Christian needs to be clear-headed when it comes to

spiritual matters, and especially with regard to potential pitfalls. One who does not take the warnings of Scripture seriously is sure to make an easy target for the adversary.

What would cause a child of God to neglect Divine warnings and to let his guard down? Often it is a case of overconfidence. The Bible certainly teaches that a child of God has confidence in his salvation.

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God (1 John 5:13).

One can know that he is saved, and he is to hold fast to this assurance in Christ until the end of life on this earth (cf. Heb. 3:14). Peter adds, “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” (2 Peter 1:11). Indeed, Christians are confident in their salvation. Overconfidence, however, is another matter.

The blessed assurance of salvation stems from an humble dependence on Christ, and it realizes the need to abide in Christ and in His will. John described this concept well when he wrote,

And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him (1 John 2:28-29).

Yes, a Christian is saved and knows he is saved, but he also knows the kind of life necessary to remained

saved. Further, he also knows that Satan is ever striving to distract his attention and divide his allegiance (cf. Luke 8:13-14). These assaults of the devil would be too much were it not for the strength and power of the Lord. Paul wrote,

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:10-11).

Overconfidence results when a child of God no longer possesses a proper view of himself. He has lost sight of his utter dependence on the power and grace of the Lord. He has forgotten that, as a human being, he actually “does not rise very far above the ground.” This is the very idea behind lowliness, or humility. In other words, all men have feet of clay and are therefore susceptible to weakness and failure. One cognizant of this fact walks circumspectly, keeping up his spiritual guard and taking heed unto his way (cf. Eph. 5:15; 1 Tim. 4:16). One who is overconfident neglects such things, assuming that he has “arrived” spiritually and is no longer in need of caution.

As mentioned earlier, the younger apostle Peter resisted the Lord’s warning and was used by Satan (cf. Luke 22:31-34; Mark 14:66-72). Christians still today must learn from Peter’s failure. One must never become so confident in his own strength or his own knowledge that he ignores the plain and simple warnings of Scripture. Sometimes the warnings in God’s Word are prefaced with the phrase, “Be not deceived...” Paul gives a warning to those who, in their overconfidence,

might presume to be “untouchable” when it comes to the perils of evil associations. “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners,” (1 Cor. 15:33). One might think himself too strong to be influenced by ungodly companions, but the Bible warns otherwise. Others tend to believe that they can dabble in sinful practices here and there without suffering any real consequences. They want to sow their wild oats while praying for crop failure at the same time! The inspired Paul makes it clear that there are consequences for our actions. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). No one is above sin, and the warnings of Scripture are there for a reason. Satan uses as his unsuspecting pawns those who are overconfident. “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall,” (1 Cor. 10:12).

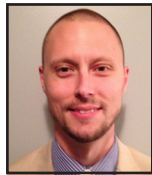
Conclusion

Satan is just as real as God, but he is not nearly as powerful. John wrote, “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world,” (1 John 4:4). As long as the child of God abides in the Word of God, the evil one cannot touch him. John would write elsewhere, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God,” (1 John 3:9). And again, “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not,” (1 John 5:18). These verses

do not teach sinless perfection or the impossibility of apostasy, but they do demonstrate the fact that no child of God has to be used by Satan. By applying himself to the warnings and instruction of God's Word, the child of God can keep himself unto the Master's use and not unto the devil's.

Names Of The Devil

Chris Perry



Chris Perry is married to the former Danyelle Templeton, and together they have three children, Jordan, Cydney Jane, and Bennett. Chris is a 2002 graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching. He has received his B.A. in English from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He currently serves as the minister for the Morrison congregation in McMinnville, TN where he has served for the past year. He also teaches Bible and English at Boyd Christian School.

Names are important – mankind’s world is governed by the need for effective communication, and therefore, what things are called makes a great deal of difference. Shakespeare’s character Juliet famously challenged, “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet” (Shakespeare 315). However, a quick survey of the modern world casts doubt on her claim. In politics, for example, changing the name of something often aids its mainstream acceptance. Thus, “illegal immigrants” become “undocumented workers,” and those who are “pro-abortion” are instead labeled as “pro-choice,” with each of these changes attempting to normalize and sterilize controversial (and in the case of abortion, sinful) issues.

Proper names often carry major significance, as well. As recorded in the Bible, “Abram” became

“Abraham” when God re-affirmed His covenant with him (Gen. 17:5); Jacob demonstrated “power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” and thereby earned the name “Israel” (Gen. 32:28). To these examples could be added Sarai, Simon Barjona, and a host of other Old and New Testament characters. In a similar vein, early English surnames often reflected the occupation of the bearer of the name. Thus, a repairer of barrels took the name “Cooper,” one who made and sold candles was named “Chandler,” and the driver of a two-wheeled carriage took the family name “Carter” (Wikipedia.org).

Since nomenclature is so attached to meaning, a careful study of the various names given to the Devil would bring forth ample fruit for the Bible student. As Rex A. Turner observed of the devil, “[T]he various names applied to him reflect his character... [and] also the methods of his operation” (Turner 89). Depending on the method of counting, the number of names and epithets ascribed to Satan in God’s Word range from 23 (Denham 63-86) to 31 (Torrey) to 40 or more (Turner 89). A systematic study of these names, arranged in a chronological fashion, can paint a deep and thorough portrait of mankind’s Adversary, and aid in the Christian’s fight against him.

Satan In The Patriarchal Age

The Serpent of Genesis

It is my conviction that mankind’s first encounter with Satan – and the Bible student’s first introduction

to him, as well – occurred as recorded in Genesis 3:1-2: “Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” Interestingly, some modern scholars dispute that this is a reference to the Devil. Note Henry Ansgar Kelly’s statement in the opening chapter of his book, *Satan: A Biography*:

It may come as a surprise to some of the readers of this book that there is no devil, Devil, or DEVIL in the Book of Genesis. The interpretation of the Serpent in the Garden of Eden as the Devil is one of those retro-fittings of past data with later ideas...When we look at the beginning of Genesis with unblinkered eyes, we see that there is no creation or fall of Angels, but only a very clever talking Serpent... (Kelly 13).

It must be admitted that Kelly’s conclusion is likely colored by his adoption of postmodern methods of Bible interpretation. Later in the same chapter, he references Genesis 1-11 as a “prequel,’ that is, an introduction written later” (ibid 14). In other words, he rejects the inspiration and validity of the first portion of Genesis, and thus sees the association of the serpent with Satan as a manmade addition. Therefore, any potential “biographical” information about Satan found in those chapters would be rejected, no matter what they revealed about the character in question.

To those who acknowledge the truth and inspiration of the Bible, such argumentation is foolish. Not only does Genesis 1-11 belong in the Bible as an inspired and accurate account of Creation and the development of

mankind (a discussion beyond the scope of this study), but the serpent of Genesis 3 most certainly is Satan. John the Apostle, guided by God (Rev. 1:19), referred to Satan as “the great dragon...**that old serpent**, called the Devil and Satan” (Rev. 12:9; cf. Rev. 20:2). As well, God’s words to the serpent later in Genesis 3 indicate that Satan and the serpent are the same entity. He tells the serpent, “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” (Gen. 3:15). This prophecy only makes sense in the framework of the battle between Jesus – the seed of the woman— and Satan and his minions – the seed of the serpent (cf. Rev. 12:1-9). As well, Paul’s statement in Romans 16:20 seems to allude to the same passage: “And the God of peace **shall bruise Satan under your feet** shortly...”

Since Satan is indeed the serpent of Genesis 3, further study of this terminology is in order. The word translated “serpent” in this chapter comes from a word that means “to hiss, i.e., whisper a (magic) spell; gen. to prognosticate” (Strong 452). It is worthy of note that the etymology of the word first referencing Satan carries with it the idea of trickery or misguidance. This fits perfectly with the description of the serpent in Genesis 3:1, which describes the serpent as “more subtil than any beast of the field.” The word translated “subtil” means “cunning,” and comes from a kindred word which is translated in the verse just previous to Genesis 3:1 as “naked” (Gen. 2:25). The connection between these two ideas likely lies in the idea of “smoothness.” Just as Adam and Eve were literally

smooth in that they were unencumbered by clothing, so Satan was figuratively smooth in his manipulation of God's first couple.

The characteristic of cunning dominates Satan's personality throughout the Scriptures. Second Corinthians 11:3 references the serpent of Genesis in similar terms: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Two words harken back to the Garden: "beguiled," which provides the idea of deceiving completely (Robertson 257), and "subtilty," whose synonyms include "trickery" and "sophistry" (Strong 249). Earlier in the same epistle, Paul warns the Corinthians, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). The Greek word from which the phrase "get an advantage" comes is a derivative of the word translated "covetous" in the New Testament, indicating that Satan is thirsty to gain our souls (Strong 682); he uses his "devices" – literally, his "knowing plots" (Vincent 3:297) – to trick and deceive us, in hopes of achieving this end. To these descriptions Paul adds "the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11), a description of his use of "deliberate planning or [a] system" (Vincent 3:392).

As Christians, we must certainly find a way to counter the subtlety of Satan, the beguiling serpent. Jesus implored His disciples to be "**wise as serpents, and harmless as doves**" (Mat. 10:16). The Christian armor, which, as mentioned above protects against "the wiles of the devil," is therefore "a defense against **strategy** as well as **assault**" (Vincent 3:406). The Christian

must be informed of the devil's **tactics**, prepared for his **transformations** (2 Cor. 11:14), and aware of his **tendencies** (cf. James 4:7, etc.) if he is to be successful in his fight against that old serpent.

The Adversary of Job

The discerning Bible student should be aware that Job falls into the Patriarchal age; that is, Job lived and died during the period of time prior to the Law of Moses, when God spoke to mankind through the male heads of each household. As with Noah, Abraham, and others, Job intervened to God on behalf of his family, going so far as to offer sacrifices for his children in case they had sinned (Job 1:5). One writer observed: "The story of Job is laid in the far-off patriarchal age, such a time as we find elsewhere represented only in the Book of Genesis; a time long before the Israelitish [sic] state, with its religious, social and political organization, existed" (Orr 3:1680).

The antiquity of the events recorded in Job adds to the significance of the book's description of Satan. In fact, though he is so called in a select few other places in the Old Testament, it is in Job that the name is most often found. 14 times – and in just two chapters – is the name "Satan" used in reference to the enemy of God and man. The Hebrew word so translated means "an adversary," or, as in Job when it is meant to refer to the Evil Being in particular, "**the Adversary**" (Wilson 367). When not referencing the Devil himself, the word is used in a variety of applications. Its first use, in fact, is Numbers 22:22: "And God's anger was kindled because

he went: and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for **an adversary** [the same Hebrew word translated “Satan”] against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him.” The Hebrew word is also translated later in this passage as “to withstand,” or, as in Young’s Literal Translation, “for an adversary” (Num. 22:32).

The devil certainly earns his title of “Adversary.” In English, the word “adversary” primarily means “a person who opposes or fights against another” (Neufeldt 19), and this is a fitting characterization of Satan. In the book of Job, he sets his face against the righteous patriarch, stripping him of his family, his fortune, and his health. He is an adversary to David, as well, tempting him to number the people and thus bringing a plague upon God’s people (1 Chr. 21:1). And in the New Testament, the title “Satan” is attached to the devil 37 times, ranging from the temptation of Jesus (Mat. 4:10) to the Evil One’s final judgment (Rev. 20:7ff), to numerous situations in between. For the Christian, Satan “desires” or “demands” our soul, as he did Peter’s in Luke 22:31 (Strong 617), and he seeks to “hinder” us – meaning to “impede” or “detain” – just as he did Paul (1 The. 2:18). Peter even directly refers to him as an “adversary” in 1 Peter 5:8 – the translation of a word that means “an opponent [in a lawsuit]” (Strong 580).

Satan In The Mosaic Age

Common terms

On several occasions, the two names already mentioned for the devil are employed in the Old

Testament. Zechariah's vision of "a man with a measuring line in his hand" (Zech. 2:1) includes a description of "the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and **Satan standing** at his right hand to resist him" (Zech. 3:1; cf. Zech. 3:2). This is obviously a reference to the same evil being referenced in Genesis and Job.

The prophet Isaiah, while describing the glory of "this mountain" (Isa. 25:6; cf. Isa. 24-27; Isa. 2:2-4), references God's punishment upon "leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea" (Isa. 27:1). Notice that Isaiah employs the imagery of a "serpent," an obvious nod to Genesis, as well as "leviathan," a serpent-like creature resembling a dragon (cf. Job 41). As one commentator notes, "[I]t seems better to think of the creatures here as symbolizing all the powers which serve Satan's efforts to defeat God's purpose" (Isa. 2:19). It is also interesting to note that this language bears a striking resemblance to Revelation 12:9 and Revelation 20:2 already referenced above.

Disputed terms

There are several possible references to Satan in the Old Testament about which Bible scholars are divided. For instance, the King James translators included the name "Satan" in Psalm 109:6: "Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand." However, the word appears in verb form in verse 4: "For my love they are my **adversaries**," or, as in the ESV, "In return for my love they **accuse** me." Because the context seems to address adversaries in the general sense, many

translators and commentators interpret the instance of the Hebrew word in verse 6 as generic, as in the ESV: "...let an accuser stand at his right hand." Adam Clarke noted, "As the word satan means an adversary simply, though sometimes it is used to express the evil spirit Satan, I think it best to preserve here its grammatical meaning: "Let an adversary stand at his right hand:" i.e., Let him be opposed and thwarted in all his purposes" (574).

Another example of a disputed term for Satan is found in 1 Kings 22:22: "And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a **lying spirit** in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so." In the context, Micaiah the prophet was called to Ahab to determine whether Israel should fight for control of Ramoth-gilead (1Kings 22:1-14). After attempting to echo the false prophecies of the other prophets (1 Kings 22:15), Micaiah revealed the vision that the Lord had given him. In this vision, God called for someone to "persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramath-gilead" (1 Kings 22:20). It is at this call that a being came forward and uttered the words recorded in 1 Kings 22:22. But is this Satan? Note the discrepancy in viewpoints:

John Gill: "...the evil spirit, Satan, the father of lies, the old deceiver, who came forth from his own place and his own company."

Keil and Delitzsch: "The spirit...is neither Satan, nor any evil spirit whatever, but, as the definite article and the whole of the context show, the personified spirit of prophecy...under the influence of Satan..." (196).

Jamieson, Fausset, Brown: “This prophetic language must not be interpreted literally...” (367).

Thus, scholars are certainly divided about the identity of this “lying spirit.” As one commentator noted, “On the one hand, it is hard to suppose one of the holy Angels [sic] a “lying spirit;” on the other, hard to find Satan, or an evil spirit, included among “the host of heaven” and acting as the minister of God” (Barnes 222). The depiction of Satan in the book of Job might explain how Satan could be in the presence of God, since in Job 1:6 we are told that “there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and **Satan came also among them.**” However, it seems most likely that this vision is representative, and is meant to reveal to Ahab that God will allow him to be deceived if the king so desires, and that the message of the false prophets, derived from their evil desire to please the king, will serve as the means of that deception.

A third disputed term for Satan is found in Isaiah 14:12: “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!” The word “Lucifer” comes from a word that means “to shine,” and literally means “the morning star” (Strong 352). The word’s association with Satan is so common that Webster’s Dictionary has the following entry for its theological use: “Satan; specifically, in Christian theology, Satan as leader of the fallen angels” (803). Rex Turner agrees with this statement, for throughout his study of “Satanology” he refers to Satan as Lucifer,

and references Isaiah 14:12 (77-91). The reasoning is certainly valid. The description of Lucifer as “fallen from heaven” matches Jesus’ description of Satan’s fall: “And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10:18).

Despite these parallels, other commentators question the association. Consider these comments from Keil and Delitzch: “Lucifer, as a name given to the devil, was derived from this passage, which the fathers (and lately Stier) interpreted, **without any warrant whatever**, as relating to the apostasy and punishment of the angelic leaders” (202). Among the most compelling arguments against “Lucifer” as a reference to Satan is the context which surrounds Isaiah 14:12. Chapter 13 begins the extended context with these words: “The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see” (Isaiah 13:1). Isaiah 14:4 narrows the focus: “That thou shalt take up a proverb **against the king of Babylon**, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! The golden city ceased!” As the chapter continues, reference is repeatedly made to the king of Babylon (the “thee” and “thou” of Isaiah 14:5-11). It would seem, then, that “Lucifer” is a reference, not to Satan, but to the king of Babylon. It is quite likely that God’s intended message to Babylon in this passage is that the nation, complete with its seemingly indestructible king, will “fall from heaven” and be destroyed.

Satan In The New Testament

The devil

By far, the references to the Evil One most often employ one of two words: “Satan,” which has been

discussed at length as the Old Testament preference, and “devil,” the predominant word in the New Testament. As one authority points out, “In the vast majority of passages (70 out of 83), either Satan or Devil is used” (Orr 4:2693). The word “devil” as a reference to Satan is used 35 times in the New Testament, and is always a translation of the Greek word “*diabolos*.” The original word means an “accuser, slanderer” (Vine 306), “a traducer” (Strong 600), a “calumniator, slanderer” (Vincent 1:27). As a common noun, it appears only three times, translated “false accusers” (2 Tim. 3:3; Titus 2:3) and “slanderers” (1 Tim. 3:11). In many translations, the Greek word “*daimon*” and its derivatives are translated “devil” or “devils,” but these are references to the evil spirits that possessed some people during the miraculous age (Vincent 1:27).

The role of the Accuser is accurately depicted in the opening chapters of the book of Job. Satan, as was referenced previously, “came among” God and His emissaries for the purpose of accusing Job:

Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face (Job 1:9-11).

This is a direct accusation leveled at the faith of Job. And he is still actively accusing today. In Revelation 12, a figurative battle is taking place between the woman

with her child and Satan, here depicted as a dragon (Rev. 12:9). As the battle is being waged, the dragon is “cast out,” and a loud voice proclaims, “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). Though the victory over Satan has only been accomplished in prospect – since judgment has not yet come – the resurrection of Jesus Christ made victory certain. Homer Hailey rightly observed about this passage:

Christ’s authority is complete and absolute; and the accuser and maligner of the brethren, who constantly accused them day and night, is cast down. Victory for weak and fallen men is now assured through God and Christ...it is a conflict that had continued from Eden, which was won by the seed of the woman, as Satan’s head was bruised beneath His heel” (Revelation 276).

Satan accuses – that is his main objective. It is our obligation to so live that no true accusation can be leveled against us, so that we might be presented to God “holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight” (Col. 1:22).

The god of this world

There are several epithets used to describe Satan in the New Testament which describe his sphere of authority and influence. Paul calls him “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4), a reference to the fact that “the worldly [people of the world] make him their god” when he is actually “a defaced image of God” (Jamieson

3:356). The same apostle also refers to the devil as the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2). The word translated “prince” is “*archon*,” and references one who is “first in rank or power” (Strong 588). The image, according to one commentator, is of “an atmosphere poisonous and impregnated with deadly elements,” lorded over by “the unseen god who lies underneath guiding ‘the course of this world’” (Jamieson 3:402). In Ephesians 6:12, Paul again references the power of Satan, calling him and his minions “the rulers of the darkness of this world.” The word “rulers” comes from a compound of the Greek words for “world” (“*kosmos*”) and “to seize or retain” (“*krateo*”); thus, Satan is identified as a “world-holder” (Strong 648). Jesus, as well, three times refers to Satan as “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; John 14:30; John 16:11), underscoring the stranglehold he has on many in this life.

It must always be remembered, however, that Satan has only as much power as we give to him. James reminds us that our authority is God, to Whom we must “submit [our]selves therefore” (James 4:7), then goes on to point out that if we “resist the devil,” he will become impotent, and will “flee from you.” It is also worthy of note a second time that Paul encouraged the Corinthians to be “obedient in all things...lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:9-11). By understanding Satan’s power, we can circumvent his processes, and thus render him powerless in our lives.

Notice, as well, that another name given to Satan in the New Testament, **Beelzebub**, takes into account

the artificial power Satan possesses. The word, used by the Jews as a reproachful term for Satan – and also for Jesus, Matthew 12:24 – likely means “dung god” (Strong 593), and indicates the fraud that “the god of this world” will be proven to be at the end of all things. This world, over which Satan so proudly rules, will be destroyed, and Satan will indeed be god of nothing (cf. 2 Peter 3:10).

Tempter

Twice Satan is referred to as “tempter” (Mat.4:3; 1 The. 3:5). In the first instance, Matthew aptly characterizes Satan as the “enticer” of Jesus (Strong 678), attempting to entrap Him in “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16; cf. Mat. 4:3-10). In the second, Paul expresses his concern for the Thessalonians, lest “the tempter have tempted” them in his absence.

How unfair it is that the one who tempts is also the one who accuses! The very one who searches out our weaknesses will then exploit them and attempt to drop the broken mess at the feet of the Supreme Judge. But, though the tempter may tempt, and the accuser may accuse, his “fiery darts” will fall harmlessly to the ground if we are washed in the blood of Christ (Rev. 7:14; Acts 22:16) and wear the Christian armor (Eph. 6:11ff).

Other descriptive terms for Satan

The remainder of the words used to describe Satan primarily appear in two verses. The first set of terms were spoken by Jesus:

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44).

First, Jesus describes Satan as a “murderer.” While it is true that Satan, through temptation, can and does influence others to take life, the emphasis here may be on spiritual death. It can accurately be said that “the death of the human race, in its widest sense, is ascribed to the murderous seducer of our race” (Jamieson 3:404). This murderous act of introducing sin into the world happened “from the beginning,” that is, with Adam and Eve. And it continues even today, for “as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and **so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned**” (Rom. 5:12).

Jesus also describes Satan as “a liar, and the father of it.” This can be taken as indicating that Satan is the father of **lies** or the father of **liars**. In either case, the point is clear: lying, murder, and every sinful thing originates with Satan. The extension, however, is far more unpleasant. Jesus’ ultimate point is that those who murder and lie are **children of the devil**. When I twist the truth – whether true things or **the truth** – I am a child of Satan, and when I murder – whether in deed or thought (Mat. 5:21-26) – I am a child of Satan.

The final passage under consideration is Revelation 9:11: “And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his

name Apollyon.” As with some of the other possible references to Satan in the Scriptures, commentators are in disagreement as to whether these two terms, both meaning “destroyer,” refer to Satan or some other being. Homer Hailey astutely addresses the issue: “...it probably matters little whether we think of the angel as representing a spirit or as Satan himself. Satan... is thus portrayed as ruling over the realm which is at war with God and His purpose” (Rev. 2:32). The devil, through lies, murder, and temptation of all kinds, seeks to destroy mankind and God’s purpose, but will ultimately fail.

Conclusion

First Peter 5:8 warns the Christian, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” Here, Peter combines the primary names for Satan from the Old and New Testament. He is our adversary, who stands with his face squarely against us, resisting our every attempt to follow God. And he is the devil, our accuser, leveling accusations against us from the depths of his own tortured soul, hoping through the devouring power of his temptations and lies to make those accusations a reality. But if we know Satan – his names, and the character traits that go with them – we can be better armed to fend off his attacks, and to rest safely in the arms of the “Shepherd and Bishop of our souls” (1 Peter 2:25).

Works Cited

- All Scriptures References taken from the *King James Version of the Holy Bible*, 1611 edition unless noted. Copied from e-sword v.11.1.1. Copyright Rick Meyers, 2000-2017.
- Barnes, Albert. *Barnes' Notes on the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 4. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970.
- Clarke, Adam. *Clarke's Commentary*, vol. 3. New York: Abingdon Press, 1823.
- Denham, Daniel. "Satan: His Names." *Satan: Diabolical Ruler of the World and Enemy of God and Man*, edited by Curtis A. Cates. Pulaski: Sain Publications, 2002. p.63-86.
- Gill, John. *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*. In e-sword v.11.1.1. Copyright Rick Meyers, 2000-2017.
- Hailey, Homer. *A Commentary on Isaiah*. Religious Supply, Inc., 1992.
- Hailey, Homer. *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979.
- Jamieson, Robert, et al. *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 1. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002.
- Keil, C. F., and F. Delitzsch. *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol.3. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001.
- Kelly, Henry Ansgar. *Satan: A Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Neufeldt, Victoria, ed. *Webster's New World Dictionary*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1994.
- Orr, James, M.A., D.D., ed. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939. 5 vol.
- Robertson, Archibald Thomas. *Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol.4. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. In Prentice Hall Literature, ed. Ellen Bowler, et al.

NAMES OF THE DEVIL

- Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1994. p.315.
- Strong, James. *The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996.
- "Surname." Wikipedia.com. <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surnames> accessed 4/2/2018.
- The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*. Good News Publishers, 2001. Copied from e-sword v.11.1.1. Copyright Rick Meyers, 2000-2017.
- Torrey, R.A. "Entry for 'Titles and names of the devil'". *The New Topical Text Book*. 1897. Accessed electronically at www.biblestudytools.com/concordances/torreys-topical-textbook/title-and-names-of-the-devil.html
- Turner, Rex. A., Sr. *Systematic Theology. Another Book on the Fundamentals of the Faith*. Montgomery: Alabama Christian School of Religion, 1989.
- Vincent, Marvin R. *Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1888. 4 vol.
- Vine, W.E. *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966.
- Wilson, William. *New Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1978.
- Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by J.N. Young, 1862, 1898. Copied from e-sword v.11.1.0. Copyright Rick Meyers, 2000-2017.

The Devil Does Not Want You To Obey The Gospel

Rob Whitacre



Rob Whitacre is married to Nicole and they have one daughter, Hannah and one son, Jared. His education includes San Antonio College, Abilene Christian University, Southwest School of Bible Studies (2 year diploma), Southwest School of Bible Studies (graduate certificate in Sacred History), and Southern Christian University (B.A.). He has authored three books; *The Old and New Testament Simplified*, *A Personal Evangelism Workbook* and Co-authored: *Engage*. He directs large biennial evangelistic and medical missions in Jamaica. He conducts Personal Evangelism seminars and Evangelistic Gospel meetings. His evangelism materials have been published by World Video Bible School. He served as a full time preacher from 1997-2018, and is now the Coordinator of Evangelism for House to House/Heart to Heart.

He sits in the pew but has never obeyed the Gospel. He has a great personality. Everyone who meets him loves him. He is a good “father, husband, and a faithful provider.” He comes from a family with a great reputation in the local community. His wife is a Christian, and he attends almost every service. In fact, when she is sick, he comes alone and brings the children. He is what I like to call a hot contact. You don’t have to knock on a door or make any uncomfortable visits to get into a Bible study. He is low-hanging fruit waiting to be plucked, and my family was eager to teach him the Gospel.

For the purpose of anonymity, I am going to call

him Joe. The strategy was simple. Invite him and his family to our home and build a relationship. In order to break the ice, we decided to begin with a game night. We invited one of the families they were close to and spent the evening eating, laughing and relaxing. Spending time with a prospect is a very important step towards conversion. You don't just ask someone to have a Bible study without first tilling the soil. You must earn the right to ask! People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Many Christians are turned down when they offer a Bible study because they have little to no previous contact with the person. Our next invitation would only involve Joe and his family. Since he had two small children, it was Hannah and Jared's job to entertain while we "would" look for an opportunity to transition to the Bible study. After supper while everyone was relaxed, I asked if we could spend a few minutes talking about the Lord. He said, "Sure, I would love to." Our first priority was to locate his starting location. Since his father was a Baptist who taught and preached from time to time, I knew this was going to be a difficult journey, because they were very close. Getting solid answers on our religious survey was going to be very important. At times, when a person learns the truth, their answers will change to conform to what they have learned, even though it does not accurately reflect what they did. Let's notice a few of Joe's responses.

Personal Evangelism Survey

**Do you know God exists?* "YES, faith and deduction." I would not normally find useful information

in this question, but I noticed his response was much more specific and analytical than almost all others I had received. Notice he used the word “deduction” which indicates a level of understanding that is much greater than the average person.

**Are you saved?* “YES.” *“What did you do to become saved?”* Because life is incomplete without Christ. In this answer, he seemed to misunderstand the question or deliberately avoided answering.

**How old were you when you were saved?* “11.” This age is important for two reasons. First, it may indicate if he had the ability to comprehend sin and obey the Gospel. Second, when compared to the age of baptism, it may indicate if he believed he was saved before or after baptism.

**Have you been baptized?* “YES.”

**How old were you when you were baptized?* “11.”

**Circle the word that describes your baptism:* “Immersion.”

**If you’ve been baptized, were you saved before or after baptism?* “Before.” The question is easy to understand, and his answer was very clear. In fact, considering Joe’s background, I am convinced he both understood and was convicted in his answer. If this question is answered before the study, you will get an honest answer almost every time. After finishing the survey, I tucked it away into my folder. In most studies, this survey is not needed. It is only when a prospect struggles to apply what they have learned that I refer back to it.

We passed out *Back to the Bible*, lesson one

and began. Although Joe was very knowledgeable in scripture, I was sure he was learning things he did not know about the differences between the Old and New Testaments, but he gave no indication. This may not seem like an important fact, but in hindsight, it was an indication of his heart. In order for someone to obey the Gospel they must be honest and humble. If a person is unwilling to admit what they don't know and be honest with the truth, there will be no conversion (honesty and humility = Gospel obedience when taught). When we finished the study, everything seemed well. We had some good conversation, a few laughs, and left on great terms with plans to move ahead with another study.

Our second study occurred at the church building. We ate in the fellowship hall and had an enjoyable conversation about the Presidential race. I always make sure to mix business (Bible study) with pleasure (socialization). The prospect should always know you value their friendship and are genuine in heart. Book two focuses on the foundation, organization, worship, and name of the church. Once again, I knew he was learning things that he did not grow up understanding or practicing. In fact, in several instances they were in direct contradiction to them. Although he asked a few questions, he seemed to accept without any disagreement all the truths that were presented on the organization, worship, and name of the church.

Our last study occurred in our home. I was very apprehensive about how it was going to conclude. He was a very confident person and did not seem to acknowledge learning anything or seeing many

differences in our previous studies. After dinner we sat around the table and began lesson three on sin and salvation. He had no problem answering the questions, but when we came to Mark 16:16, things began to change. Before reading the verse and filling in the blank I used one of my charts that made two statements.

What Does The Bible Teach?

- He who believes is saved and then baptized.
- He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.

As with almost everyone with whom we have studied, he indicated statement one as correct. This was also consistent with his answers from the survey. There was no doubt he was experiencing stage one of the conversion process. I call it “concern.” When a person reads scriptures that contradict their understanding of faith, it normally creates questions. The Ethiopian Eunuch was concerned about his faith when Phillip taught him the Gospel.

And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? (Acts 8:34).

As we moved through the study, I noticed that he did not say much. This kind of silence is a clear indication that the prospect is beginning to internalize the teaching.

Back to the Bible builds slowly and reaches the climax in Romans 6:3-5. It is at this point a person normally reaches stage two. Conflict occurs when you are forced to reconcile what you have been taught with what the Bible says. The following questions are asked

to help the prospect move through their conflict.

**Have you been baptized for the remission of sins?*

He answered, “yes.” I normally don’t stop to correct or explain as the questions that follow address any inconsistencies.

**If you were taught you had remission of sins BEFORE baptism, could you have been baptized for the remission of sins?* He was silent at this point, therefore, I went on to the next question.

**If you were taught you were saved BEFORE baptism, could you have been baptized to be saved?* It is here that I brought out the survey. The conflict was right in front of him. I said, “Joe, you cannot be taught the wrong thing and obey the right thing. I believe you were honest when you said you were saved before baptism. Now that you understand salvation comes after baptism, what are you going to do?”

First, Joe said that it did not matter why a person was baptized as long as they were baptized. We turned our Bibles to Acts 19, where Paul found a group of disciples who were taught error about baptism by Apollos (See Acts 18:24-28). After speaking to them, Paul realized they were not baptized according to the Great Commission. I asked Joe, “Did Paul tell them that it does not matter why you are baptized?” Next I had him read Acts 19:4-5,

Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

John's baptism did not look back to the Cross. It was not into the death of Christ. Even with these plain Bible passages, Joe would still not humble himself and accept the Truth. Instead, he decided to change his approach.

Second, he said, "I did not understand the question on the survey, as I was baptized for the remission of my sins." Gently I tried to point out his answer on the survey and his response to Mark 16:16, but he would not accept it. It seems as though he argued with himself. It was a very awkward and heart-wrenching moment that I have rarely experienced. No matter what Bible passages he read, no matter how many times we looked at his own words, he would not be honest with himself or humbly admit wrongdoing. He concluded by saying, "I know I am saved, and you have nothing to worry about as we will see each other in Heaven." I knew there was nothing more I could do, so we prayed and parted as friends.

We need not blame ourselves when someone does not obey the Truth. It was tempting to say to myself, "Rob, what if you used a couple more examples or a different chart? What if you said it differently?" Even if you are perfect in both word and tone, we must understand that some will not obey. I don't always understand why people don't obey, but I accept the fact of it. Paul asked the Galatians,

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you,
that ye should not obey the truth, before whose
eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth,
crucified among you (Gal.3:1).

Satan is a Master deceiver and knows exactly how to "hinder" Gospel obedience. Over the past twenty-five

years, we have witnessed several people walk away from the Truth. In some of these cases, one or more of the following hindrances were used by the Devil to keep them out of Heaven.

Possessions

Jesus is the living example of the Perfect Evangelist. We can learn lessons by studying those who did not obey Him. During one occasion, a rich young ruler came to Him and said, “Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17). If there was ever an example of a personal Bible study, this is it! Let’s point out a few advantages Jesus possessed as a Teacher. First, He could look at his heart and know his motives. Second, He knew his weaknesses and problems. Third, He knew the solution and could teach it perfectly. Knowing a direct answer was not best, Jesus answered with a question. “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God” (Mark 10:18). God is the only authority that matters. In reciting the commandments, Jesus revealed a problem. He skipped, “Thou shalt not covet...” (Exo. 20:17). He knew he loved money and was eaten up with greed, but Jesus still loved him (Mark 10:21). Jesus revealed the “one” thing he lacked, “go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me” (Mark 10:21). The Master Teacher, the right timing, the purest motives, and the most loving tone could not convert this young wealthy man. “And he was sad at the saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions” (Mark

10:22). Sadly, he was a man possessed by his possessions.

Felix was another man snared by money. Luke wrote,

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee (Acts 24:25).

There is no doubt that Felix had reached the stage of conflict. He knew he was lost, but “He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him...” (Acts 24:26). “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 5:10). Money is a wonderful servant but a terrible master. It is one way the Devil keeps people from obeying the Gospel.

Power

Agrippa would not obey the Gospel because of power. He was “king,” and his family had a history of betraying their faith for favor (Mat. 2:1-18; Acts 12:21-23). Paul was an inspired evangelist who was able to teach with the wisdom and words of Christ (John 14:26; 16:13). As Paul preached the Gospel and reasoned with the words of Truth (Acts 26:23,25), Agrippa became concerned (stage one). Paul said,

For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner (Acts 26:26).

His concern quickly transitioned to conflict when Paul forced him to make an application. “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest” (Acts 26:27). At this point the prospect will obey or rebel. Agrippa said, “...Almost thou persuades me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28). He came face to face with truth but was unwilling to step down from the kingdom of men and step into the Kingdom of God.

Pride

He was the best debater among his peers. He never lost even one argument. His name was Jesus, and the lawyer who came to tempt him was no match for His skills. Jesus employed the perfect strategy, “He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?” (Luke 10:26). First, he took him to the Scripture. This is the converting power of God (Psa.19:7). Second, he asked him to read it. There is a big difference in telling someone what the Bible says and having someone read it for themselves. The lawyer correctly recited a very important passage,

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself (Luke 10:27).

Although his ability to memorize and recite a passage was flawless, his ability to apply it wasn't. Jesus said, “...Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live” (Luke 10:28). The implication by Jesus is that the lawyer was not living what he knew. The lawyer was not about to allow Jesus to win this argument, and herein

lies the problem. He was more interested in winning the debate than winning the soul. He was not going to admit he was wrong. “But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?” (Luke 10:29). Even though he was motivated by pride, Jesus still sought to reach his soul by teaching one of the greatest parables ever spoken, “The Good Samaritan.” Even the perfect teacher plus the perfect and powerful parable was unable to break down the pride in this man’s heart. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov.16:18).

Parents/Progeny

I am certain that one of the contributing factors for Joe’s unwillingness to honestly accept and humbly obey the truth was his family. After this study, I spent a lot of time thinking about what I could have done differently. I decided to go back to the Master Evangelist. According to the Hebrew writer,

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15).

Therefore, is it possible that Jesus experienced family difficulties during His ministry? Jesus was not only our Savior, He was a man with family. He had four brothers named James, Joses, Simon, and Judas (Mat.13:44). According to Gospel of John, “For neither did his brethren believe in him” (John 7:5). Did Jesus give up His Gospel teaching or delay His obedience? To the contrary, he pushed forward and was even willing

to suffer, leaving us an example so we can walk in his footsteps (1 Peter 2:21). When studying with someone who is struggling with non-believing family, I often make the following statement, “People normally don’t travel down empty roads. If you want your family to obey, you must show them the way.” Jesus had few followers at His cross. Years later he had thousands. Included in this number are two familiar names.

Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called (Jude 1:1).

My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons (James 2:1).

Both Jude and James became believers! In fact, James refers to his brother as, “the Lord of glory.” What if Jesus was unwilling to do what was right even in the midst of his family’s unbelief? Do you believe his brothers would have become New Testament writers? When faced with the decision of following family or following Jesus, the choice is clear.

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me (Mat.10:37).

Satan will use every device at his disposal to take as many people to Hell as possible. Today, Joe continues to visit almost every Sunday. The Scripture says, “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that

which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isa. 55:11). I know he has heard God’s word and that it is working on his heart. I pray that someday he will be pricked and respond by repenting and being baptized for the remission of his sins.

WORK CITED

All Scripture quotations are from the King James version of the Bible.

The Devices Of The Devil: Ism's In America

Jeff Miller



Jeff Miller graduated Summa Cum Laude with honors at Freed-Hardeman University, receiving an earned B.S. degree in Physical Science with minors in Bible, French, and Mathematics, and an earned B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA). His academic honors included membership in several honor societies, including Pi Tau Sigma Mechanical Engineering Honor Society, Golden Key International Honor Society, Alphi Chi National Honor Society, and the National Society of Collegiate Scholars. He also received earned M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Biomechanical Engineering from UTA and Auburn University, respectively, with emphases in Thermodynamics and Bio-thermal Science, Bio-transport Phenomena, Biomechanics, and Navigation and Control of Biological Systems. While at Auburn University, he also instructed courses in Thermodynamics, Fluid Mechanics, and Heat Transfer, as well as Statics and Dynamics. Jeff serves as the full-time science writer at Apologetics Press. He is the Associate Editor of A.P.'s monthly Christian evidences journal for adults, *Reason & Revelation*, as well as the Editor of the A.P. Bible Class Curriculum. He is also the author of the book, *Science vs. Evolution*, in addition to other books and materials.

The parallels between physical cancer and spiritual cancer are stunning, and there is no doubt that America is sick. Scripture highlights particular sins, warning that when those sins are prevalent enough in a society, the society's demise is at hand (Miller 2012). A comparison of those sins with the state of America today leads to a bad prognosis for the survival of our

great country. There is no doubt that America is in a late stage of spiritual cancer. What has caused America's spiritual cancer? Knowing the causes can help Christians to know how to fight America's spiritual cancer, in hopes of sending it into remission.

Starting in Genesis 3:6, we find that Satan is at the root of humanity's disease. Wherever sin abounds, there is no doubt that Satan is nearby, roaring in the town square or lurking in the shadows. His mission is not a secret one, nor are his methods. His goal is to lead as many people as possible to believe the lie: it is better to reject God than accept Him. In 2 Corinthians 2, Paul encourages the Corinthian Christians to forgive a repentant brother, "lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). Satan has devices (i.e., "wiles" – Eph. 6:11; "snares" – 1 Tim. 3:7) that he uses to entrap humans, and according to Paul, the Corinthians were not ignorant of them.

How often do we as Christians take time to stop and consider those devices? Are we ignorant of them? Being constantly aware of the traps that Satan will likely use to ensnare Christians will undoubtedly help us to avoid those pitfalls. It is, therefore, a helpful exercise to consider ourselves from Satan's perspective. If I were Satan, what would I do to entrap me? Satan is not omniscient, but he is old and is an expert at causing humans to stumble. He has his own angels (Mat. 25:41; Rev. 12:9). We can be certain that he has observed our lives and knows our weaknesses. He knows precisely the kind of temptations he can use to trip us. "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against

principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

What about Satan’s devices on a societal level, rather than an individual level? Are we ignorant of those devices he is likely to use to wreak havoc on a society? It is apparent that America has been a stronghold of the Lord’s Church in the world. It is, by and large, the congregations in the States that send missionaries to the world to convert souls, not the other way around. We can, therefore, anticipate that Satan has long had his sights set on America. If he can weaken the state of the Church in America, he can hinder the spread of the Church in the world in a major way. We are not ignorant of his devices.

But what is the Devil’s game plan? What devices has he used to infect America and cause it to digress to its current spiritual state? I submit to you that there are at least eight “isms” that have laid the groundwork for the situation we are facing in America today. [NOTE: The material in this manuscript is taken from session two of Jeff Miller’s “Stage IV Culture Cancer” seminar.]

Device #1: Anti-Legalism

It has become a prevailing sentiment in society, and among many in the Lord’s Church, that rules or laws in and of themselves are, at the very least, unimportant, and at most, evil. “Laws are restrictive to our freedom.” “Live and let live” should rule our lives, they say. “God wants me to be happy, and ‘that rule’ would make me unhappy. So it must be more of a suggestion.” The liberal

element of American society has effectively vilified law, and has long championed the removal of all moral restraints that once characterized our great country, from blasphemy to pornography to “blue laws” to sodomy. When a movie theater requests that no outside food be brought into the theater, we have been conditioned to think that we do not need to submit to such restrictive rules, unless we see a good reason for them. When we see speed limits, we view them as unnecessarily restrictive, and feel justified in ignoring them (as long as a police officer is not in sight). Fudging the facts on our taxes – “just a little” – does not overly concern us. Many vilify those individuals who rightly believe that illegal aliens should be forced to behave legally, and ignore the well-reasoned immigration laws that have been made for our safety. We have been conditioned to somewhat disregard rule and authority wherever we can.

Sadly, the same mentality has encroached upon the Church. The anti-legalism movement has led many to embrace the mentality that we can and should ignore God’s pattern of worship, Church organization, and the entrance requirements to the Lord’s Church. Romans 6:14 is often cited and misapplied – “We’re not under law, but grace! Don’t sweat the ‘small stuff.’”

Consider the effect of the anti-law mentality on Society and the Church. No doubt, as more citizens and Christians embrace anti-legalism, one would expect more laws and rules to be violated. Society and the Church will become more unruly, headed towards anarchy. “[E]veryone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 17:6). Are society and the Church bearing

out that prediction? When we consider whose hands are being played into by unlawful behavior, is there any question who would be behind the anti-legalism movement? If you were Satan, would you not want to promote disregard for God's Law – engendering a desensitization towards sin in society and the Church?

Of course, a few moments' thought reveals the silliness of the anti-legalism movement. Would those who champion the anti-legalism movement advocate overturning the entire legal system, which is based on laws? Would they endorse removing all restrictions on those criminals who would seek to steal from them or otherwise plunder their homes or families? When those liberals who castigate as "legalists" those who believe in abiding by law, are they not simultaneously admitting that they are "illegalists"? Are they also not contradicting themselves by implicitly creating and binding a law of their own – "thou shalt not bind law on others"?

In truth, neither God the Father nor Jesus ever discouraged strict compliance with law. After all, God authored law. Jesus did, however, warn against being an "illegalist" when He said that in the end many will claim to be religious while failing to abide by God's law. "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Mat. 7:23). In Matthew 23:23-24, Jesus criticized the scribes and Pharisees. They were so meticulous in abiding by the tithing laws enjoined by the Law of Moses that they even paid tithes on herbs from their backyard. Contrary to some anti-legalist claims, Jesus did not discourage such attention to detail. He said, "These you ought to have

done, without leaving the others undone,” referring to their lack of compliance to other areas of the Law of Moses. Was Jesus being “legalistic” by encouraging the scribes and Pharisees to be so meticulous in their tithing?

Law and compliance with it is described repeatedly in Scripture as good, not bad. One will be happy who keeps the law (Prov. 29:18). God’s laws are established for our good (Deut. 10:12-13). God’s law is perfect, sure, right and pure. It converts the soul and gives wisdom, joy, and enlightenment (Psa. 19:7-8). God’s laws keep us alive (Deut. 6:24). God’s law is not sinful, but instead, is instructive about sin and its dangers (Rom. 7:7). God’s law is holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12). Just as a parent’s rules are intended to be for a child’s benefit, laws exist for our good.

It is clear that deceiving people into believing that laws are “bad” has been an effective device of Satan’s from the very beginning. He succeeded in convincing Adam and Eve not to be concerned about God’s rule concerning the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He is good at what he does. Rest assured: Satan would love to see the whole earth deceived about the benefit of law. After all, Satan, himself, is an anti-legalist. [NOTE: see (Miller 31[6]) and (Miller 31[7]) for responses to anti-legalist arguments from John 8:1-11; Mat. 12:1-9; etc.]

Device #2: Hedonism

At the same time that law is being castigated as evil by the anti-legalists, “living it up” is being embraced and encouraged by the hedonists. “If it feels good and doesn’t appear to hurt anyone else, you should be able

to do it, no matter how wicked.” “Y.O.L.O.,” they say—“You Only Live Once. So, live it up! Celebrate! Indulge! Don’t deny yourself. Engage in anything that comes to your mind. Nothing is off-limits.”

It is easy to see that from such thinking comes a proliferation of vices, no matter how unnatural. From the legalization of drugs, homosexuality, and bestiality (and other vices around the corner, such as polygamy and pedophilia), to the endorsement of pornography, “open relationships,” and divorce-at-will, hedonistic thinking is rampant. Against all reason, every step is taken to attempt to deny that such behavior affects more than the person choosing to hurt himself. Society is not immune to the influence of those who indulge in wicked behavior. Simultaneously, society is expending untold amounts of money and manpower attempting to eliminate any consequences to the individual who wishes to indulge his passions. Passing out contraceptives, legalizing abortion, racing to find cures to venereal diseases, and legalizing the use of narcotics for “recreational use” are among the most prominent endorsements of the hedonists.

When we step back and consider our society, do we see hedonism being practiced on a large scale? Do we see it having a widespread effect on our nation? Have we as Christians been affected by the movement? How likely are we to spend extra time and money over-indulging ourselves in selfish pleasures instead of personally advancing the cause of Christ and helping other brethren to do so as well? Have I been guilty of tacitly endorsing immorality by supporting those wicked businesses that

vocally berate Christian values—simply because of the pleasure I get from experiencing a product they offer? Have I failed to play a role in supporting those who are fighting for Christianity in the open square? Have I argued for the legalization of various vices by arguing, “I may not like it, but as long as it doesn’t directly hurt anyone else, who am I to resist? Legalize wickedness”? Have I been affected by hedonism in America?

Again, who wins by the proliferation of hedonism in America? Obviously, hedonism is a major victory for Satan – a powerful device he has used to cause spiritual cancer in our society.

Device #3: Anti-Judgmentalism

Anti-judgmentalism goes hand-in-hand with hedonism and anti-legalism. Few have not heard the phrase “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Mat. 7:1) upon attempting to confront sinful behavior in others. Along with the phrase, the rebuked will often hear a brief sermon on the fact that Jesus was staunchly against judging others – against warning them of the ultimate consequences of their sinful behavior. “You need to accept people for who they are like Jesus did. Don’t try to change people.” Once again, when we consider the ramifications of such a mindset in a society from Satan’s perspective, we realize how gleeful he must be about the message and effectiveness of the anti-judgmentalism crowd.

The anti-judgmentalists have effectively issued a gag order on the righteous. The politically correct crowd

– the P.C. Police – sweep onto a scene and castigate Christians, branding them with derogatory labels if they try to confront sin or unbiblical thinking: “homophobe”; “racist”; “sexist”; “Islamophobe”; “xenophobe.” The righteous are bullied into either feeling pressure to be silent upon witnessing sinful conduct, or worse, to compromise on the truth. They often either accept iniquity without a fight or even embrace and endorse it. Both effects amount to a victory for Satan. The effect: the elimination of all confrontation of sin and erroneous thinking. The pressure effected by the righteous on the unrighteous, which has historically helped to keep societal immorality at bay, is eliminated. “Just accept folks for who they are. Accept yourself for who you are. You don’t need to repent. God’s not judgmental. He will accept you.”

Ironically, many of the P.C. Police would self-identify as Christians and Bible believers, in spite of the fact that a Divine demand of repentance is found on almost every page of Scripture. By definition, repentance necessarily includes being judgmental: accepting the **judgment** that a person is in sin and needs to change. Consider: one of the most fundamental purposes of having a local congregation is to surround oneself with individuals who will encourage us and even pressure us to behave as we should – to give us accountability. But both encouragement and pressure to behave a certain way require a **judgment** that there is a way we **should** behave! Can judging or convicting another individual of sin be inherently wrong?

Consider:

- Is our court system in America, equipped with hundreds of judges, unscriptural? Being judgmental is literally their job.
- Was Moses wrong for judging Israel (Exo. 18:13) or for setting up judges for Israel (Exo. 18:22-26)? Many passages could be cited that prove that God not only allowed for judges and being judgmental, but commanded it (e.g., Lev. 19:15; Num. 35:24; Deut. 1:16; Deut. 16:18; Deut. 25:1; 1 Kings 3:9; Ezra 7:25; Prov. 31:9; Eze. 23:45).
- Is evangelism wrong? After all, evangelism rests on the assumption (i.e., the judgment) that a person is not in a right condition with God, and therefore, needs to be talked to about it.
- Are the many biblical commands to rebuke, exhort, and admonish against sin wrong, since they require judging others? “Preach the word! ... Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2). “When I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand” (Eze. 3:18). The many passages in Scripture that give direct commands to God’s disciples to preach, rebuke, exhort, warn, etc. – activities that require making judgments about others – would all become contradictory

with Jesus' statement in Matthew 7:1 if the P.C. Police are correct in their understanding of Scripture.

- Are the many New Testament scriptures that enjoin church discipline unscriptural and unloving (e.g., Rom. 16:17; 2 The. 3; Titus 3:10-11; Mat. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5; 2 John 9-11; etc.)? The process of disfellowshipping wayward members is the height of "being judgmental."
- Any time a parent guides or corrects his child, he is judging his child's behavior. Should he stop?
- Surely, due to the influence of the anti-judgmentalism crowd, some Christians have the mistaken idea that concealing one's disapproval of a behavior and tolerating it instead of confronting it is an exhibition of love. And yet Proverbs 27:5 says, "Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed." Was Solomon mistaken?

How are such points to be reconciled with Jesus' oft'-quoted statement in Matthew 7:1: "Judge not, that you be not judged"? Upon studying the context of Jesus' statement, the truth is self-explanatory. In Matthew 7, Jesus is specifically addressing hypocrites (vs. 5) and explains that they are not in a position to judge others because they are guilty of infractions that are even worse than those they are attempting to correct in others (vss. 3,4). Thus, it is clear contextually that Jesus is not addressing those who have repented of their sins, but

rather, those who are themselves in sin. “Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (vs. 5). Notice that Jesus commands hypocrites to fix their own infractions, and then they can feel free to judge others correctly.

The context, therefore, proves that Jesus’ statement in Matthew 7:1 does not contradict the teaching found throughout Scripture about the importance of confronting sin in others. Ironically, Jesus, Himself, also said, “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Notice that Jesus actually commands people to judge others. However, He qualifies His command to insure that we will do so “righteously” (i.e., correctly or fairly, not according to how a situation might seem on the surface).

I will forever remember my dad’s admonition to my teenage self about determination of truth. “Error always manifests itself through some kind of internal contradiction or inconsistency”—an axiom that is very relevant when considering the argumentation of the anti-judgmentalism crowd. Is it not inconsistent for the anti-judgmentalism police to be judgmental about those they deem to be judgmental?

Standing back once again and considering the aftermath of decades of pressure from the anti-judgmentalism movement, we can see how effective Satan’s device has been. The lie that we should not stand up to error has spread throughout our society and effectively gagged all preaching about certain sins—thus allowing those sins to flourish. We must not be ignorant

of Satan's devices.

And further, we should regularly examine ourselves, remembering that we are not above being influenced by the anti-judgmentalists. "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Have I been affected by anti-judgmentalism? Do I feel the pressure to obey the gag order to not speak out against sin around me, believing that speaking out would be harsh or unloving? If I were asked by God to lovingly confront a brother at church Sunday about the sin I know he is engaging in – as Nathan did to David (2 Sam. 12)—how hard would that be for me? Would I feel it to be inappropriate? Do the P.C. Police have a finger on my "reigns"? Has Satan effectively gagged me and stifled my influence? Am I salt to the world, or have I lost my flavor and become "good for nothing" (Mat. 5:13)?

Device #4: Denominationalism

It seems that denominations, by and large, were much more concerned about following God's Word in the past than they are today. It is evident that the denominational world is moving ever further away from God's Word. "As long as you believe in Jesus, that's all that matters," they say. Such dangerous thinking has spread and affected the Lord's Church.

A 2012 Gallup poll indicated that 77% of America still identifies as Christian, in the broad sense (Newport), and yet only 1/2 of one percent of Americans are members of the Lord's Church (Yeakley 18). That means that at least 76½% of America have been lulled

into a sense of false security, believing they are true Christians and part of the Lord's one Church that He died for. They fall into the category Jesus mentioned in Matthew 7:21-23 and Matthew 15:8-9.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus described His then coming Church in a singular sense. There is one Church, not multiple Churches (Eph. 4:4; Eph. 1:22-23). The Church is the Lord's bride (Rev. 21:2; Eph. 5:22-29), and He is not a polygamist. It is Christ's Church, not Luther's, John the Baptist's, John Wesley's, Joseph Smith's, or John Calvin's. Christ built His Church, and then God warned Christians not to create divisions in His Church. "Now I plead with you..., that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). If sin is transgression of God's Word (1 John 3:4; Rom. 4:15), and Christians are commanded to continue repenting of their sins in order to remain faithful and receive a crown of life (2 Cor. 7:10; 2 Peter 3:9; Rev. 2:10), then those individuals who are transgressing God's Word by teaching unbiblical doctrine and thus causing division must repent and conform to Scripture. Adherence to that single command in Christendom would terminate denominationalism.

Again we should ask ourselves, has denominationalism affected me? Am I more likely to feel compelled to compromise truth due to loved ones that are in the denominational world that I do not want to accept as being lost, or a loved one who has passed away? "She was such a good person! Maybe it doesn't matter if a

person is baptized for the remission of sins.” “He did such good for so many people, even though he didn’t worship the way the Bible says. Maybe it doesn’t really matter how you worship God, as long as you just love Jesus.” Guess who wins when Christians begin thinking that way.

Device #5: Materialism

“Therefore put to death your members which are on the Earth: ... covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5). Is there any doubt that Americans are guilty of a modern form of idolatry? We have been blessed with such affluence that we tend to lose sight of the purpose of God’s blessings in light of eternity. Instead of using our many and varied blessings to advance the Kingdom of God, we have become obsessed with acquiring even more material items. We will sacrifice many things to satiate our materialistic passions.

We want the newest phone, the shiniest car, and the biggest house and will sacrifice immense amounts of time, energy, and money acquiring them – time, energy, and money that we likely would not be willing to part with if we were asked to use those same resources in advancing the cause of Christ. We simply “have to” see the latest film in our favorite movie series, but are not willing to go to the local church singing. We crave the delicacies of our favorite restaurants and are sure to regularly set aside time and money to treat ourselves to a meal there, but are much less willing to offer to prepare or purchase a meal for an ailing Christian brother or sister going through a hard time. We are much less

willing to attend a monthly congregational pot luck, where we can provide encouragement to the brethren and strengthen the bond of peace in our congregation.

When considering our materialistic mindset, Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler often comes to our minds (Mat. 19:16-22). The man believed he had followed God's commandments since his youth. But had he really? Without directly rebuking him for his materialistic, covetous mindset, Jesus instead helped the young man to convict himself of violating the tenth commandment of the Decalogue – "You shall not covet...." Do not allow your mind to indulge itself, craving something. Be willing to let it go. The young man could not let go of his material possessions for the good of others.

Materialism in America goes beyond the pursuit of possessions. We also tend to be materialistic with our **time**. The more time that we spend pursuing worldly, material things, the less time we spend pursuing spiritual things. That to which we sacrifice our time can be our idol. In 2013, the Bureau of Labor Statistics conducted a survey to assess how Americans use their time on a daily basis ("Time Use...."). After removing from the equation the time we spend sleeping, working, taking care of household activities, eating and drinking, caring for others (e.g., children), grooming, dressing, shopping, and using the facilities, Americans are left with 2½ hours each day on average with which to do as we please. What is that time filled with? That time is spent in leisure.

On average, over half of our leisure time is spent watching television. After removing time spent playing

games, socializing and communicating, playing sports and exercising, and relaxing, only a few minutes are left to read and do “other” leisure activities—most of which do not entail spiritual activity (“Leisure Time....”). Question: where is God in an average American work day? How much time is being devoted to prayer, Bible study, and evangelism in America? According to the statistics, very little (if any, for most people). Rest assured, we are able to “find time” to do the extra work required to purchase the things we want; the extra time required for watching the shows and movies we want to see; and the extra energy to make house improvements. But if very little time and energy are being spent on Kingdom pursuits when compared to material pursuits, can we honestly say that those material pursuits are not our idols?

Materialism is rampant in America, and sadly, we in the Church have been affected by it. Again we must ask, who wins when such a state characterizes our country and the Church? There is no doubt who is behind the increase in American idolatry. The modern form of idolatry may be more “respectable,” not coming with fires and altars or hand-carved creatures, but that does not mean it isn’t idolatry. The more Christians are distracted by material pursuits, the less the Kingdom can impact the world, and the more the ranks of Satan’s army are swelled numerically.

Device #6: Pluralism

A few years ago I heard a speech at a brotherhood University given by retired NBC journalist Tom Brokaw.

One of the primary messages of his speech was the importance of tolerance and pluralism in America. Tolerance is the chief virtue among the pluralists: allow and encourage the spread of a diversity of religions and beliefs within America and promote the idea that multiple competing worldviews can live in harmony. Pluralists believe it will be beneficial to a society when that goal is reached.

You do not have to look far to see the effect of pluralistic thinking in society around you. “Coexist” bumper stickers can be seen on many cars—where every letter of the word “Coexist” is shaped in such a way that it represents a different religion or set of beliefs. The message is clear: we can and should all live together in harmony, accepting the different beliefs of those around us. Bumper stickers like “God is too big to fit into one religion” litter the rear view windows of cars. The subtle, implied goal of the pluralist is to promote the idea that all belief systems and religions on Earth are equal. One religion should not be elevated compared to others, as though it is the true religion. “Who’s to say his religion is better or more correct?”

It is easy to predict the ultimate outcome of such a widespread view, and it is easy to see the impact it has already made in American society and the Church. In the realm of government and politics, pluralists have been effective in re-writing history, promoting the false idea that the Founders endorsed and encouraged a pluralistic society. “Separation of Church and State” and the Establishment Clause of the constitution are erroneously used to dampen the influence of Christianity

on the country (cf. Miller 2008).

When we look at the influence of pluralism on the Church, as with anti-legalism and anti-judgmentalism, the effect has been to silence Christians from promoting the superiority of Christianity and speaking of it as **the truth** and the true religion, and implying or explicitly teaching that other religions are, simply put, **false**. Others in the Church accept and promote the superiority of Christianity, but have a pluralistic mindset towards Christian denominations, embracing their members as brethren with “differing opinions that are just as good as ours” and who are in a right state with God.

A new twist on pluralism that has apparently come into the Church was highlighted to me several months ago. An individual responded to a Facebook post that Apologetics Press made concerning the dangerous growth rate of Islam in America. The individual, a self-identified Christian, said, “The more diversity and immigration we have in the U.S. gives birth to more opportunities to bring precious souls to Christ.” According to the Facebook user’s response, the more false religion we insulate ourselves with in America, the better, since it will lead to more evangelism opportunities. Is such rationale biblical, let alone rational?

On the contrary, consider what God, before leading them into Canaan, communicated to the Israelites concerning the pagan Canaanites who were saturated with false religion: “[Y]ou shall drive them out before you. You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, **lest they make you sin against Me**” (Exo. 23:31-33). God’s

instructions were certainly not “tolerant” or pluralistic, but they were **logical**. Entering into Canaan was not to be viewed as an evangelism opportunity for the Israelites. Immersing oneself with false religion will affect a person spiritually. “A little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6). “Can two walk together unless they are agreed” (Amos 3:3)? “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits’” (1 Cor. 15:33). Clearly, God is not in favor of pluralism. Rather, the nation whose God is Jehovah is the one that will be blessed (Psa. 33:12); the one which acknowledges that there is no salvation in any other name under heaven (Acts 4:12).

Again, when we consider pluralism from Satan’s perspective, we can see that it is certainly a device that he would wish to use and obviously has used to great effect. Rather than allowing just one bad apple to spoil the bunch, allow millions to spoil America, and the spoiling can happen much quicker and comprehensively. Pluralism demotes Christianity from its holy status and raises false religion to an equal or in some cases elevated position. Pluralism allows Satan to influence our society with false teachings and bad influences, while simultaneously deceiving society into believing those teachings and influences will be a good thing—to be promoted and proud of; an evangelism tool, even.

Device #7: Naturalism

Naturalism (the belief that only the natural exists – no supernatural realm or phenomena) is the endorsed national religion of the science classroom in American

public schools, due to an erroneous interpretation of the establishment clause as intended by the Founders: do not make a law respecting the establishment of a religion (cf. Cain 2010 for a response to that rationale). The National Academy of Sciences has effectively defined God out of science, expelling Him from the classroom:

One goal of science is to understand **nature**.... The statements of science **must invoke only natural things and processes**. The statements of science are those that emerge from the application of human intelligence to data obtained from **observation and experiment**.... Progress in science consists of the development of better explanations for the causes of **natural phenomena** (Teaching About.... Emphasis added.).

With this description of science by the NAS, any supernatural events described in Scripture (e.g., Creation or the Flood) cannot be accepted as possible explanations of what we see when studying the natural realm, even if those supernatural events actually happened and may have direct impact on our conclusions in the historical sciences (e.g., geology, paleontology, evolutionary biology, and cosmology).

Keep in mind that several key requirements of naturalism are unobserved and unobservable—unable to be experimented on—making naturalism unscientific by the above NAS definition of science. As an example, notice the words of Robert Hazen in a lecture series on the origin of life. Hazen is an evolutionary geologist at the Carnegie Institution of Washington's Geophysical

Lab and a Professor of Earth Science at George Mason University:

The origin of life is a subject of immense complexity, and I have to tell you right up front, **we don't know how life began....** How can I tell you about the origin of life when we are so **woefully ignorant of that history?** (Hazen. Emphasis added).

Leading naturalists acknowledge that they are “woefully ignorant” about key steps in naturalistic evolution, and yet naturalism is accepted by many as truth. Hazen continues:

In this lecture series I make a basic assumption that life emerged by some kind of **natural process**. I propose that life arose by a sequence of events that are completely consistent with the natural laws of chemistry and physics. **In this assumption I am like most other scientists.** I believe in a universe that is ordered by these **natural laws**. Like other scientists, I rely on the power of **observations and experiments** and theoretical reasoning to understand how the cosmos came to be the way it is (Hazen. Emphasis added).

Notice that evolution hinges on the **assumption** that life came about from non-life in some natural way. Evolution does not hinge on actual observation or experiment, but rather, an assumption that it occurred. As Hazen admitted, naturalists do not know how it could happen—they are “woefully ignorant” about that question. But they accept naturalistic evolution anyway. Notice further that Hazen claims to “rely on the power of observations and experiments,” a pronouncement that

the NAS would laud, and yet life coming from non-life is not susceptible to observation and experiment.

The fundamental requirements of naturalism are not supported by evidence. Richard Lewontin, an atheistic evolutionary geneticist at Harvard University, admitted:

Our willingness to accept scientific claims **against common sense** is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science **in spite** of the **patent absurdity** of some of its constructs..., **in spite** of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a **commitment to naturalism**. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that **we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes** to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, **that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door** (Lewontin 31. 2nd and 4th emphases in original).

Based on Lewontin's own words, many of the claims of "science" (i.e., naturalism) are unsubstantiated, against common sense, counter-intuitive—even absurd. But naturalists are committed to materialism, regardless of the evidence. God simply is **not** an option, regardless of the evidence.

Little do most seem to realize, naturalism is

ultimately self-contradictory since it requires unnatural occurrences to explain the Universe. [NOTE: see (Miller. *Science vs. Evolution*) for an elaboration of the points in this section]. In truth, there is no such thing as a **naturalist**, since every individual must accept that something **unnatural** (i.e., an occurrence not shown to be able to occur in nature) happened at some point in order to explain the Universe. For instance, a self-proclaimed naturalist must believe without evidence that matter/energy/time came from absolutely nothing at some point – which would be unnatural (violating the First Law of Thermodynamics). He must believe that the Universe is an effect without an adequate cause – which would be unnatural (violating the Law of Causality). He must believe without evidence that the laws of nature wrote themselves into existence – which would be unnatural (nobody has observed the self-creation of a single natural law). He must believe without evidence that life came from non-life – which would be unnatural (violating the Law of Biogenesis). He must believe without evidence that at many times on Earth over millions of years, one type of creature did not just give rise to a similar creature with small differences, but rather, evolved across a phylogenic boundary into a completely different type of creature (e.g., a fish turning into an amphibian; an amphibian turning into a reptile; a reptile turning into a bird) – which would be unnatural (violating the laws of genetics). Since naturalism requires unnatural (i.e., supernatural) phenomena, then according to the NAS, evolution should not be taught in schools. And yet, 87% of children in America are in

the public school system where naturalism is the official doctrine taught in science (cf. "Statistics About..."; "Public and Private...").

And again we must ask: who ultimately wins if naturalism continues to spread, finally to be accepted *carte blanche* in America? What would be the predicted effect of widespread naturalism in a society? Famous atheistic evolutionary biologist of Oxford University, Richard Dawkins, acknowledged, "My own feeling is that a human society based simply on the gene's law of universal ruthless selfishness would be a **very nasty society in which to live**" (Dawkins 2-3). Widespread naturalism would not be good for a civilization, and even leading naturalists have to admit that truth. Charles Darwin, in his autobiography, admitted the eerie implication of naturalism: "A man who has no assured and ever present belief in the existence of a personal God or of a future existence with retribution and reward, can have for his rule of life, as far as I can see, only to **follow those impulses and instincts which are the strongest or which seem to him the best ones**" (Darwin 94. Emphasis added).

Bottom line: naturalism is definitely an ideology the Devil would like to see gain prominence in America. His dream is gradually becoming reality.

Device #8: Fideism

Alongside naturalism and pluralism as tools for spreading doubt, Satan is using fideism. The denominational world has a totally different view about the nature of biblical faith than what the Bible teaches

about faith, and it is likely that false belief has in part caused the surge of naturalism in this country.

The denominational world, by and large, claims that biblical faith has nothing to do with evidence. Rather, faith is blindly accepting, for instance, the existence of God, whether or not the evidence supports that belief. Faith, to them, is a blind leap from a cliff into the dark – an irrational belief there will be someone at the bottom to catch them.

Fideism, according to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, is “reliance on faith rather than reason in pursuit of religious truth” (“Fideism”). Notice that modern dictionaries place religious faith in contrast with reasoning from the evidence. Dictionaries, of course, merely reflect the common uses of words at a certain time, and the bulk of the religious world has come to believe that faith is separate and apart from the use of reason, logic, and evidence.

A brief assessment of several Bible passages reveals that the biblical concept of faith is not “blind,” separate from reason, or without evidence. The Greek noun *pistis* (verb, *pistuo*) in the New Testament is simply the word first century people used for the modern words, belief, trust, or faith. If a first century Christian wished to express the fact that he believes, trusts, or has faith in another individual, he would use the word *pistuo* to elucidate his feelings.

Was the first century Christian’s trust – i.e., his *pistis* – a **blind** faith? To answer that question, one could ask himself, is my faith in a friend, parent, or spouse blind (i.e., evidence-less), or is my trust based

on evidence? Those who spoke Greek used *pistis* in the same sense. If a stranger approached me in a parking lot and told me that my wife told him to tell me to give him the keys to my minivan and I believed him, that faith would be blind, since the stranger offered no proof of his claims and I have no reason to believe him. However, if my wife told me she went to the store without my knowledge while I was at work and I believed her, my faith is based on evidence. How so? The evidences that undergird my trust in her statement are the many times Julie has proven herself to be **trustworthy**. My faith in her is certainly not blind. Has she provided me with sufficient evidence to verify that she would **absolutely never** make a mistake that would affect my trust in her? No human could do so. So my faith in her is not as strong as the faith I would have in God, but my faith in her is certainly not blind. If my faith in Julie is not blind, then my faith in God is definitely not blind, since God has provided sufficient evidence to verify the fact that He exists, is never wrong, and will never fail us. Belief in God amounts to simply choosing to accept the mound of evidence that He has provided that verifies His trustworthiness (cf. Miller "Faith..."). One cannot logically trust without any evidence of trustworthiness.

In the field of philosophy, there is a general rule that is followed if a person wishes to be rational: the Law of Rationality. It says that one should only draw those conclusions that are warranted by the evidence (Ruby 130-131). Many within Christendom seem unaware that Scripture endorses and commands adherence to the same obvious axiom. "Test all things; hold fast what is good"

(1 The. 5:21). The Bible explicitly prohibits having a blind faith. Scripture incessantly makes the point that we should come to a knowledge of the truth **based on the evidence** that has been provided to us. According to Romans 1:20, so much evidence has been provided to come to the truth of God's existence that not to come to the right conclusion is "without excuse." We can **know** the truth – not merely accept it "on faith" – and it will set us free (John 8:32). As did the "fair-minded" Bereans of Acts 17, God wants us to search for evidence that substantiates a claim before blindly believing it (vs. 11). Since many false teachers are in the world, He tells us to "not believe every spirit, but test the spirits" before believing them (1 John 4:1). Unlike blind faith (i.e., fideism)—which, again, pits itself against reason—Paul believed in establishing truth **using reasoning** from the evidence (Acts 26:25). In fact, Jesus told His audience to **not believe/have faith Him** if He did not substantiate His claims with evidence (John 10:37).

The blind "faith" idea is unbiblical. The biblical portrait of faith in God would be more like seeing evidence being "poured" into a "truth container." The "evidence" rises to the top of the container and begins pouring over the top, establishing the truth of God. Where "faith" comes in is when we look at the truth container, filled to the brim with evidence, and **choose** whether or not to believe it. Most do not and will not (Mat. 7:13-14). It is their own choice, but it is not because God has not provided enough evidence to come to the truth. Rather, they have rejected the evidence which is readily available, due to their own

personal motives.

Famous philosopher from the 1800s, Herbert Spencer, said, “Those who cavalierly reject the Theory of Evolution, as not adequately supported by facts, seem quite to forget that their own theory is supported by no facts at all” (Spencer). Fideism has lent credibility to arguments like this one, and rational people rightly reject religion and Christianity in particular when theists promote having an irrational, blind faith. Who wins when fideism is promoted?

Conclusion

Satan has created the perfect combination to initiate the moral implosion of America: sow doubt by spreading naturalism, fideism, and pluralism, and at the same time tempt Americans to sin by encouraging hedonism and materialism. Continue the plan by assuaging our consciences not to feel guilty about sin. This is being done by gradually causing Americans and Christians to feel more comfortable with sin by teaching error about God's feelings regarding it (i.e., anti-legalism and denominationalism). Those who know better and would speak the truth about it can be silenced by making them feel pressure and discomfort about confronting the error around them (anti-judgmentalism).

The 'isms that have attacked our country are the perfect combination of Satanic devices to cause spiritual cancer. The important questions Christians must ask ourselves are, “Have I been affected by these 'isms? What am I doing to fight them? Can I do more?”

Works Cited

- Cain, Kevin. "Deconstructing the Establishment Clause." Apologetics Press. 2010. <http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=7&article=2327&topic=30>.
- Darwin, Charles. *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin*. Ed. Nora Barlow. New York: W.W. Norton. 1958.
- Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press). 1989.
- "Fideism." *Miriam-Webster On-line Dictionary*. 2015. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fideism>.
- Hazen, Robert. *Origins of Life*. Audio-taped Lecture. Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company. 2005.
- "Leisure Time on an Average Day." *American Time Use Survey*. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013.
- Lewontin, Richard. "Billions and Billions of Demons," *The New York Review*. 1997. January 9.
- Miller, Dave. *America's Most Pressing Concern*. "Session 7: Our Status." DVD. Apologetics Press. 2012.
- Miller, Dave. "Is Christianity Logical? [Part 1]." *Reason & Revelation*. 31[6]. 2011. <http://www.apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=977>.
- Miller, Dave. "Is Christianity Logical? [Part 2]." *Reason & Revelation*. 31[7]. 2011. <http://www.apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=994>.
- Miller, Dave. *The Silencing of God: The Dismantling of America's Christian Heritage*. Apologetics Press. 2008.
- Miller, Jeff. "Faith: Believing the Truth Substantiated by Evidence." Apologetics Press. 2017.
- Miller, Jeff. *Science vs. Evolution*. 2nd edition. Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press. 2017.
- New King James Version*. Thomas Nelson, Inc. 1982. WordSearch Electronic Database. 2013.
- Newport, Frank. "In U.S., 77% Identify as Christian." *Gallup*. 2012. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/159548/identify-christian.aspx>.
-

- “Public and Private School Comparison.” Fast Facts. *National Center for Education Statistics*. 2016. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=55>.
- Ruby, Lionel. *Logic: An Introduction*. Chicago, IL: J.B. Lippincott. 1960.
- Spencer, Herbert. *Essays Scientific, Political and Speculative*. *Online Library of Liberty*. 1891. http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/spencer-essays-scientific-political-and-speculative-vol-1--5?q=those+who+cavalierly#Spencer_0620-01_8.
- “Statistics About Nonpublic Education in the United States.” *U.S. Department of Education*. 2016. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oii/nonpublic/statistics.html>.
- Teaching About Evolution and the Nature of Science*. National Academy of Sciences. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. 1998.
- “Time Use on an Average Work Day for Employed Persons Ages 25-54 with Children.” *American Time Use Survey*. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2013.
- Yeakley, Flavil. *Why They Left*. Gospel Advocate. 2012.

The Devil And Divorce

Scott Cain



Scott Cain is married to Melissa and together they have three sons Walker, Tanner, & Hunter. He is a native of Lawrence County, Tennessee and a 2009 graduate of Memphis School of Preaching. He has served as an evangelist with congregations in Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, & Louisiana.

Scott has been privileged to engage in foreign mission efforts in cities & villages in Fiji, Hungary, Italy, Serbia, & Austria. Currently, Scott serves as the preacher with the DeGaulle Drive congregation in New Orleans, LA.

Love. Honor. Cherish. Have. Hold. Guide. Guard. Protect. "...for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, till death do you part, for as long as you both shall live?"

"I do."

Ten percent of "I do's" become "I don't anymore" within five years; and within ten years twenty-five percent divorce ("Number" 11). First marriages ending in divorce last eight years on average (Ibid. 18). For four decades it has echoed, "America's divorce rate is fifty percent and climbing." Claims of lowering divorce rates are based on the "crude divorce rate," which counts "the number of divorces per 1,000 people" (Copen 2), ignores cohabitation, and reflects recent divorces across the total population, not the total percentage of marriages ending in divorce. Though improved from

1981, the overall trend is still startling: in 2010 the chances of a first marriage lasting twenty years ranged from fifty-two to fifty-six percent, and death was a statistically marginal factor (Ibid. 7). “Till death do we part” is seen as a maybe, not a must.

The church is not immune, with four percent of adults cohabiting and twelve percent currently divorced (Maschi). Since over half of the divorced remarry (“Number” 16), around twenty-four percent of New Testament Christians have likely faced divorce at some point in life.

The home is under attack. It always has been.

God instituted the first home by providing Adam a suitable companion who was bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:23-24, KJV). Soon after the institution of the family came the intrusion of the enemy.

First the assailant questioned God’s words: “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Gen. 3:1), portraying God as restrictive. Next the adversary contradicted God’s words: “Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4), portraying God as dishonest. Then the accuser slandered God: “God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5, ASV), portraying God as selfish.

He targeted **God’s message, God’s meaning, and God’s motives.**

The devil’s words subtly attacked man’s relationship

with God, luring man into sin and causing separation between God and the pinnacle of His creation. His words subtly attacked man's relationship with man, specifically husband's relationship with wife: by addressing Eve, he craftily undermined the God-given authority that Adam neglected to exercise (Gen. 3:1, 16-17). With mere words he disrupted man's oneness in the home and oneness with heaven.

The first home had been infiltrated. Sin ensued. Heartbreak followed.

The devil has directly and indirectly assaulted homes throughout time. His efforts tainted Eden, had Job's wife urging her ailing husband to "curse God, and die" (Job 2:9), and infected the view of matrimony even in Jesus' day. The Pharisees' calculated ploy to tempt Jesus with a divorce question reeked of the devil's philosophy: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" (Mat. 19:3). Like the serpent, they insincerely asked, "What has God really said?"

Jesus reminded them of what God said ("Have ye not read"), emphasized God's will from the beginning when He first instituted the home, and concluded, "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mat. 19:4-6). In short: when the marriage has been joined by God, do not divorce.

They replied, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" (Mat. 19:7). Just as the serpent had a prepared rebuttal for Eve, the Pharisees had one for Jesus, implying, "God may have said that, but He did not really mean it,

otherwise Moses would not have commanded divorce!” They had asked about what was lawful, but when the Lord cited God’s foundational law for the home, they fled to their assessment of the Law of Moses.

Jesus did not let them hide behind Moses’ Law to justify flippant divorce as “lawful.” For one thing, Moses never **commanded** divorce, but **allowed** it (Mat. 19:8). Instead of basing doctrine on what they could get away with doing, they should have sought what God desired. It is a sad commentary on the maturity of faith when God’s people live by the get-away-with-it sentiment: “I know what God wants, but what can I get away with doing and still go to heaven?”

Christ next clarified what God’s standard for the home had always been, not just from Eden, but also under the Law of Moses: “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Mat. 19:9).

They asked, “What has God said;” Jesus reminded them. They objected, “That’s not what God meant;” Jesus corrected them. The Pharisees had no more to say: no subsequent rejoinder or rebuttable. They knew what the law said about divorce, and whether they would ultimately accept it or not, they knew what the law meant and were thus incapable of refuting Jesus’ words.

Then came the disciples with the last statement mirroring Satan’s philosophy. A snake once suggested that God was hindering man’s potential, making life

harder and less enjoyable (Gen. 3:5). The disciples displayed the same sentiment: “If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry” (Mat. 19:10). Jesus’ reply forced them to check their priorities:

But He said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it (Mat. 19:11-12).

In short, while men may perceive God’s standards as strict, those who truly love God and His kingdom will heed the kingdom’s laws.

Once again, God’s message, God’s meaning, and God’s motive had been targeted.

Satan’s beguiling mindset and home-wrecking impact still linger, from halls of divorce courts to pulpits and pews that repeatedly scrutinize, manipulate, and impugn what Jesus taught concerning the sanctity of the home.

The message has been critiqued: “Did God really say that about marriage and divorce?” Ignorance of scripture and inaccurate summaries have contributed to a dearth of understanding concerning what God has **actually** said.

The meaning has been changed: “That’s what God said about marriage and divorce, but that’s not right; it’s not what He really meant.” What God “really meant” has been postulated by those who attempt to reframe verb

tenses, redefine word meanings (particularly “adultery”), and reduce the scope of Jesus’ words.

The motive has been challenged: “I don’t think God wants me to live the rest of my life miserable,” or, “God wouldn’t expect people to break up a happy home.” This emotional and highly presumptuous reasoning subjects God’s Word to revision based upon the hardship or heartbreak from a soul actually doing what the Bible says. For them heaven is not worth it all.

Christians must oppose such ideas. Resist, and the devil will desist (Jam. 4:7).

Resisting Satan’s attacks on the home requires opposing his assault upon **God’s message**, **God’s meaning**, and **God’s motives**, but in what order? Consider the apostles, who had been under Jesus’ tutelage for some three years, yet they allowed God’s message and God’s meaning to be skewed by their preconceived notions of God’s motives concerning marriage, essentially replying, “If this is God’s standard, it would be better to be a lifelong bachelor!” When Jesus’ divine commentary on marriage differed from their human attitude, they called marriage a bad idea! If preconceptions of God’s motives distorted the apostles’ view of the meaning of God’s message, souls today are no less susceptible.

To resist the devil’s divorce doctrine, let saints first examine **God’s message** (What has God said?), then **God’s motive** (Has God revealed why He said what He said?), and finally **God’s meaning** (What does it all mean, and how does it apply?). All three are under attack.

The Devil's Doctrine Of Divorce Attacks God's Message

What has God really said? The devil asked Eve. The Pharisees asked Jesus. People of both sincere and insincere motives ask today, "What has God really said about divorce?" To answer the question and to resist the devil, God's people must know God's message.

Divorce is hard. It hurts. It wounds domestically, societally, financially, psychologically, and especially emotionally. Heartbreaking indeed is a broken home that yields no broken hearts.

Let Christians be ever mindful of divorce's emotional impact! Let saved hearts be soft enough to give a soft answer when sharing the truth with broken hearts (Prov. 15:1)! Let saints have the sympathy to "weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15)! All the while, let saints avoid the error of substituting passion for precept or sentiment for scripture. The "way which seemeth right unto a man" is not necessarily the course God prescribes (Prov. 14:12; Prov. 21:2). Society's prevailing attitudes on marriage and divorce do not dictate God's message on the matter.

To Defend God's Message, Leave The Traditions Of Men

God's law for the home will not be learned merely by observing Jewish customs and traditions, for they consistently misunderstood, misrepresented, misapplied, and missed God's teaching: for instance, their elevated tradition of "corban" served as a loophole to avoid God's commandment to "Honour thy father and thy mother" (Mark 7:10-13). Just because Jews assumed, asserted, or

acted like God approved a practice, that did not make it so.

Additionally, this lone study cannot possibly address all of the false, fallacious, flimsy, and flawed assertions that have been made to suggest that souls today are not subject to Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage. Numerous Old Testament characters and their unlawful marriage situations are not indicators that God grants limitless license to men's perversions of the home, and to use them as such misses the point of the Old Testament! God repeatedly used man's bad choices as a means to accomplish His good will, yet this did not justify man's disobedience: Pharaoh's hard heart was part of God's plan, but Pharaoh was responsible for his heart condition (Exo. 10:1; Exo. 14:4). Similarly God let Jacob's polygamy jumpstart His promise to make him a great nation (Gen. 28:13-14; Gen. 29-30), He used Samson's marriage to a heathen as a domino in liberating Israel from Philistine oppression (Judg. 14:4), and He utilized David's adultery and polygamy to bring the promised heir who would build God's temple and continue the Messianic seed line (2 Sam. 7:12-16; 1 Chr. 22:9-10; 2 Sam. 11-12; 2 Sam. 12:24). Israel's recurring misconduct and neglect did not prove God's approval of the misconduct: the Jews of Nehemiah's day observed the feast in the seventh month and dwelt in booths as God had commanded Moses, yet the nation had failed to observe this since the time of Joshua, almost 1000 years (Neh. 8:13-17). The Jews' systemic failures do not authorize souls today to ignore God's divine standards: rather, their failures exemplify God's

patience with imperfect people living under an imperfect law (imperfect in that it could not remit sin and they would not quit sin – Rom. 3:20; Heb. 8:7-8; Gal. 3:21; Rom. 8:3), as He prepared mankind for the perfect law of Christ (James 1:25; Gal. 3:24; 6:10). Today mankind has God’s complete revelation with inspired explanations so as to make clear His expectations. “So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty” (James 2:12).

To Defend God’s Message, Learn The Doctrine Of God

What **has** God said concerning the sanctity of marriage and the propriety of divorce? In examining what God has said, let it not be forgotten that the Bible is its own best commentary.

Consider further the dialogue of Matthew 19.

The Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him, and saying unto Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto Him, why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another,

committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. His disciples say unto Him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But He said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

God's Law For The Home Was Taught By God In The Garden

Jesus first reminded them of the sanctity of the home from the beginning: one mature man (able to leave his parents), one woman, united for life ("one flesh") (Mat. 19:5). Per this divine blueprint, because man and wife are no longer individuals but a single unit, Christ concluded, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mat. 19:6). This union, so tarnished by the Jews' polluted traditions and doctrines, was joined by God. God made man and wife to be one! This they had forgotten, if they ever knew it in the first place: husband and wife are united by God! Let no man interfere with what God has interwoven!

God's Law For The Home Was Taught By Moses In Moab

Unsatisfied with Jesus' reply, the Pharisees issued their calculated rebuttal pertaining to the Law of Moses (Mat. 19:7). Moses had indeed mentioned a writing of divorcement in his final speeches to Israel from

the plains of Moab (Deut. 1:5; 24:1-4). By Jesus' day, divorce was a hotly contested topic among the Jews, with two schools of thought debating two extremes, both allegedly based on the same passage of scripture, Deuteronomy 24:1-4 (Davies 864).

When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, And if she goes and becomes another man's wife, And the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife, Then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the Lord. And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance (Deut. 24:1-4, ESV)

The school of Rabbi Hillel focused on "if she finds no favor in his eyes," concluding that God allowed divorce for virtually any reason, including if the husband was displeased with her cooking or found a more beautiful woman. The school of Rabbi Shammai honed on the words "some indecency in her" ("some uncleanness," KJV), and determined that divorce was only permissible in the case of adultery. [Evidence suggests a third position among Jews in the Qumran community, who forbade divorce under any circumstances (Lusk 19-20).] Debate continues as to whether "some uncleanness" referred to adultery or something else. While the term

could conceivably allude to impurity from adultery, to center the discussion on this term is to miss the forest for the trees. Moses' words required a wider lens.

The key problem to the Jews' understanding of these verses has been perpetuated in modern translations: they **assumed** that God **approved** (at least partially) of the circumstances developed in the passage. The KJV says of the discontented husband, "then let him write her a bill of divorcement," and the ASV has "then he shall write her a bill of divorcement," but the Hebrew "has neither 'then' nor 'that,' but the simple conjunction 'and'" (Davies 863). Both the KJV and the ASV render verse two as "she may go and be another man's wife," which seems to grant permission, but again the Hebrew merely has a conjunction joining her second marriage with the preceding "if's." The terms insinuating permission were assumed by the ancient Jews and by English translators, yet Moses never said them. In fact, Moses painted a specific scenario.

In these verses, however, divorce is not established as a right... The four verses form a period, in which vv. 1-3 are the clauses of the protasis, which describe the matter treated about; and v. 4 contains the apodosis, with the law concerning the point in question. (Keil 951).

In other words, Moses gave a specific set of circumstances and then told Israel what to do "if" it happened. Consider Deuteronomy 19:11-13, describing a man who might "hate his neighbor, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die," and flee to a city of refuge. Moses did not

authorize hate, ambush, murder, or evading arrest: he depicted an ungodly scenario and then told God's people how to react when and if it occurred: extradition and execution (Deut. 19:12-13).

The same is true of Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Moses supplied a series of circumstances, none of which had God's approval, and then legislated how an Israelite ex-husband was to behave in such circumstances. Permission cannot be assumed where God never gave it.

Leaving the wide lens and focusing closer on the text, the second marriage rendered the woman "defiled" (Deut. 24:4), a term unquestionably related to adultery (Num. 5:20). An honest student of the law would realize that the second marriage was neither authorized nor approved by God, but that it rendered the put-away wife "defiled" and on par with an adulteress. Paul did.

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as she liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man (Rom. 7:1-3).

Paul knew the Law of Moses, addressed people who correctly understood that law, and with divinely inspired words accurately describe the **actual** teaching of the law pertaining to marriage and divorce, not what Jews claimed that it taught. According to Paul, the woman

described in Deuteronomy 24 became an adulteress when she remarried the second husband.

Various Old Testament passages have been employed to contest this conclusion (blind to the senselessness of debating the inspired apostle Paul on the actual teaching of the Law of Moses). One such passage is Deuteronomy 21:10-14.

When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the Lord thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife; Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails; and she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.

Here again ancients and moderns alike have assumed what is neither explicitly nor implicitly stated: that the soldier could marry the prisoner, enjoy conjugal privileges with her, and afterward, if he were disappointed with her, he could send her away. However, the options to “be her husband” or to “let her go” are not linked by any time-specific term such as “after” or “then.” Rather than force the assumption that God permitted Hebrew husbands to give captive girls a test

drive and afterward usher them away if dissatisfied, is another explanation plausible? Could it be that God allowed a smitten soldier to take a pretty prisoner home, wait a month for her to grieve and for him to base his decision on more than a first impression, and then, after a month of seeing her whacked hair, whittled nails, wardrobe change, and weeping eyes, he could decide whether to marry her or release her? After thirty days he could marry her or he could let her go: he could not do both. This passage details a prenuptial situation with a soldier and a captive foreigner. It does not discuss the Mosaic law of divorce and cannot be taken as justification to divorce “for every cause,” especially in light of Paul’s words to the Romans (Rom. 7:1-3). Paul was not ignorant of Deuteronomy when he penned the inspired epistle to the Romans. If Paul so described the law’s teaching on divorce, so must saints today.

These truths were clear in Jesus’ omniscient mind as He answered the Pharisees’ rebuttal pertaining to Moses’ law. Yes, Moses had allowed for divorce, not because it was granted approval in Deuteronomy 24, but because provisions were made four decades earlier at Sinai concerning women who had been “divorced,” literally “driven out” (Strong, “Garash”) (Lev. 21:14; Lev. 22:13; Num. 30:9). Scripture does not specify when or where divorce became a familiar concept among the children of Israel, yet by the time of the exodus the mention of a “divorced” woman needed no explanation to the Hebrew hearer. Moses never encouraged divorce. Moses never commanded divorce. Moses, because of the hardness of their hearts, made provisions pertaining

to women who had been divorced, and thereby had “suffered” them to put away their wives. However, even in the putting away, Moses showed that remarriage defiled.

God’s Law For The Home Was Taught By Jesus In Judea

Teaching in Judea (Mat. 19:1), Jesus stressed to the Pharisees what Paul later stressed to the Romans, with the distinction that Jesus clarified the one otherwise obvious exception to divorce and remarriage. “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Mat. 19:9).

This was the teaching of the Law of Moses. This was the teaching of the Son of God.

Consider closely the Master’s message.

The words “Whosoever shall put away his wife” include all divorced individuals. The words “except it be for fornication” exclude individuals who divorce their mates because of a spouse’s fornication. The words “and shall marry another” are conjoined to “Whosoever shall put away his wife,” thus combining to define a class of individuals who divorce (for any reason other than fornication) and later remarry. Any who fits this category “committeth adultery.”

The words “committeth adultery” are from *moichao*, which means the act of adultery (Strong, “*Moichao*). The specific form Jesus employed was the Present Middle Indicative moichatai: Present describes the tense of the verb, Middle describes the voice, and

Indicative describes the mood. The mood of a Greek verb shows how it relates to reality: an indicative verb describes something that “is” instead of what “may” or “might” be (Mounce 124).

The tense of a Greek verb refers to the nature of the action: “the primary function in the Greek verb is ‘kind of action’ conveyed by the tense of the verb, in contrast to the idea of ‘time’ which is primary in the English verb” (Lusk 54). The Greek present tense describes an action in progress, or an ongoing action: this is reflected in the KJV and ASV by the use of –eth on the end of verbs to denote continuous action. Despite attempts to employ farfetched exceptions to Greek tenses in an effort to redefine the tense of “committeth adultery” in Matthew 19:9, the simple truth is that “committeth adultery” goes far beyond a one-time action in the past: “committeth adultery” and “doth commit adultery” describe continuous action.

The voice of a Greek verb describes the relationship between the subject and the verb: in the middle voice, the subject is acting upon itself. In the context, Jesus said anyone who “shall put away his wife” (active voice) and then “marry another” (active voice) is one who “committeth adultery.” The actions are all performed by the subject (“Whosoever”): when it comes to the adultery, he has done it to himself, for himself, and has affected himself [Note 1].

Present tense: the action is ongoing. Middle voice: he does it to himself. Indicative mood: the action is a reality, not a “might” or a “maybe.”

According to Jesus, when any person divorces for

any reason other than a spouse's fornication and later marries someone else, that person enters into a real, ongoing, and self-inflicted state of adultery. Such a one is committing continuous adultery. Christ further clarified that whoever marries the woman that has been put away is also committing continuous adultery.

Some claim the Bible says nothing about "living in adultery." While these words do not appear verbatim, Paul equated the idea of continuing in sin with living in sin (Rom. 6:1-2), something Christians must not do. Adultery is a sin (Mat. 19:18; 1 Cor. 6:9; etc.). If a person can damn himself by continuing to live in sin (and he can), and if adultery is a sin (and it is), then a person can damn himself by continuing to live in adultery.

When Jesus addressed these matters in Matthew 19, the Jews of His day had grossly misunderstood the teaching of the Law of Moses. In essence, the overall attitude toward marriage and divorce was eerily similar to modern attitudes. As such, the church today must be diligent to avoid viewing the Jews' erroneous practices as a God-approved standard.

The events of Matthew 19:3-12 were also chronicled by Mark (Mark 10:2-12), who recorded an additional statement: "And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery" (Mark 10:12). Some claim a literal application of Matthew 19:9 would literally only allow husbands, not wives, to divorce for fornication, and therefore to take Matthew 19 literally results in a prejudiced and misogynistic standard. This objection fades to oblivion

when relevant passages are compared, because Mark's account shows Jesus assigning the wife the same rights, responsibilities, and restrictions as the husband in regard to divorce and remarriage: allowed only in the case of fornication.

In addition to this occasion when He answered the Pharisees' question, Scripture preserves two similar statements from Jesus on two other occasions during His ministry.

Jesus taught on this subject in the Sermon on the Mount.

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery (Mat. 5:31-32).

For generations Jews taught that they could simply dismiss their wives with a divorce certificate, but Jesus contrasted their oft-repeated error with the simple truth.

Some today, noting how the man that put his wife away "causeth her to commit adultery" (Mat. 5:32), question how the put-away woman could be made into an adulteress when she did nothing wrong. It has even been argued that because Jesus used hyperbole in this context, the adultery here is just exaggeration for the sake of emphasis to stress the importance of marriage.

Since Jesus did use hyperbole in this context (Mat. 5:29-30, 33-34), the potential for hyperbole in Matthew 5:32 cannot be ignored. In fact, recognizing

the hyperbolic nature of the context clarifies Christ's statement. The simple question is, "What part is hyperbole?"

Did His hyperbole refer to how the woman became an adulteress? How a divorced woman became an adulteress took no stretch of the imagination: it occurred upon remarriage (Deut. 24:4), a likely event given the habits at the time. No hyperbole there.

Did His hyperbole refer to the meaning of adultery? Jesus' hyperbole is not reconciled by appealing to late Old Testament prophets (Jeremiah and Ezekiel) and employing their figurative contexts to redefine the Hebrew term for adultery as mere "covenant breaking," then backdating the meaning of adultery 1000 years to insert that definition into the Law of Moses, and then fast forwarding fourteen centuries to the Sermon on the Mount to redefine the Greek term for adultery based on the shadily redefined Hebrew term contingent on figurative contexts. This is the route taken to define adultery as "covenant breaking." Despite the depressing impressiveness of such hermeneutical acrobatics, the hyperbole is still not explained by redefining "adultery" as "covenant breaking" and then claiming her husband "causeth her to commit adultery" by leaving her with a broken covenant. In fact, mere divorce cannot possibly equate to adultery, not as Jesus used the terms, for Christ gave a simple equation: divorce (except it be for fornication) plus remarriage equals adultery. If a man divorces his wife, but he does not marry another, he has not committed adultery. Without remarriage, the put-away wife had not entered into perpetuated adultery.

The hyperbole is not found in the definition of adultery.

So what was the hyperbole? It pertained to how the man **caused** his put-away wife to commit adultery. This is the idea that presents the most difficulty and generates discussion: how do **his actions cause her** to be guilty of adultery? Jesus' words actually parallel modern hyperboles: "She drove him to cheat" or "He made her an alcoholic." In the one case, a wife's sinful refusal to be intimate with her husband may contribute to the frustration that led to his adultery, but he still chose to have an affair. In the other case, a man's sinful negligence could create such frustration that a wife seeks solace in the bottle, but the decision to drink was still hers. Such is the case in Matthew 5:32: if a wife can drive her husband to cheat without robbing him of free will, or if a husband can make his wife an alcoholic without robbing her of free will, then the husband who "causeth her to commit adultery" has not robbed her of her free will. It is hyperbole: his sin contributed to her sin, but her sin was still her choice.

Matthew 5:32 can be easily understood without redefining ancient terms. Any doctrine devised by using a hyperbolic passage as the baseline to recast the meaning of other plainer passages is a pitiful doctrine indeed [Note 2].

Luke recorded the fourth occasion when Jesus addressed this subject.

And He said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. The law

and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery (Luke 16:15-18).

Chastising them for their covetousness, Jesus charged the Pharisees with violating the Law of Moses even though they appeared to be keeping it (Luke 16:15-17). He would next tell of the rich man and Lazarus, illustrating the dangers of refusing to hear and live by God's Word (Luke 16:31). In the midst of rebuking the Pharisees, Jesus spotlighted one of their most despicable violations of the Law: their flippant approach to marriage.

Luke's record is explicit in using, not the middle voice *moichatai* or even *moichasthai*, but *moicheuei*, which is Present Active Indicative. There is no question concerning middle or passive voice; this is an action performed by the person that is divorced: the act of adultery came to fruition upon entering into an unlawful marriage.

If God reluctantly permitted flippant divorce and remarriage under the Law of Moses, then why did Jesus link the divorces and remarriages of the Pharisees with the refusal to hear Moses and the prophets? Had they truly listened to the Law of Moses, they would not have been divorcing and remarrying contrary to that law.

God's Law For The Home Was Taught By Paul In Pen

All else taught concerning marriage and divorce is taught in light of the truths already considered. Paul's epistle to the Romans depicted Mosaic law on marriage as a till-death-do-they-part relationship (Rom. 7:1-3). The same consistency is seen in Paul's letter to Corinth.

Paul answered Corinth's questions pertaining to marriage and intimacy in light of a "present distress" that concerned them (1 Cor. 7:1-2, 26). After advising them concerning celibacy, marital intimacy, and whether single Christians should get married (1 Cor. 7:1-9), Paul addressed questions about whether the married should stay married.

And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife (1 Cor. 7:10-11).

Paul's words are perfectly consistent with what was taught by God in the garden, by Moses in Moab, and by Jesus in Judea: let those who are married stay married, but if they separate or divorce, either remain unmarried or be reconciled with the estranged spouse.

Paul next addressed the special circumstance concerning believers wed to unbelievers.

But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the

unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now they are holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace (1 Cor. 7:12-15).

Some use these verses to claim that Jesus' previous teaching only applied to "covenant" couples or "believers married to believers," insisting that when Paul said, "to the rest speak I, not the Lord," the apostle meant that Jesus had never legislated in any way concerning marriages of believers with unbelievers. Therefore Matthew 19:9 and Christ's other statements concerning divorce and remarriage do not apply to marriages of believers with unbelievers (Bales-Deaver, 40). They then assume that when an unbeliever deserts a believing spouse, the phrase "not under bondage" means that the abandoned Christian is free to remarry, whether the deserting unbeliever committed adultery or not. Of course, claims that "a believer can remarry when deserted by an unbeliever" soon become "any person who has been deserted can remarry."

As convincing as these ideas may seem, Christians must be careful not to build doctrines based on unproven and unprovable series of assumptions. Whereas Paul's words "to the married" directly alluded to a specific saying of Christ, his council here did not. Whatever Paul addressed in these verses, it was something Jesus had not specified during His ministry, and it pertained directly to believers married to unbelievers. These facts do not warrant certain assumptions.

Unprovable assumption #1: “Nothing Jesus ever said about marriage applies to marriages involving unbelievers.” That is not what Paul said. Paul addressed specific issues regarding believers married to unbelievers, issues that Jesus had not specifically addressed for such unions. Just because Jesus never specifically gave qualifications for elders in the church, that does not mean that nothing He said applies to their responsibilities. So it is here: Jesus never specified the legitimacy of marriages with believers and unbelievers (1 Cor. 7:14), nor did He specifically discuss marriage obligations in light of ultimatums (1 Cor. 7:15), but silence on those specifics did not equal silence on everything applying to marriage between believers and unbelievers.

Unprovable assumption #2: “The words ‘not under bondage’ means that the Christian is no longer bound to the marriage and is free to remarry.” This is a sad, ungodly view of the marriage bond. The word translated “under bondage” (*douloo*) indicates enslavement, and is repeatedly used as such throughout Scripture (Acts 7:6; Rom. 6:18, 22; 1 Cor. 9:19; Gal. 4:3; Titus 2:3; 2 Peter 2:19). Paul used the term *deo* to describe the marriage bond (1 Cor. 7:39), a term that does not necessitate servitude or subjugated bondage. Spouses are “bound” to each other, but not “enslaved” to each other. In fact, the Perfect Passive Indicative form that Paul employed indicated an action accomplished in the past and with lasting effect: “the deserted believer is not now and in fact never has been under the kind of bondage signified by the word *douloo*” (Bales-Deaver 61). Believers are not enslaved to their unbelieving

spouses, nor have they ever been. The “under bondage” Paul described in 1 Corinthians 7:15 is something that has never described God’s plan for marriage. In the cases under consideration, the marriage was at stake over the believer’s faith: since the unbeliever threatened to depart, and since faith was the distinguishing factor, the unbeliever was threatening to depart over the believer’s faith. The unbelieving spouse had given the Christian an ultimatum: remain married or remain a Christian. Paul stressed that marriage is not slavery, and no soul is or has ever been so enslaved to a mate or to marriage that he is obligated to abandon Jesus to stay with a mate and uphold the sanctity of marriage.

“Not under bondage” means not enslaved to a person, not “no longer bound by the law” of God. Christians deserted by spouses on grounds of faith are free to stay married to Jesus, but they are not necessarily free to be married to whomsoever they will.

For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it (Mat. 19:12).

Paul’s words to Corinth contain another statement pertinent to marriage and divorce.

Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you (1 Cor. 7:27-28).

Here, as with other passages, people cannot assume that which must be proven. Unless the Bible contains logical and irreconcilable contradictions, Paul's words here correlate perfectly with what both he and Jesus had already taught concerning marriage and divorce. It cannot be assumed that his words to anyone who is "bound to a wife" included unlawful marriage, especially when Paul used the term "bound" (*deo*) to describe being "bound by the law" of God (1 Cor. 7:39). If Paul referred to two people as "bound" in reference to marriage, they were "bound by the law" of God, not in spite of the law of God. It also cannot be assumed that anyone "loosed from a wife" includes those whose remarriages would contradict Christ's words or Paul's earlier words in the immediate context (1 Cor. 7:10-11). Therefore, when Paul said, "if thou marry, thou hast not sinned," he was speaking of those whose remarriage would not constitute sin in the first place. They were just as eligible to marry as a never-before-married virgin (1 Cor. 7:28).

What has God really said about the sanctity of marriage and the propriety of divorce?

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery (Mat. 19:9).

To Defend God's Message, Speak As The Oracles Of God.

"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11a).

Members of the church often adopt memorable phrases meant to reflect Biblical teaching and simplify

complex thoughts. One danger is that such phrases can be shortsighted and implicitly contradict Scripture. They also tend to get misconstrued, both intentionally and unintentionally. Error arises frequently enough from those who would wrest God's inspired words: it spreads like kudzu on the banks of man's abridged version of God's Word.

Too many are summarizing Scripture instead of memorizing it, and the effects are legion. How many brethren recite, "God does not want us to use instrumental music," but remember neither how God said it nor where God said it? How many are convinced that handclapping is acceptable and humming is approved because for decades preachers and teachers only quoted the Bible's Cliff's Notes on praise: "Don't use instrumental music!"? The result: "Well, it's ok if it's not instrumental music." God wants psalms and hymns, not palms and hums! If more Christians would commit to heart the commands for "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19), and for "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16), if the saved would focus on God's positive order to "sing" in a way that teaches, admonishes, and speaks (not hums), the church would be far less vulnerable to today's brethren who compromise where yesterday's brethren summarized.

Does the church really have a problem with replacing God's words with man's? One question:

which phrase is more often heard from members of the church, Thomas Campbell's uninspired "Where the Bible speaks, we speak," or Peter's inspired "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God"? Answer honestly. React accordingly. Christians cannot afford to base doctrine on words of God's uninspired servants rather than the record of His inspired ones.

Let the church abandon catchphrase Christianity and hold to New Testament Christianity!

Let Christians quote 1 Peter 4:11 instead of Thomas Campbell's Declaration and Address, let saints "speak as the oracles of God" instead of the disciples of the Restoration, let believers remember truth based on the words of inspired authors rather than cute quips of modern preachers, and let the saved fill their hearts with the words of Jesus and Peter and Paul instead of the commentaries of Lipscomb and McGarvey and Woods!!

Too many care less about Jesus' words than what some preacher said about Jesus' words. Christians need not go far to find past names of renown who taught error on marriage: Alexander Campbell, David Lipscomb, J.W. McGarvey, R.L. Whiteside, G.C. Brewer, Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Homer Hailey, etc. (Langfield 54-72). Their opinions and mistakes do not alter the simple words of Jesus and Paul. First century Judaizers could have cited Peter's behavior in Antioch to push their agenda (Gal. 2:11-14), but that did not make it right! Good men have unwittingly erred, but this does not justify perpetuating their errors when saints should have learned better.

Speaking as the oracles of God will profoundly impact the discussion of divorce.

It has been conjectured, “If a wife who divorces her husband for fornication is free to remarry, then she is no longer his wife, and if she is no longer his wife, then he is no longer her husband, therefore he is free to remarry.” This is not what Jesus taught. Christ gave one exception allowing a divorced soul to remarry, saying of the divorce, “except it be for fornication” (Mat. 19:9). The only soul granted freedom to remarry was the one who put away an unfaithful spouse, and only the “innocent party” meets this qualification. The “guilty party” is not free to remarry.

In marriage there are three tethers: the man and wife are “married,” the man is “bound by the law” to God relative to that marriage, and the woman is “bound by the law” to God. This idea has been crudely portrayed by the handcuff illustration: when errorists equated marriage to two people handcuffed to each other and affirmed that one cannot be released without the other also being set free. Good brethren have countered by depicting matrimony as involving, not one, but three sets of cuffs, with the husband and wife bound to each other, and both individuals being bound to God (Deaver 201-202). A man’s infidelity frees his wife from the marital obligations (cuffs) binding her to God and to her husband, but the man remains bound by God’s law. (Even in cases of fornication, divorce ought not be a foregone conclusion. If both spouses are sincerely determined to save their marriage, their home can become than ever before.)

Incidentally, Paul not only connected “bound by the law” to Jewish marriages (Rom. 7:1-3), but also to

marriages in the Christian age (1 Cor. 7:39). God's law still binds in marriage.

A Biblical understanding of being "bound by the law" also helps in sorting situations wherein an eligible bachelorette weds a bachelor ineligible for matrimony. They are "married" to each other (see Mark 6:17-18), but their unlawful and unsanctioned union is not "bound by the law" of God (Rom. 7:2), or in Jesus' words, this is not a union "God hath joined together" (Mat. 19:6). The dissolution of that unlawful marriage would not render the previously eligible bachelorette ineligible, for she was never "bound by the law" to the unlawful marriage: in fact, she was bound by God's law to get out of that marriage for the sake of her soul!

Christians **must** be able to distinguish between unions that people call "marriage" and unions that render the couple "bound by the law" of God. In 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau's form will provide check boxes for couples who are in same-sex marriages (Cohn). At hand are the days when elderships must face the question, "I was in a same-sex marriage with another man, but I obeyed the Gospel and ended the situation: does God's Word allow me to marry a woman?" The world may have recognized his "gay marriage," but was he ever "bound by the law" of God to another man in a way that violates God's law?

Other catchphrases ought to be discarded if saints would speak as the oracles of God.

"Two people in an unlawful marriage are committing adultery every time they are intimate with each other." The sexual aspect of the union cannot be

discounted as part of the defilement, but at no point did Jesus say that such a one “committeth adultery each time he goeth in to his wife.” Of the three events, four accounts, six constructions, and seven statements, each time Christ connected adultery to the marriage itself: “shall marry another” and “marrieth her which is put away” (Mat. 19:9), “shall marry her that is divorced” (Mat. 5:32), “marry another” and “be married to another” (Mark 10:11-12), and “marrieth another” and “marrieth her that is put away” (Luke 16:18). The marriage itself is adultery, not just the act of getting married, and not just the marriage bed. False teachers have claimed that the adultery occurs in the act of remarriage, not in any intimacy or relationship that follows, and those in an unlawful marriage must simply repent of the one-time act of entering that marriage in order to be justified before God. In response, well-intentioned brethren have doubled down on marriage’s implicit conjugal aspect as the defiling detail that makes an unlawful marriage “adultery.” If mere sex were the determining factor in making the marriage adulterous, then scripture has given a new category of marriage that is honorable in all as long as they stay out of the marriage bed (Heb. 13:4). If it were just a question of sex, then the marriage would no longer be adultery once they outlive their sexual desires, regardless of whether former spouses were living. The unlawful marriage is not adulterous just because of sex, but because “God so declared it in the explicit language of Jesus” (Lusk 52). The marriage itself is ceaseless adultery until repentance occurs and efforts are made to reconcile the situation.

Again, Bible truth cannot be defended and distorted at the same time.

“Jesus said whoever divorces his wife, except for adultery, cannot get married again.” No. That is close, but that is not what Jesus said. He said “except it be for fornication” (Mat. 19:9), and “saving for the cause of fornication” (Mat. 5:32). Christ gave “fornication,” not adultery, as the cause. What is the difference? Fornication (*porneia*) is illicit sexual contact outside of the marriage bond: adultery is a specific class of fornication that involves a married person engaging someone besides the spouse. The practical distinction here is seen in Deuteronomy 22:13-21, wherein a groom only learns of his bride’s premarital promiscuity after the vows are said. Her fornication occurred sometime before the marriage (not necessarily during the betrothal), and was not adultery, but if guilty, she faced the same sentence as an adulteress (Deut. 22:22). Jesus said “except it be for fornication.” Are His words subject to revision?

“Anyone who commits adultery can never get married.” Again, these are not Jesus’ words. True, the one put away over his adultery is still “bound by the law” and therefore not eligible to marry, but Jesus did not speak to the eligibility of the adulterous accomplice. Have no doubt, both adulterers have sinned, and if both are wed to other persons and their spouses put them away over the tryst, both remain “bound by the law” of God. However, if one of the paramours is unmarried and otherwise eligible to marry, although guilty of adultery, he would not be one who “put away his wife,”

nor would he be the one “which is put away,” thus his future marriage (to a lawfully eligible wife) would not be adultery.

Knowing and understanding God’s message is vital to resist the devil’s devices pertaining to divorce. Abandon men’s traditions. Learn God’s doctrine. Speak as the oracles of God.

The Devil’s Doctrine Of Divorce Attacks God’s Motives

The serpent snared Eve by suggesting the fruit could make life better and happier (Gen. 3:5). The disciples saw God’s strict marriage laws as too hard for happiness (Mat. 19:10). Both appealed to human happiness and human betterment. Both hinged on emotion. The topic of divorce is particularly emotional. For many the word divorce exposes an open nerve. For others, every decision they have ever made pertaining to divorce was based solely on emotions.

Nevertheless, neither human emotions nor human ideals dictate God’s motives.

God’s Motives Go Beyond Man’s Idea Of Happiness

“God wants Joe Theismann to be happy.” So explained the former Washington Redskins quarterback to his second wife as he gave the reasons behind his affair (Romano). With this worldview, Mr. Theismann could occupy the pulpit of countless congregations bearing the name “church of Christ” on the marquis, assemblies that have allowed man’s happiness to dethrone God’s holiness. God offers abundant life (John 10:10), but that

abundant life is enjoyed when man transforms to God's standards, not by conforming God to man's standards (Rom. 12:2).

If God's standard of marriage and divorce were meant to satiate man's concept of happiness, why did the apostles see it as rigid (Mat. 19:10)? If they were mistaken, Jesus could have cleared the confusion by indicating that marriage was a right for all to enjoy regardless of marital history and that they had missed His point. No, Jesus conceded that, from their perspective, God's standards on marriage and divorce are strict, but not too strict for those who seek heaven (Mat. 19:11-12).

The devil appeals to man with the "I'd be happier" philosophy. His mindset has yielded unprepared homes, convincing irresponsible singles: "I'd be happier if I were married." His influence has interfered with unprotected homes, convincing incontinent spouses, "I'd be happier if I could sleep with someone new." His ideology has splintered unpleasant homes, convincing irritated spouses, "I'd be happier if I were divorced." His impact has established unprofitable homes, convincing ineligible singles, "I'd be happier if I were married again." The devil's pursuit of happiness is a miserable way to live.

Whether it makes people happy or not, there are marriages that have so violated God's standards that God calls them "not lawful." This is how John the baptizer described the union of Herod Antipas with Herodias: "It is **not lawful** for thee to have thy brother's wife" (Mark 6:17-18, emphasis mine, DSC). Some suggest the

union was unlawful, not because Herodias had left her first husband, but because her first husband was Herod's brother Philip, making this an incestuous situation (Mark 6:17; Lev. 18:16). Regardless of this quibble, the fact remains: this marriage was "not lawful." It violated the law of God. This description of her marriage certainly left Herodias unhappy, for she harbored a quarrel with John and sought his death (Mark 6:19).

What should Herod and Herodias have done to rectify this unlawful situation? Herod feared John, recognized John as just and holy, and enjoyed hearing John (Mark 6:20). Given his esteem for John, if he could have rectified his unlawful marriage by saying, "We are sorry, and we will not adulterate any more marriages," it stands to reason that he would have done so. As a couple they were intensely dedicated to their union and set on staying together, with Herodias even accompanying Herod Antipas when he was later exiled into France (Mosher 383). Why behead a man he esteemed when he could have resolved the contention with a verbal apology?

The simple truth is that Herod's unlawful union could not be rectified with a mere "We're sorry." Rectifying an unlawful union required ending the unlawful union. Neither Herodias in her ambition nor Herod in his lust was willing to do what was needed to be "lawful," and the just and holy John fell victim to the misguided wrath of the unlawfully married.

God's Motives Go Beyond Man's Idea Of Home

"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Psa. 127:1). A home not built per

God's plan, that departs from God's blueprint, is a work of vanity. O, let this truth be ingrained in today's youth so that tomorrow's adults might seek the right foundation! Let them realize that "the best time to get a divorce is before you marry" (Chambers 100).

Herod and Herodias were happy with their relationship, but just because the relationship makes a couple happy, and just because man calls it a home, does not mean they are "bound by the law" of God. Any union that God calls "not lawful" (which would be the same as "unlawful" or "unscriptural") is a union that must be dissolved. This applies to all "not lawful" unions.

"But we love each other." Jesus wants souls to love Him most (Mat. 10:37; Luke 14:26). The one who abandons Jesus' message for unlawful matrimony has declared that he does not love Jesus enough. In fact, such a one actually shows a lack of love for the bride he claims to love, for if he truly cared for her he would be concerned about the state of her soul. When all things are considered, it is really a love for self that moves people to stay in unlawful unions.

"But God would not break up a home, would He?" Man constantly blames God for the troubles man concocts. When couples unlawfully marry, is that God's fault? Why is God blamed for "breaking up" something good, when God's Word calls it something bad: unlawful? Why is God charged with wrongdoing when He has told man what is right, supplied man what is good, and offers man what is best? God has never "broken up" a home, but He has distanced ungodly

relationships between people so that those people can have a proper relationship with Him.

“But what about when children are involved?” Those children’s souls are at risk. They are in a home where, if this question is being asked, their parents are on the cusp of making a decision that will forever influence how these children view commitment to God. Will the parents heed God’s will, or will they rationalize God’s will? Will they obey God with resentment, or with true repentance?

On one occasion in Israel’s sordid history, after suffering decades of captivity and decades of despondency, the people had again violated Moses’ law by marrying the heathen around them (Deut. 7:3-4; Ezra 9:2-3). What did God expect them to do who were in unlawful marriages? They were to “make confession unto the Lord” and “do His pleasure” (not theirs) and “separate... from the people of the land, and from the strange wives” (Ezra 10:11). The people committed to do this very thing (Ezra 10:12). A registry documented all those who left unlawful marriages to submit to God’s law, and then this statement was recorded: “All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children” (Ezra 10:44). Children born to an unlawful marriage did not make the marriage lawful.

It is never wrong to stop living in sin.

Separating from an unlawful marriage would not mitigate a father’s responsibility to care for his children (1 Tim. 5:8). Conforming to God’s will in one relationship and performing God’s will in another are

not mutually exclusive propositions! Doing what is right will not be easy, but the man (or woman) who holds to his obligations to God will also hold to his obligations to his children. In caring for each others' souls and the wellbeing of their children, some saints have developed separate living quarters on the same property (by building an apartment or a separate house), so as to be "unmarried" as a couple but united as parents. It has been done, and it can be done. As difficult as the changes can be, for the individual or couple who truly seek to heed God's will and do what is right for their families, there is one promise that must never be forgotten: the Lord is faithful, and He will make a way (1 Cor. 10:13). Will man take His way?

God's motives were never contingent on man's ideals of happiness or man's ideals of home: the motive for God's law on marriage and divorce, as well the motive for all He has supplied, is to teach man holiness (1 Cor. 7:14; Eph. 5:25-27; 1 Tim. 2:4). "A person does not have to be married in order to please God and go to heaven. All a person has to be is a Christian" (Miller, "Are All...").

Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life (Mark 10:29-30).

God's motive is to bring souls to heaven. Heaven will surely be worth it all.

The Devil's Doctrine Of Divorce Attacks God's Meaning

“But God didn't really mean that.” Having discussed what God has said and His motives, let the saved be ready to face all who insist that God's Word does not mean what it says.

God Really Did Mean What He Said, And Baptism Will Not Change It

“But baptism washes away all sins.” Baptism is for the remission (forgiveness) of sins (Acts 2:38). So is repentance. Repentance involves godly sorrow and change (2 Cor. 7:10).

Jesus declared unlawful marriages to be adultery. Adultery is sin. Unlawful marriage is sin. Sin will not be forgiven to those who refuse to confess it and forsake it (1 John 1:7-9; 5:16).

...baptism will not do any more for the alien sinner than prayer will do for the child of God. If, therefore, as an alien, I can unscripturally divorce six times, and marry six new women, be baptized, then keep the last one, I could do the same thing as a child of God! (Jackson 36)

Sin is a violation against God. Adultery is a violation against God and man.

Perhaps if sin repulsed and sickened man the way it disgusts God, more people would realize its heinousness. Suppose a Christian enters his home and catches his wife committing adultery: in the very act. Practicing the fruit of the spirit (particularly self-control), he resorts to no violence, but he makes his presence and their

sin known. His wife, in another man's arms, tells her husband she is sorry and asks for forgiveness, yet she and her accomplice continue the act. Her husband, furious, demands that they stop. They refuse. She continues saying "I'm sorry" to her husband while continuing as a willing participant until the adulterous desires are satiated.

Is that repentance? Is that godly sorrow? Is a spouse to forgive while the act is ongoing?

This is exactly what people expect God to do. Unlawful marriage is adultery: perpetuated adultery. Can a person honestly claim to have godly sorrow for a situation that he will not discontinue? Can an adulterer seriously continue to be wrapped in adulterous arms while saying, "God, I'm sorry," and expect God's forgiveness?

"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound" (Rom. 6:1)?

Christians have used the example of a thief who obeys the Gospel, illustrating that repentance involves returning the stolen items (watch, car, etc.). While generally effective, this leaves a bit to be desired when the idea of restitution is fully vetted: for instance, how does an unlawfully married man return a "stolen wife" to a husband who divorced her long before the second man ever met her? Although she is still "bound by the law" of God to her first husband, he does not want her back, so the "restitution" argument can lead to more quibbles than answers.

Why not speak as the oracles of God? Why not describe adultery as "stolen waters" (Prov. 9:17)? In every

case of adultery, someone is drinking stolen waters out of someone else's well (Prov. 5:15). If a person stealing water from a neighbor's spring were to obey the Gospel, would he that stole be able to continue stealing, or would he need to stop stealing waters out of another's well? So it is with adultery. When a person is "bound by the law" of God to someone else, marriage to such a one is a perpetual case of stolen waters. Stolen waters may seem sweet, but they lead to death (Prov. 9:17-18).

God Really Did Mean What He Said, And Rebellion Will Not Change It

"God's marriage law only applies to Christians, not to those who are not Christians yet." Efforts to prove this idea are endless. Some have claimed that those outside of the church are only amenable to civil law (Taylor 133), and others have claimed those who have not submitted to God's covenant are subject to the "law on the heart" (Bales-Deaver 58). One even wrote concerning the accountability of non-Christians: "The covenant argument is irrelevant since if all are under the covenant, it does not change the fact that the covenant itself teaches that aliens are not amenable to certain covenant laws governing the church" (Ibid. 222).

Ultimately this line of thinking claims that Jesus, Who has "all power in heaven and in earth" and "all things in subjection under His feet," only has actual authority over His church (Mat. 28:18; Eph. 1:22-23). "To those holding such a view... 'Your God is too small'" (Lusk 71).

Jesus has all authority. The church is composed of

those who have submitted themselves to His authority and are therefore law abiding citizens of His kingdom. Those who refuse His authority are still amenable to it, no matter how long they rebel against it. If people were to dwell within the realm of a ruler whose authority they refused to acknowledge, and they committed acts that qualified as crimes within that realm, then these individuals are guilty of crime whether they willingly bow to the ruler's sovereignty or not (Ibid. 71-72). Jesus has all authority, and all will bow to His authority and be judged by His standards (Phil. 2:10; John 12:48).

Are some so intent on defending false doctrine that they will deny Jesus' absolute lordship to defend their error (Lusk 77)?

Some suggest part of Christ's law only applies to Christians, like the Lord's Supper and giving to support the work of the church. In truth, every soul has the responsibility to worship God in spirit and in truth, but worshipping in spirit and in truth would not achieve salvation for the accountable soul who neglects to obey the Gospel and become a Christian. Thus, God's law for worship applies to every soul, as do God's law for salvation and God's law for marriage. Impenitent disregard for any law of God renders moot obedience to the rest (James 2:10-12).

God Really Did Mean What He Said, And Ignorance Will Not Change It

Ignorance of the law does not justify violation of the law: whether traffic laws, tax laws, or the law of God. Before obeying the Gospel, the Corinthians were guilty

of adultery, fornication, idolatry, sexual perversion, and numerous other sins (1 Cor. 6:9-11), most of which were permitted and even promoted under civil law, but they had nonetheless violated the law of God even before entering into the covenant with God, and this included violating God's law on the home (guilty of adultery)!

Conclusion

The devil's divorce doctrine aims to dissolve lawful marriages and defend unlawful ones.

Christians have been accused of "shutting up the kingdom of heaven" for studying these truths with prospects for conversion. It is claimed that no Biblical example exists of apostles questioning a couple's marital situation or refusing baptism unless unlawfully wed couples would "break up their home." This ignores the fact that Jesus directly addressed the relationship status of the Samaritan woman (John 4:16-18). This ignores the fact that the apostles repeatedly addressed the audience's most obvious sins and taught them to repent.

1. Peter on Pentecost: "You crucified the Christ" (Acts 2:36). "Repent" (Acts 2:38).
2. Peter in the temple: "You people killed the Prince of life" (Acts 3:15). "Repent" (Acts 3:19).
3. Peter to the council: "You people slew and hanged Jesus on a tree" (Acts 5:30). "Repent" (Acts 5:31).
4. Peter to Simon the sorcerer: "Your heart is not right with God, for you think the gift of the

Holy Ghost can be bought with money” (Acts 8:20-21). “Repent” (Acts 8:22)

5. Paul on Mars’ Hill: “You people are idolaters” (Acts 17:23-25, 29). “Repent” (Acts 17:30).

Jesus had the audacity to insist that His potential followers must count the cost, and that following Him could cost them their fathers, mothers, siblings, children, and even their spouses (Luke 14:26). Did Jesus shut up the kingdom of heaven by teaching souls to count the cost?

The facts do not lie. In forty-two percent of new marriages in 2012, at least one spouse was previously married (Lewis 9). Divorce is rampant. Remarriage is commonplace. Studying with a drunkard necessitates discussing the sins of alcohol. Studying with a prostitute necessitates discussing the sin of fornication. Studying with those in adultery requires a study of their sin so that they can count the cost. Is Jesus worth it to them?

What is **God’s message**? “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mat. 19:6).

What is **God’s meaning**? “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her that is put away doth commit adultery” (Mat. 19:9).

What is **God’s motive**? God “would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

Let souls heed God’s law on marriage and divorce, not the devil’s.

Works Cited

- Bales, James D. and Roy Deaver. *Bales-Deaver Debate on Aliens and the Covenant*. Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1988. Print.
- Chambers, Everett. "What Therefore God Hath Joined Together." *The Christian Home*. Sain Publications, 1998, pp. 89-104. Print.
- Cohn, D'vera. "2020 Census Will Ask About Same-Sex Marriages for the First Time." Pew Research Center, 10 April 2018. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/10/2020-census-will-ask-about-same-sex-marriages-for-the-first-time/>
- Copen, Casey E., Kimberly Daniels, Jonathan Vespa, and William D. Mosher. "National Health Statistics Report – First Marriages in the United States: Data from the 2006-2010 National Survey of Family Growth." *Centers for Disease Control*, 22 March 2012. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr049.pdf>
- Davies, W.W. "Divorce in the OT." *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited by James Orr, vol. II, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1939, pp. 863-865.
- Deaver, Roy. "Matthew 19:9 Is Not a 'Covenant Passage'." *The Home as God Would Have It*, edited by Garland Elkins and Thomas Warren, National Christian Press, 1979, pp. 194-202. Print.
- The Holy Bible: American Standard Version*. Accordance electronic ed., OakTree Software, 2008.
- The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. Accordance electronic ed., OakTree Software, 2008.
- The Holy Bible. Old and New Testaments in the King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1976. All references are to this version unless otherwise stated.
- Keil, C.F. and F. Delitzsch. *Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch*. vol. I. Hendrickson Publishers, 2011.
- Langfield, Weldon. *The Truth About Divorce and Remarriage: A Politically Incorrect View of Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*

- in Today's Church*. Weldon Langfield Publications, 2013. Print.
- Lewis, Jamie M., and Rose M. Krieder. "Remarriage in the United States." *United States Census Bureau*, March 2015. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/acs/acs-30.pdf>.
- Lusk, Maurice W. Marriage, *Divorce, and Remarriage in the Teachings of Jesus and Paul*. Guild of Scribes, 1982. Print.
- Machi, David and Claire Gecewicz. "Share of Married Adults Varies Widely Across U.S. Religious Groups." Pew Research Center, 19 March 2018. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/19/share-of-married-adults-varies-widely-across-u-s-religious-groups/>.
- Miller, Dave. "A Look at 1 Corinthians 7:15." *Apologetics Press*, 2003. <http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=11&article=4183&topic=324>.
- . "Are All Divorced Persons Eligible to Remarry?" *Apologetics Press*, 2003. <http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=11&article=1182&topic=37>.
- Mounce, William D. *Basics of Biblical Greek*. Second Edition, Zondervan, 2003. Print.
- Mosher, Keith. "The Herods, a Family of Continuing Iniquity." *Great Lessons from New Testament Characters*. Edited by Curtis A. Cates. Memphis School of Preaching, 1991, pp. 377-387. Print.
- "Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: 2009." *United States Census Bureau*, May 2011. <https://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p70-125.pdf>.
- Romano, Lois. "Theismann: 2nd Down." *The Washington Post*. 7 December, 1994, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1994/12/07/the-reliable-source/5b3ffe9f-c5d4-4511-ad47-87c137d71d47/?utm_term=.b598a37634d7.
- Strong, James. "Garash." Entry #1644. *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Accordance electronic edition, OakTree Software, 2008.
- . "Moichao." Entry #G3429. *Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New*

Testament. Accordance electronic edition, OakTree Software, 2008.

Taylor, Robert R. "Review of the Warren-Fuqua Debate." *The Home As God Would Have It*, edited by Garland Elkins and Thomas Warren, National Christian Press, 1979, pp. 194-202. Print.

Note 1: Some have asserted that *moichatai* in Matthew 19:9 is actually passive voice, and that the action is happening to the subject (i.e., that the adultery is being done to the man). The problem here is that Greek Present Passive Indicative and Present Middle Indicative share the same form (identical spelling), and context determines whether the voice is passive or middle (deponent verbs are an exception to this, but *moichao* is not a deponent verb). In the context, Jesus said anyone who "shall put away his wife" (active voice) and then "marry another" (active voice) is one who "committeth adultery." The actions are all performed by the subject ("Whosoever"): when it comes to the adultery, he has done it to himself, for himself, and has affected himself. It defies the context to assume that the man who **actively** divorced his wife and **actively** remarried is **passively** "having adultery done to him" as the consequence of his actions, which is what the passive voice would indicate. The middle voice is the only voice that fits the context of the passage.

Note 2: While older Greek New Testaments such as Textus Receptus and Elzevir have the Present Middle Infinitive *moichasthai* in Matthew 5:32, other Greek New Testaments such as Westcott-Hort, Tischendorf, Nestle-Aland, and Tregelles have the Aorist Passive Infinitive *moicheuthenai*. If this passive form of *moichao* belongs in the New Testament, it occurs only in Matthew 5:32, and the resulting image (that of a husband causing his wife to have adultery done to her) would correspond perfectly with the hyperbole Jesus employed in this passage.

The Devil And Jesus ~ Matthew 4:1-11

Kevin Ruiz



Kevin Ruiz is a native of southern Florida. He began preaching in 1990 and is a graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching. Kevin has served as the local evangelist for congregations in Tennessee, Wyoming, and Texas and is now preaching for the Eastside congregation in Maryville, Tennessee.

He has been blessed with the opportunity to preach the gospel in various states and foreign countries and produces a weekly internet radio program, *Light Has Dawned*, heard on the Gospel Radio Network. Kevin and his wife Courtney have three daughters and one son.

The apostle Peter described the Devil as a roaring lion that seeks to devour its prey (1 Peter 5:8). The first man and woman were Satan's initial victims (Gen. 3:1-6). Through the avenue of temptation, Satan, in the form of a serpent, seduced Eve to partake of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She then gave to Adam, who ate as well. Because they sinned by eating the fruit that God had forbidden, judgement came upon them, death began, and access to the tree of life was no longer possible (Gen. 3:16-19; Gen. 2:17; Gen. 3:22-24). But God also dealt with the Devil.

So the Lord God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity

Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” (Gen. 3:14–15, NKJV)

In God’s pronouncement against the wicked tempter of man, there is a reference to a coming battle – a battle that would end in victory for God and defeat for the Devil. Though Jesus was rejected and put to death by His enemies – a blow to His heel, His resurrection amounted to a fatal strike to the head of Satan. Through Christ, redemption and eternal life came to all those who would follow Him.

Prior to that crushing blow, the Devil’s efforts had been intensely focused on the Lamb of God. If Satan could have enticed Jesus to sin, even once, the Lamb would not have been spotless, and all hope for human salvation would have been lost. In the fourth chapters of both Matthew and Luke, as well as a brief mention in Mark, a record is preserved of an occasion when the Devil attempted to entice Jesus to sin. In His encounter with the Tempter, our Lord left for us a model of spiritual triumph over temptation.

Temptation is part of life. Our desires play a leading role in the process of temptation and, if unlawful desires are not restrained, sin is the tragic outcome. Continuing in such a pattern of living will lead to spiritual death (James 1:14-15). And that is precisely the objective of the Devil.

An Appointment with the Enemy (Mat. 4:1-2; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-2)

It was following Jesus’ baptism that the Holy Spirit led or drove the Lord into the wilderness “to be

tempted by the devil.” This appears to have been an arranged period of exceptional trial for Jesus. Mark adds that Jesus “was with the wild beasts” (Mark 1:13), perhaps suggesting that inherent wilderness dangers were rendered impotent by the protective hand of God (cf. Dan. 6:19-22).

This attack on Jesus is reminiscent of Satan’s previous attack on Job—an attack which began with Satan accusing the faithful patriarch in the presence of God (Job 1:6-12). Satan was not impressed by Job’s devotion to God and seemed to be saying, “let me lay hold of your man, and I’ll show you how devoted he really is.” We do not know if a similar accusatory encounter took place in Heaven regarding the Son of God, but we do know that God permitted the Devil to subject Jesus to an intense period of trial. In fact, Luke’s account indicates that Jesus was tempted by Satan throughout the forty days of His fasting. “Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, **being tempted for forty days** by the devil. And **in those days** He ate nothing, and **afterward, when they had ended**, He was **hungry**” (Luke 4:1-2). Notice that Satan’s suggestion for Jesus to turn a stone into bread (Luke 4:3) fits logically at this point in the account, given the Lord’s extended fast. The three specific temptations, listed in both Matthew and Luke, appear to have taken place at the end of the forty days. Concerning whether the Lord was tempted during the forty days, biblical scholars have offered various insights. Robertson notes, “Probably all, during the forty days the devil tempted him, but three

are representatives of all.” Dunne, likewise, suggests, “In Matthew and Luke’s accounts, Jesus is tempted in the wilderness for forty days (Mat 4:2; Luke 4:2). The specific temptations depicted by Matthew and Luke, however, likely occur at the conclusion of the forty day period of temptation.” Commenting on Mark 1:13, Wuest argues from the grammar:

Tempted of Satan. A present tense participle speaking of continuous action. Satan tempted Messiah constantly during the forty days. The three temptations which Matthew records at the end of the forty day period of temptation, merely indicate the additional intensity of the temptations as the period of temptation closes. Satan was attempting his worst, seeing that he had but a short time left. (25-26)

But there are other views of the forty days, as Jackson explains:

Some believe that Luke indicates the temptations were ongoing. Others see the present passive participle, “being tempted,” as an expression of purpose, like the infinite term in Matthew 4:1, “to be tempted” (Fritz Rienecker, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980, p. 147).

Daniel Wallace writes, “Almost every instance of an adverbial peirazon [tempt] in the present tense in the NT that follows the controlling verb suggests purpose,” and he lists Luke 4:2 as an example. Admittedly, he suggests that Luke 4:2 and Mark 1:13 might be exceptions, but the context “seems to suggest that these, too, should be taken as telic [purpose]” (*Greek Grammar*

Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, p. 636, ft. nt. 60).

Regardless, even Luke represents the three specific temptations as occurring after the forty days of fasting (Luke 4:2-3). The Lord may have endured many temptations during the forty days, but the three temptations were the culminating, most intense testing, of Jesus' wilderness solitude.

Stones To Bread (Mat. 4:3-4; Luke 4:3-4)

In his efforts to seduce the Savior to sin, Satan exploited Jesus' hunger, resulting from forty days without food. Naturally, the more intense the desire, the more powerful the temptation. "Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread'" (Mat. 4:3). With his statement, the Devil suggested that perhaps Jesus was not the Son of God; but, if He were, the matter might be laid to rest by a demonstration of His power, which would also provide the benefits of nourishment and satisfaction to a body that had received no food for forty days. What would be the harm?

Jesus, though hungry, looked past His own bodily needs and focused on the Will of His Father, answering, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'" (Mat. 4:4). The quotation from Deuteronomy 8:3 hearkened back to what God had sought to teach the children of Israel when He allowed them to hunger before He met

their needs. Instead of immediately intervening when food supplies diminished, God allowed His people to hunger and, thereby, tested their faith in His promise to bring them to the land of Canaan, a promise which implied that their needs would be met along the way. In His reply to Satan, Jesus implied that it would not have been in keeping with God's will for Him to miraculously provide food for Himself. Instead, He had to trust in His Father to provide for His needs, which is precisely what happened (cf. Mat. 4:11).

It is important to note that Jesus responded to temptation with the words, "It is written." In so doing, He demonstrates that we must always follow God's will in everything we do and that we can only know how to avoid the snare of temptation when we know what God has spoken on the matter. We must be fully committed to doing the Father's will above our own; for, that was the way of our Lord, who declared, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 6:38). Throughout Psalm 119, the psalmist highlights the profitability of God's Word and its singular ability to provide inspired spiritual direction:

Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You (Psa. 119:11).

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Psa. 119:105)

The wicked have laid a snare for me, Yet I have not strayed from Your precepts. Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart (Psa. 119:110–111).

Depart from me, you evildoers, For I will keep

THE DEVIL AND JESUS (MATTHEW 4:1-11)

the commandments of my God! (Psa. 119:115)
The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple” (Psa. 119:130).
Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble. Lord, I hope for Your salvation, And I do Your commandments. My soul keeps Your testimonies, And I love them exceedingly. I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies, for all my ways are before You (Psa. 119:165–168).

Strength to overcome temptation will, in part, be directly proportional to our knowledge of God’s Word, our love for it, and our unwavering devotion to obeying it.

Facts pertaining to temptation are addressed by the Spirit through James:

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death (James 1:13–15),

God is not the tempter. He does not entice man to do that for which He will then punish man. God does, however, allow Satan to tempt, or test, mankind. But, regardless of whether the Devil is behind specific temptations we may face, the desires of our fleshly body and mind remain key factors in such trials. Jesus instructed His disciples to pray in times of spiritual vulnerability: “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mat. 26:41). The apostle Paul wrote of the need to bring the body under control.

“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1 Cor. 9:27). Our Lord excelled in self-control. “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). What an encouraging truth! Jesus thoroughly understands the struggles we have with temptation and is sympathetic with our failures, because He also faced every manner of temptation experienced by mankind! And what is the Spirit’s conclusion in the very next verse? “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16). What a marvelous God we serve! No matter the struggle, God wants us to come to Him with our cares (1 Peter 5:7). He wants us to come boldly – full of faith and confident that He cares and desires to help us.

John lists three categories into which human temptations commonly fall: “For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:16). With Satan’s suggestion that Jesus turn stones to bread (Mat. 4:3), the Devil appealed to a desire of the flesh – Jesus’ hunger – in his attempt to ensnare the Savior. Satisfying hunger is not inherently sinful; but, as noted earlier, the Devil’s suggested means of doing so was not according to God’s will. Next, Satan would appeal to the pride of life and lust of the eyes.

Throw Yourself Down

(Mat. 4: 5-7; Luke 4:9-12)

The next temptation that Matthew records took place in Jerusalem. By unspecified means, the Devil took Jesus from the wilderness to the temple and set Him on the pinnacle. Satan challenged the Lord to cast Himself from that lofty height to the ground. “After all,” Satan essentially suggested, “if you are the Son of God, you will suffer no harm.” To give weight to his proposal, the Devil referred to Psalm 91, which speaks of the protective care of God: “For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone” (Psa. 91:11–12). McGarvey comments,

The suggestion of the tempter is supported by the written promise of God that Jesus shall not be allowed even to strike His foot against a stone, much less to be dashed to pieces by a fall like this. No injury, then, can result from the attempt if He is the Son of God; and this if, as in the former instance, contributed to the force of the temptation. Moreover, some good might result from the act. It would show how completely he trusted in the promise of God, and it would convince the Jews that he was under special divine protection. (42)

True, the Father would and did guard His Son, not allowing anything to happen that was not according to God’s will (cf. John 19:11). However, Jesus needlessly placing Himself in harm’s way would have amounted to testing whether God would be true to His Word. Thus, the response of our Lord was, “It is written again, ‘You

shall not tempt the LORD your God' ” (Mat. 4:7).

Jesus' quotation of Deuteronomy 6:16 references Moses warning the children of Israel to refrain from testing God, as they had done in Massah. Along their journey, they had come to a place where there was no source of water for the people. Because of their lack of faith, they had contended with Moses and tempted God. Thus, the names Massah (meaning “tempted”) and Meribah (meaning “contention”) were given to the location near Horeb where God provided water for Israel. Had they instead cried out sincerely to God for aid and waited for His provision, they would not have provoked the LORD to anger (Deut. 9:22). How exactly had they tested God? Moses tells us, “they tempted the LORD, saying, ‘Is the LORD among us or not?’ ” (Exo. 17:7). Such testing of God amounts to an attempt at forcing His hand or to challenging Him with a doubtful spirit, saying, in essence, “God, if You are really there and care, You will take action now.” Instead, we should look to the apostle Paul's handling of his own trial, which serves as an example of proper response of how we should turn to God in prayer with a humble and heartfelt petition and trust that God will answer with what is best (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Before considering the final temptation, we should note that the second and third temptations are recorded in opposite order by Matthew and Luke. Various explanations have been offered by commentators, including the following:

In the first thirteen verses of this chapter, Luke recorded how Satan confronted Jesus and tempted

Him three times: first, to turn stones to bread; second, to worship him; and third, to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. Interestingly, Luke's order of the temptations is different than that found in Matthew's gospel account. Matthew recorded that Satan's second temptation involved him trying to persuade Jesus to throw Himself down off of the temple, while the third temptation was Satan's attempt to get Jesus to worship him. Some might assume that because Luke had earlier professed to write an "orderly account" that his specific arrangement of the temptations of Christ must be the correct order. Most biblical scholars, however, believe that Matthew was concerned more with the order of events in this story because of his use of words like "afterward" (4:2, Greek *husteron*), "then" (4:5, Greek *tote*), "again" (4:8, Greek *palin*). These three adverbs strongly suggest that Matthew recorded the precise order of the temptations. Luke merely links the events by using the Greek words *kai* and *de* (4:2,5,6, translated "and"). NOTE: The NKJV's translation of *kai* as "then" in Luke 4:5 is incorrect. It should be translated simply "and" (cf. KJV, ASV, NASV, and RSV). Similar to the English word "and" not having specific chronological implications, neither do the Greek words *kai* and *de* (Richards, 1993, p. 230). In short, the evidence suggests that Matthew's account of the temptations of Jesus is arranged chronologically, whereas Luke's account is arranged in some other orderly fashion—perhaps thematically, or possibly climactically. (Lyons).

Worship Me (Mat. 4:3-10; Luke 4:5-8)

For the final temptation on this occasion, as recorded by Matthew, we find Jesus on an “exceedingly high mountain” (Mat. 4:8). The Devil had taken Him there and, “showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time” (Luke 4:5). This rapid yet all-encompassing view suggests a supernatural manifestation of an unspecified nature. Undoubtedly, Satan knew the tremendous appeal of such a presentation. The prince of this world then made his shameless proposal, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours” (Luke 4:6–7). Jackson explains how this temptation would have appealed to the human nature of Jesus:

How, in any respect, could this be considered a temptation? The temptation lay in the tendency for humanity to avoid the hard way, and for Christ the hard way was unbelievable suffering — both the physical torture for which he was marked, and the spiritual agony that he would endure in bearing the wrath of his Father because of our sins. But the Lord would not be discouraged from fulfilling the will of God, even though it put him through suffering unimaginable (Mat. 26:38).

Further discussion of how the Devil’s offer may have tempted Jesus is offered by McGarvey and Pendleton:

It was an appeal to him to reveal himself in the fullness of his power and authority as above generals, princes, kings, and all beings of all ages. An appeal to obtain by physical rather than by

spiritual power; by the short-cut path of policy rather than by the long road of suffering and martyrdom. Jesus came to obtain the kingdoms of the world. He was born King of the Jews, and confessed himself to be a King before Pilate. All authority is now given to him, and he must reign until he puts all his enemies under his feet, and until all the kingdoms of the world become his kingdom. Satan's way to obtain this kingdom differed from God's way. He might obtain it by doing Satan's will and becoming his worshiper, or by worshiping God and doing his will. Satan would give the speedier possession, but God the more lasting. (97)

Rejecting Satan's offer, Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve'" (Luke 4:8). Here again, Jesus turned to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures to counter the wicked suggestion of the Devil. Had Jesus worshipped Satan, the Lord's sin, at that very moment, would have severed all hope of salvation for man.

After The Battle (Mat. 4:11; Luke 4:13)

When Satan failed in his efforts to entice Jesus to sin, he departed. At that point, angels interceded by divine direction and tended to various needs of the famished and weary Son of God. But Luke adds that Satan departed, "until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13). The Devil attacks his victims in waves. Luke's words imply that Satan later continued his attempts to tempt Jesus to sin, as he relentlessly pursued his goal

of sabotaging Christ's mission to provide a means of reconciliation for mankind. Satan's ongoing efforts to destroy were alluded to by Paul when he wrote of the influence of false apostles – pawns of the Devil: "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). As with Christ, Satan will never cease to seek our destruction today through the avenue of temptation, but will repeatedly return with evil intent.

The temptations that Jesus suffered in the wilderness and those that occurred at other times in His life served a noble purpose: "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, **He is able to aid those who are tempted**" (Heb. 2:17–18). In His victories over Satan's attacks, Jesus left for us a pattern of success. The inspired instructions of James mirror the actions taken by Jesus in the face of temptation: "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). Our victory through Christ is already written (1 Cor. 15:57). We, however, must take the path blazed by our Savior, remembering, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). Having successfully resisted the Devil, Christ

now sits at the right hand of God. If we withstand the temptations of this life, we, too, are assured of eternal reward: “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12).

Works Cited

- Dunne, John Anthony. “Jesus, Temptation of.” *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Ed. John D. Barry et al., Logos Bible Software, 2016.
- Jackson, Jason. “The Temptations of Christ.” *Christian Courier*. 2018, <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1208-temptations-of-christ-the>
- Lyons, Eric. Luke’s “Orderly Account.” *Apologetics Press*. 2005, <https://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=6&article=1486>
- McGarvey, J.W. *Commentary on Matthew and Mark*. Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Company, 1875, p. 42
- McGarvey, John William, and Philip Y. Pendleton. *The Four-Fold Gospel*. Cincinnati, OH: The Standard Publishing Company, 1914, p. 97.
- The New King James Version*. Logos Bible Software, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982.
- Robertson, A.T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933. ch. 4, 4:13.
- Wuest, Kenneth S. *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, pp. 25-26.

The Devil Is A Racist

John DeBerry



John DeBerry is a graduate of the University of Memphis and Freed-Hardeman University. He also attended Christian Brothers University where he studied marketing and computer programming. John DeBerry was married to his wife, Georgia for over 40 years prior to her death in 2015. They have two daughters and seven grandchildren. He has been preaching fulltime since 1968. Currently, he serves as the minister for the Coleman Avenue Church of Christ. In addition to his local work, he has served as a Tennessee State Representative since 1995.

Let's not mince words, "I've been black for quite some time, as a matter of fact my whole life." That said, race has often been on the forefront of many of the decisions I've had to make on various occasions of my life. I've had the pleasure of personally watching the evolution of Race Relations in America, as well as, those in the church. Being noted as a colored, when I was born at John Gaston Hospital, 1951, in Memphis, Tennessee to John and Pearl Deberry, there was a well-established social system; strongly enforced, called "Separate but Equal." Therefore, when my mother enrolled me in Dunn Avenue School for my first grade year, all the children in the school looked like me – colored. It never occurred to me at the time that there was an alternate society in Memphis, called White People and their children were in schools with other children who

looked like them. Because our schools were wonderful institutions of education, with articulate, well-dressed and professional teachers, I never felt deprived or neglected. Our church, the Vance Avenue Church of Christ, was a congregation of 500 plus, with a beautiful new building and a rich and dignified heritage. My family was my greatest blessing, my Great Grandparents, Brother and Sister Enos Garrett, my Grandparents, brother and sister Starling Hall and my parent's brother and sister John J. Deberry, Sr., surrounded us with love, learning and leadership. The word colored; therefore, was never allowed to be a handicap. By the time I understood the implications of race in Memphis and in America, I had already been fortified with God's word and a healthy respect for all people, even those who, on occasions, did not respect me.

Changing Times

My grandparents were one of the first couples to buy homes in an area that was formerly all white in the late forties. There were two houses already on that property and my great Grandfather built a third with his own hands; therefore, until my early teen years we had three sets of parents living side by side who refused to allow the color of our skin to skew us or fill us with malice. As a matter of fact, in our working-class neighborhood several of our neighbors were white and all of us children played together. In those days one of my father's best friends was another struggling Mississippi boy by the name of Vernon Presley. You may recognize him as being the father of Elvis Presley. I can

still see them both under the hood of some old car they planned to sell talking about life and the Bible. When Elvis made it big, two of my dad's sisters worked and cooked for him at Graceland Mansion.

Because of the structure of our family, and our Christian values, we were raised to monitor and adjust to the racial climate of Memphis. We were always taught that these issues were temporary; that laws would eventually change and we were forbidden to live up to negative stereotypes. In the late fifties and early sixties, my great Grandparents and my Grandparents, were Eisenhower Republicans. Our family had personal loss in World War II and my father was a Korean War veteran. There was quite a rift in our family when my parents were supporting Kennedy and not Nixon, Eisenhower's Vice President.

The Sixties

When the civil rights movement of the 60's began, our parents explained to us why there was social and racial tension. It was time for change, they asserted, but always stressed that people have to change the way they see one another. In 1963, my father was transferred from Memphis to the small town of Alamo, Tennessee. There in that small town, with hard-working people in a small little church, we learned a lot of lessons that would prepare us for the racial upheaval of the late 60's. The same year that we moved to Alamo, (1963), my dad scraped up enough money to drive to the March on Washington with some Army buddies. One of them was white. I remember watching it on television

and proud that my dad was somewhere there in that huge crowd. I can still see us sitting on the floor at my Grandmother's house listening to Dr. King's speech on her new console television. The positive, non-violent nature of the speech was pointed out again and again at our dinner table. My Father started the first Black Newspaper in Crockett County in 1966. "*The Informer*," carried news about Central High School, the segregated county school for all blacks, as well as, community news and church news. Because we had Press Passes, and my Grandparents were still conveniently in Memphis, we were in the middle of most of the momentous civil rights events. I remember when my father brought the "*I Am A Man*," sign home after he had marched with the sanitation workers. My mother was always worried, but she and my Grandmother prepared sandwiches and tea for the strikers, including a nice foil-covered lunch with iced tea in towel-wrapped Mason Jars for Dr. King. On April 3rd 1968, my father let the folks at the Lincoln Street Church of Christ know that we would not be back from Memphis in time for Bible class. My dad and I went to Mason Temple where there was a rally for the strikers and Dr. King would address the crowd. It was a last minute part of the program, but I can still hear his troubled voice speaking that night. While others spoke of the speech as great, to me it was frightening and upsetting. My father and I talked about it on our drive back to my Grandmother's house, and he had to comfort me concerning some of the harsh realities of race, prejudice, and hatred at this troubling time in history. I guess it never occurred to me that

there could be such hatred that would spark events that would change the world. The next day, by the time we got back home to Alamo, our phone was already ringing in the house. "They shot Martin Luther King," my Grandmother said in tears to my mother, who gave the phone to my father and sat and wept. It was already late in the evening and we had been driving for hours, but we got back in the station wagon and drove back to Memphis. The city had erupted in violence; it was awful. Through it all, our parents stressed that we know who we are and what we are; we will not hate and we will not be defined by either side, "We are Christians." I'm not making this up. My father grieved the loss of Dr. King most greatly, because of the personalities, which would emerge, because of his removal. Of course, there was hatred, prejudice, and injustice, but my father stressed that people must learn mutual respect, if there was to be positive change in America.

Later that year, 1968, my father decided it was time to integrate the Crockett County Schools. Me and my five brothers and sisters would be the first black children in history to go to what was once an all-white school. Remember, the country was in upheaval and in many places integration had not gone well. When I asked my father about this decision, he did not talk much; he just said it was time. We loved Central High School, the colored school. All coloreds from kindergarten to twelfth grade, from the entire county went to that one school. The teachers were great, and did the best they could to prepare us for the world. My Dad said we must get ready for the future. "America is changing" he said,

and would change faster now that Dr. King and others had been killed. When I pressed him at the urging of my younger siblings, “Daddy what do you want us to do?” He sternly told me “Nick, you go to school; that’s what you do; you go to school; don’t scratch your head when it aint itching; don’t grin when it aint funny; be a man; you give respect, you will get respect.” He told us all that this was not a protest and we were to be students – period.

We were to do our lesson and do as we were told. Alamo High was one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life. If you know me, you also know it was not because I wasn’t opinionated, or had a lack of personal pride, or self-confidence. It was fulfilling because my parents had taught me to respect myself and that I had nothing to prove. However, I was expected to be everything they had raised me to be. At Alamo High I played football, basketball, sang in the choir and was a member of 4-H and Future Farmers. I represented the school on several occasions and all five of my brothers and sisters also loved the school and the opportunities that were opened to us. I was told by the superintendent of the school when I graduated in 1970, “Everything I thought I knew about colored children for a lifetime, you have changed it in two years.” You see, we didn’t walk into that school with clinched fists of protest but with the extended hand of friendship. We got our lesson and did what was asked of us. My father and mother did the same in the Parent and Social Organizations of the school, and that little town of Alamo, Tennessee became an example that the whole country could follow. They

looked at character not color. This success was not just because of my family, but because in that hard-working farming and factory-worker community, the white people also decided to have fellowship and not fear. Their minds were open, and they allowed themselves to get to know us not just prejudice. I'm not saying there were no tense moments or mistakes made; I'm saying neither side allowed them to escalate into violence, or malice. To this day, the guys I played football and basketball with are my friends and they check on me from time to time.

Freed-Hardeman

Alamo High prepared me for Freed-Hardeman College. Like most of America, this wonderful institution was also segregated for most of its history. When I enrolled in 1970, I was part of the first large group of black students to attend the school. There had been one or two here and there, but now there were 23 of us, and all of us were aware of the history being made and the responsibility we had accepted. We prayed together, studied together, and provoked one another to good work. We refused to verify negative stereotypes, but also respected ourselves and our heritage and culture. Dr. Gardner, Dean Oldam and many others counseled and watched over us but soon realized that we were just fine. Most of us had come from Christian homes and those that weren't were soon baptized. My beautiful bride, Georgia, who I met at the school was baptized on a Wednesday night while I was away preaching. God was good to me; if I hadn't gone to Alamo High,

I would not have known about Freed-Hardeman. If I hadn't gone to Freed-Hardeman, I would not have met Georgia, who was a caring and Godly mother and a wonderful preacher's wife for almost 45 years.

I had lost three members of my family in 1970. My family was a mess and my father almost lay down and died. We all needed someone, God saved me and blessed me with a woman who understood what we were going through, she lost her mother when she was 12. Georgia appreciated who I had been raised to be, and what I had to be as a minister. She also understood my responsibility as a big brother to my younger siblings. Georgia had studied Ruth in the Marriage and Family Class, and literally told me that "my family would be her family and she would go wherever I go." She raised our daughters to be servants who, like us, have no racial bitterness or bias. We were 21 and 22, we had to grow up fast to pull the family through those trying times. Times when it would have been so easy to fall into the trap of racial animosity and spite.

When I lost Georgia I realized that God gives us what we need to survive, be sensible and prosper in our time. We should never allow hate, prejudice or malice to steal that away. Georgia helped me through many racially motivated setbacks early in our marriage. She was a Godly helpmate, a steady, mature girl who would not allow the racial realities to negatively affect me. In 1976, we were looking for a home. We picked a beautiful little house that was within our budget and we financially qualified. When we thought we were about to close, we were told that the owners decided not to

sell; the house was off the market. Ironically, as soon as our contract was cancelled, the “for sale” sign was back in the yard. I was hurt and furious. It was an obvious racial event, and I wanted my wife and little baby girl to have that house. Typically, I talked about lawsuits, the Justice Department and who knows what else fighting the system. I probably wasn’t acting Christ like or even like I was raised to deal with race. Georgia sat calmly there in the car, and when I finished my uncharacteristic rant, she calmly said, “I’m so glad we got out of that deal; God has a better house for us.” She was right. Then she gave me a look that I saw a thousand times over the next 40 years. And you know what? The realtor showed us a bigger, better house with a huge backyard at a lower price in a nice integrated neighborhood. Our neighbors were white and we are still friends as well as our children. I bought her that house; Georgia reminded me so much of my mother and Grandmother, who forbid rants of “woe is me” because of race.

Why The Story An Objective Wake-Up Call

The relevance of the personal biographic information is to qualify myself to take an objective and unbiased study of racism and its implications in the church. Why? Because the question “*IS the Devil A Racist?*” is a very provocative subject indeed. If I am to be productive and edifying, the question most certainly requires us to look at facts given to us both in the Bible and our history books. Since race and the perception of race is so prevalent even now in America,

it behooves us to be sober and spiritual in our assigned topic and seek not to be controversial or sensational. We must be perceptive and enlightening because for far too long we in the Lord's church have avoided the topic and have been blind to the elephant in the room, **Race**. Now brethren, we all know that most of our churches are virtually segregated. We also know because the reasons behind this phenomena are so complicated and so often unintended, we pretend that it's not so, or that it is not relevant. As Christians, we know God's word; we respect His will, and we want to go to heaven. But our congregations often become victims of community morass, demographic separation, and social indifference. Let's be clear, racism is a two-headed **DEMON**, and in this modern era, it is being driven and invigorated by political leaders who thrive on racial animosity. There are still those, black and white, who are uncomfortable with people who don't look like them or share the norms of their immediate culture. In essence, we all have some stuff to get rid of, and we all have unspoken and engrained misconceptions about people we don't know.

Jesus Had A Story

When the Lord promised to build this new community of believers that He called the Church He understood all too well human prejudice, misjudgments, and mistrust. Jesus Himself was the constant recipient of man's misjudgments, both social and religious. There were people who knew Him as a boy who were offended by His knowledge and influence. Regardless of the

profound wisdom and skill of the teachings of Jesus, those of His own home town could not see beyond their prejudice and bias.

And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house (Mat. 13:54-57).

Jesus had clearly been seen working most of His life in His earthly father's business. He obviously and had acquired carpentry as an honest and respected skill. He was often called "the carpenter" Jesus must have been an accomplished tradesman in His community and continued to be so, even after Joseph's death. According to Luke, even as a child, He carried himself as one the whole community should have been proud of, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

Jesus was a good student in the synagogue; He was physically strong because He did His work, He pleased His father in heaven, and was well respected by His neighbors; still He suffered relentless bias and prejudice. This, of course, makes no sense, for Jesus Christ was the best child and the best man who had ever lived. Brothers and Sisters, therein lies the discussion,

for Racism, Prejudice, Bias, and Stereotypical Hatred, color mistrust makes no sense. A person, who is truly overcome in the fault of racial prejudice, whether black or white, can never see anything else but Race. Every group has their good and their bad. But when racism prevails, accomplishments, character, spirituality, military record, family history, economic or professional achievement means nothing. Because of prejudice, none of the above are considered, only Race and Color is considered, black or white. Think about the question/statement made by Nathaniel when Philip came to him to tell him about Jesus, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth” (John 1:46). Oftentime a place, city or community can also be misjudged because of the perception of Race. In the Lord’s sermon recorded in Matthew 5, Jesus attached the idea that it is acceptable to become comfortable with the prejudice and racism around us;

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Mat. 5:46-48).

The Lord stresses in this principle that our character and behavior, as His followers, is not to be guided by political philosophy, and ethnocentric opinion, but by the Lord’s personal example, and His unbiased behavior. We, as Christians, are to be a light to the world not just to get lost in its darkness. A perfect example of this mindset is Peter, one of the Lord’s

apostles, and a member of His trusted inner circle. However, for Peter to be truly useful and able to carry out the “Great Commission”, to take the gospel to the whole world, he had to separate himself from the racial prejudice of his day. This prejudice was compromising his effectiveness to do the Lord’s business of saving all types of people, “Every creature.” Before Peter could be effective, the Lord had to address his prejudice against Gentiles, (Acts 10:9-23) once Peter got the lesson sent within the message he stated that he was ready to preach to all races.

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him (Acts 10:34-35).

The apostle Paul who took the Gospel all over the Gentile world made a similar statement as taught at the church at Rome;

But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God (Rom. 2:10-11).

What Is Happening In America?

It is amazing that in 2018 we are struggling more about race and race relations than we have in decades. I am sure these issues were always there but the division, strife and discord that we are experiencing currently in America was not so blatantly in the forefront. On occasions, recently I have witness crowds that are

reminiscent of the 60's. Some are quiet, peaceful, dignified protest that serve a purpose, but many are just unruly mobs that serve no one's purpose but their own. The visible signs of legal segregation that I grew up with are long gone, as well as the laws that supported them. Still many so called activists have reverted to stirring up the divisive animosities of the past. I do understand our history, and that rebellion and civil disobedience is part of that history. However, the purpose was always to make America better, independent, more inclusive and to insure that all could have "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Almost every one of every group these days is making charges of **RACISM**. Blacks are calling whites racist, whites are calling blacks racist, and Hispanics and other ethnic groups are calling us both racists. There is plenty of name-calling going around as we become an even more segregated and alienated society.

What Then Is Race In America?

When speaking of human beings, RACE is a grouping of human beings. A specific separation that creates categories that is recognized as distinct ethnic groups. However, there are differences between Race and Ethnicity. It's taught that our DNA or our biology determines our Race, while it is said that environment and culture determines our Ethnicity. Hey, these are college professors, they know ... don't they?

Like the kids say, "Let's be real," because when all the big shot social scientists and others are done talking, we all know what we call Race in America, **COLOR**,

COLOR OF SKIN – color, black and white and various shades in between. Thus color prejudice is something we have created over the last thousand or so years since it meant nothing to the times of people we read about in the Bible. Brethren, these are fake categories. Why? Because there is no particular genetic signature that separates, white, black, red, or yellow. We all can and do share the same blood. My sister-in-law, who has black skin, is alive today because a young preacher at MSOP, with white skin, gave her a kidney that saved her life. Have you ever heard a person who would die without a blood transfusion specify, “white blood only please!” or “only a black kidney please!” Of course not, that’s ignorant! The fact is, color of skin, **melanin** is the most shallow of genetic and biological differences in human beings, yet the most recognized.

Racism

When we consider the aforementioned discussion of Race, we are lead to ask, “What then is RACISM?” All sources give similar answers familiar to all of us. Prejudice, bias, discrimination against a person or group based on characteristics that another group disrespects or finds offensive. Racism assumes that those with one group of physical characteristics are better or less than another. Those who accept this mindset actually believe that God’s favor is upon a particular people or group simply because of the color of their skin. I remember in my Anthropology Class years ago learning the word, ETHNOCENTRISM, talk about a ten-dollar word. However, all it means is one group believing they are

better simply because their own standard or culture is better than others.

The word of God strikes down these misconceptions and misrepresentations of those that God created. When the apostle Paul did his thesis asserting that as Christians, we are no longer under the Law. This was because the Law had served its purpose to bring us to unity in Christ Jesus. Paul wants the shaky and misguided brethren to realize that they were, “all the children or sons of God by Faith in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:26). While the social circumstances and Jewish history had supported strong separation for centuries, Paul enlightens them that they are no longer condemned by the Law, but are brought into a family relationship with our Savior Jesus Christ. That they have been adopted by God into that intimate relationship.

For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now (Gal. 4:27-29).

According to God all these man-made separations have no relevance with Him and should have none with those born again;

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew,

circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all (Col. 3:9-11).

Not only is the “New Man” to put sin to death, he is also to put away man-made barriers that divide people and that nourish the vices of the Old life. Among renewed humanity there are no national, ceremonial, cultural or social distinction, (King James Version by Thomas Nelson).

Yes, The Devil Is A Racist

If racism is defined as, “Prejudice, bias, discrimination and ill will against a person or a contiguous group, then the Devil is most certainly a Racist. You see, he does hate a particular Race, “The Human Race,” and he is the worst racist in history. Because of the Devil, the human race is pursued and pledged with all types of troubles because of his vehement hatred for our race. As a matter of fact, it is clear that he is our mortal adversary and an enemy of everything God loves. He is real and is driven by Pride and Prejudice to destroy God’s heritage.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world (1 Peter 5:8-9).

If we are to fight off this racist and his evil intent we have to be aware that racism is often veiled in smiles and trickery. Paul warned the church at Ephesus of

the sneaky undercover tactics of the Devil against the Race;

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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. 6:10-13).

We are in a mortal battle against this enemy of the Human Race who with bias seeks ill will against us. When Paul was exhorting the church at Corinth to be forgiving and longsuffering he was aware that the Devil wants us to destroy each other for Him;

To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:10-11).

Paul warns that when we mistreat one another, we are doing the Devil's dirty work for him. When we lose sight that God created us all in his image, we will become a tool of the true Racist. He does not want us to spread the love of God and the libertarian of the Gospel. He wants us to be imprisoned in hate, prejudice and malice so that we destroy our brothers;

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth

commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them (2 Cor. 4:1-4).

The Great Assassin

There have been several assassinations in our country attributed to hate and prejudice. Beginning with President Lincoln who freed the slaves; John Kennedy who was on the forefront of civil rights, to Dr. Martin Luther King who became the voice of a movement. Their deaths most certainly changed the course of American history and created division and malice among the people. Racial tension became greater and people moved further apart because of racial animosity and distrust. Their assassins, John Wilkes Booth, Lee Harvey Oswald and James Earle Ray, are well-known names in history because of the stature and position of the men they killed. Each of these murderers had malice in their hearts when they pulled the trigger and took those men's lives. But what each of them did, pales in comparison, with the mass murders of the greatest assassin of all, "The Devil." His accomplishment because of hate, prejudice and malice brought death on a whole race, the Human Race. We all know that the great racist used the most deadly weapon ever devised, "A lie (Gen. 3:4). He told the first lie, and brought death on our whole race. This racist changed the course of all human history. All

men of our race therefor die; all, not just one nation, were affected;

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Rom. 5:12).

When we study human history, all of the butchers, murders and cutthroats who have committed genocide in the name of race in the whole history of mankind truly were only amateurs. While they may be responsible for the deaths of millions, the Devil is responsible for countless billions, beginning with Adam and Eve. Every heart that has ceased to beat is because of the early success of this great racist. The Devil is insidious. He smiles and says he's a friend, while he is playing the ambush that will destroy you. Paul speaks of those who march and serve the Devil. They will always make us feel comfortable and safe before they strike us dead;

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Don't Let The Devil Use You, "Love Your Brother"

Jesus came to the world to bring us life everlasting, by teaching us how not to fall into the trap of the "great racist, the Devil. He wants us to do His work for him

by seducing us to hate to the point that we destroy ourselves. The Lord Jesus knows this, and gave us a potent weapon against the Devil's Racism, "LOVE". According to Jesus, this will separate those who are led by Him, and those controlled by the Devil.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another (John 13:34-35).

John later wrote that, " who so keepeth his word in him verily is the Love of God perfected: hereby we know that we are in him, " (I John 2:15).

To Hate Is A Choice

In 1956-1957 when I was in the first and second grade one of my favorite things to do was to go downtown Memphis with my Grandmother. In those days downtown Memphis was one of the most exciting and cosmopolitan shopping areas in the country. Because the men of the family were both at work in the cars, She would always take the city bus, the #9 downtown. On a pretty day we would walk down to the bus stop and wait for the bus; she had the bus schedule so we never waited long. It was exciting to get on that big city bus, my grandmother would let me drop the fare, and the driver always spoke as we walked to the rear of the bus. It never occurred to me that we were going to the colored section of the bus. My grandmother never allowed me to be affected by the cultural and social realities that neither of us could change at that time. She, like the

other two matriarchs of our immediate family was the consummate Christian lady. Her calm and dignity shielded me from feelings of anxiety and inferiority and instead allowed me to enjoy the adventure. However, in the fifties segregation was too profound and pronounced for even a child to consistently ignore. The markings of a separate society were posted everywhere in the words **colored** and **white**. I have a very vivid memory of the first time I realized the difference and the separation.

My grandmother and I were on one of our trips downtown. We had walked in the hot sun and I became thirsty. When we went to the water fountain I got on the little step to get a drink from the cooler; my grandmother quickly stopped me, and took me to the pedestal fountain a few feet away. When I protested, my grandmother was uncharacteristically stern, letting me know how things were. I was in Ms. Beasley's second grade class at Dunn Avenue School at the time and could read well enough to see the, **colored** and **white** signs for the first time. It was a little traumatic but she smiled again and calmly took my hand. She took me to the **water pipe** coming out of the wall; she pointed to one pipe going right to the fountain posted **white**. Then she pointed to another pipe going left. "It's the same water Nick – get a drink and lets go."

Choose Not To Hate

My Grandmother chose not to be bitter or bothered by any of it. They all said over and over, "God has been too good to us; this is just a test of faith, we have never missed a meal. Because they chose not to allow race to

affect their faith, so do I. I have never, never been bitter against anyone because of racial animosity. **NEVER.** My father's formula has always worked for me in every avenue of life, "Nick, if you give respect, you will get respect." That has never failed. Still like my mama told a young lady who had spoken disrespectfully to her and used a racial slur, and then apologized. She controlled her temper and said , "You don't know me good enough to bother me girl, I gonna love you, and there ain't nothing you can do about it."

IS THE DEVIL A RACIST? YES! BUT WE DON'T HAVE TO BE!

Resisting The Devil

Jon McCormack



Jon McCormack was raised in a Christian home in Central Texas. He is a 2002 graduate of the Southwest School of Bible Studies. He is the preacher for the Atlanta Church of Christ in Atlanta, TX. He and wife Holly have three children Lucy, Emma, and Noah. One of his greatest joys is being a camp director at Camp Ida Youth Camp.

The Epistle of James is sometimes referred to as the Proverbs of the New Testament. It is a most practical book that instructs us on how to live as faithful Christians. The inspired brother of our Lord tutors us on a wealth of needful truths such as the origin of temptations and the destructive path they lead us down when we surrender to them (James 1:12-15), the essentiality of having an active faith (James 2:14-26), and the taming of that most difficult member (James 3:1-12). Concerning the practical nature of the book, one brother writes,

The Epistle of James is not, nor was it intended to be, a formal, theological treatise, but a simple sober presentation of Christian principles, the design of which was to enable the readers thereof to resist the sins peculiar to the age... The Letter, because of its eminently practical character has been quite properly styled "the Gospel of Common Sense." (Woods 17-18)

One of the eternal Truths found in this “Gospel of Common Sense” is how to resist the devil. Such is a needful training for every man, woman and child that desires to be with the Lord for eternity. Knowing how to avoid the abominable adversary, deflect the diabolical deceiver, and elude the evil one is an essential part to any faithful Christian life. The instruction James gives is thus,

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up (James 4:7-10).

Here the Spirit lays out His design for resisting the devil. Consider briefly the steps of that plan.

Submit to God

Every successful spiritual action begins with a complete submission to our Creator. One can not even begin to resist the evil one without a proper understanding of God’s Word and our diligent obedience to it. The word submit in the text is translated from the Greek word hypotasso which means to subordinate. In other words, God is the Boss, and what He says is to be obeyed immediately. Too often we want the devil to stay away but we are unwilling to be subject to the Lord which makes that possible. Many Christians have met their spiritual downfall because of their unwillingness to simply obey God. They want their problems solved,

their emotions in check and their conscience cleared. They want the devil to leave them alone but then refuse to submit to the only Person who can make it a reality.

Take Your Stand

To resist the devil is to stand up to him. Brother Woods writes of the seriousness of this imperative,

Antistete de toi diaboloï, take your stand against the devil. “Resist,” from antistete is an aorist active imperative verb from antihistemi, which in turn, is from anti, against, and histemi to stand... We are, therefore, to face Satan in battle array; to recognize him as a formidable and dangerous enemy; and to fight off all his advances. All is at stake in the effort; and the issues are life and death (Woods 224).

Such is not a part-time effort considering the warning that Peter gives, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

The child of God should be thrilled at the results that follow, “he will flee from you.” Jesus proved this point in the wilderness when the tempter came to Him there. The Lord so wonderfully wielded the Sword of the Spirit, and upon that bold confrontation, the devil retreated. Inspiration reads, “Then the devil left Him... (Mat. 4:11). He will indeed flee from us when we resist him, but that doesn’t mean he won’t be coming back. In Luke’s account of Christ’s temptation he adds that the devil only left the Savior for a season, writing, “Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.” In order to keep

the devil at bay, one must heed to the next instructions in James' inspired work, draw near to God.

Get Closer To Your Creator

Herein lies the secret to truly resisting the devil, get close to the Almighty. A close relationship with God gives protection to the servant of Christ. The psalmist declared, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold" (Psa. 18:2). The closer we are to God, the further we get from the devil.

Get Clean

Inspiration demands, "cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded." In short, we must drop our sins. One is unable to resist the devil if he or she is unwilling to lay aside their life of sin. Sin will only weigh us down in this important fight. The Hebrews writer gives just such a command when he writes, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1).

Likewise, one can not draw nigh to God without the release of these weights. Isaiah confirmed,

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear (Isa. 59:1-2).

Humble Yourself

The devil loves the prideful, for he himself is prideful. The Word says that elders in the church are not to be new to The Faith because of the danger of pride. Paul informs, “not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.” The devil has gotten into many a man’s heart because of pride, and he knows, as we should, that the Lord hates pride. The wise man taught,

These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an
abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue,
Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises
wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil,
A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows
discord among brethren (Prov. 6:16-19).

Whenever we see a list of things that God hates, our attention should be at its highest.

Consider that the first sin on the list is a prideful look. Pride is a silent killer, that is, people often don’t realize they have it. One can avoid adultery, dodge drunkenness, and reject racism, but if we allow ourselves to permit pride, we have failed to resist the devil. Pride blinds us to our weaknesses. Solomon pens, “Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). Pride puffs us up and leads to a false feeling of spiritual security. With such, our guard is down, and we are no longer on the lookout for that roaring lion who is about to pounce.

Know His Devices

Holy Writ has provided several insights into the tactics of the adversary. From his introduction in the

garden, to his interaction with patient Job, God has revealed to us how the devil operates. Through these methods he has impacted kings (1 Chr. 21:1) apostles (Mat. 16:23; Luke 22:3), and early church members (Acts 5:3). When we know how the enemy operates, we are more capable of defending ourselves.

Jesus told Peter and Andrew, “follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (Mat. 4:19). From that day they went with Christ and learned how to catch men instead of fish. Sadly, Satan is a fisher of men as well. For the last six thousand years he has attempted to bring men and women to his cause, and he has been extremely successful. A good fisherman knows the proper bait to use. Though a successful fisherman, the devil is not very original. Since his debut in the garden he has used just three types of bait: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. In commanding the saints to not fall in love with this world, John warned, “For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:16). Two of his most famous temptation attempts, Eve and Jesus, show the use of each method.

The Lust Of The Flesh

The flesh is one of Satan’s most used tools. So much so that Peter begged, “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). Such was the first temptation attempt upon the Savior. One does not have to wonder why, for the Scriptures reveals that the Lord had fasted for forty days and nights. Satan, with this knowledge,

endeavored to get the Savior to turn stones into bread. The Lord, of course, refused, quoting Scripture as a means of defense. In like manner, the lust of the flesh was in the tool bag of the devil back in Genesis 3 when he successfully tempted Eve to taste of the forbidden fruit. Moses writes, “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food...” (Gen. 3:6). This indicates that one of the factors in her forsaking the command of God was the lust of the flesh.

Beloved, we must understand that no amount of fleshly gratification will ever be worth missing heaven. Moses chose to “suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin” (Heb. 11:25). With this understanding firmly in our hearts, we can resist the lust of the flesh.

The Lust of the Eyes

On his third recorded attempt, the devil moves to tempt Christ by putting something before His eyes. Matthew records, “Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me’” (Mat. 4:8-9). The Lord again deflects the temptation with the Sword of the Spirit, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve’” (Mat. 4:10). Additionally, we see the same bait used on Eve in the Garden, but with a more lucrative ending for Satan. Of the forbidden tree it is said that she thought it “was pleasant to the eyes” (Gen. 3:6). The

world is filled with things that Christian eyes should never glance upon. From the raunchy and raucous films of today, to the modern immodest fashions that fill our streets, Satan has provided a plethora of illicit sights. We must earnestly avoid these.

The Pride Of Life

As mentioned previously, humility is key to resisting Satan. The hook of pride catches many souls. His pursuit in getting Jesus to sin with this tactic failed miserably. Having taken Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple he states, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up lest you dash your foot against a stone’” (Mat. 4:6). The devil’s attack here is aimed at the very deity of Christ. Satan is saying, If you are the Son of God, prove it. This is similar to the mockers that passed by the Lord while He hung for six hours on the cross. Matthew records,

And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, “You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” (Mat. 27:39-43).

The most humble act ever committed was witnessed at Calvary. Not once in his thirty-three years did Jesus ever give in to the sin of pride, or any other sin for that matter. His example serves as proof of our ability to resist the pride of life.

Eve, on the other hand, gave in to pride. Satan hit her in an undefended spot saying, “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). The poisonous words appeared sweet to the naïve woman and she ate. Adam and Eve are perfect examples of the truth taught by the wise man. He writes, “When pride comes, then comes shame” (Prov. 11:2).

Know What He Wants

Satan has desires. Knowing his desires can help us to resist him. Ultimately, he wants us. Jesus told Peter, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31). It is no different for us today.

He Wants to Keep You Out of the Church

The church is the location where God puts all the saved (Acts 2:47). One can not be saved outside of God’s glorious kingdom, and Satan knows this. His desire is to keep us out of this saving body and away from every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3). He is going to throw every obstacle he can in our way. Consider how many individuals have rejected the New Testament pattern because their family wouldn’t approve. How many others have denied themselves salvation because

they refuse to give up a vice? Still others have never entered into that watery grave because of an unlawful marriage they refuse to leave. This is Satan's will. He doesn't care what the excuse is as long as it keeps you out of the blood bought body. It is impossible to resist the devil outside of the one true church.

He Wants to Make Current Members of the Church Worthless

He may not have been able to keep you out of the church, but if he can convince you to be an apathetic member, he has done his job. Too often members find themselves in the same position as the lackadaisical Laodiceans of Revelation 3. The Lord gave a most severe warning when he said, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth" (Rev. 3:15-16). Satan loves a part-time Christian. He is thrilled by the Sunday morning only crowd, and he is elated with members who practice worldliness.

One very important way to resist the god of this world is to engulf yourself in the work of the church. Be there every time the doors are opened. Have your children attend all of the youth functions. Go to singings, potlucks, and door knockings. Show up for work days and Gospel meetings. If your congregation has Vacation Bible School, attend it. Live your life for the church. Jesus made this clear when He commanded, "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Mat. 6:33).

Know What You Need

Make no mistake about it, we are at war with Satan. The New Testament is filled with references of Christians being good soldiers (Phil. 2:25; 2 Tim. 2:3; Phile. 1:2). As soldiers, we need the proper weapons and tools to get the job done.

Study

The 119th psalm details the importance of God's Word. In it we find that the Word is a lamp and a light (Psa. 119:105), as well as something to meditate upon throughout the whole day (Psa. 119:97). It should be no surprise that within this inspired chapter we find a tool for resisting the devil. The sweet psalmist of Israel writes, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You" (Psa. 119:11). There is a direct correlation between our faithfulness and our study habits. Satan is disgusted when we study God's Word. He loves an ignorant Christian. Hosea penned, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). Christians, we should be people of The Book.

Occasionally, this writer meets brethren who are struggling. Perhaps there is a sin that they have failed to overcome or they have become absent in the assembling of the saints. The first question I usually ask them is "how often do you study your Bible." The answer is always, "not enough." Satan preys on the ignorant. Don't let it be you!

Surround Yourself with the Right People

It is always easier to resist the devil when you have others helping you. This is why it is so important to be

a part of a faithful congregation of the Lord's church. In the Lord's church we strengthen and edify each other (1 The. 5:11). Paul instructs us to be careful of the company we keep. He taught, "Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Cor.15:33). The opposite is also true. Wisdom demands,

Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken (Eccl. 4:9-12).

Such a truth can be applied to our fight against the devil. When we encourage the faithful, restore the erring, and snatch the lost from the fire, we are resisting the devil and helping others to do the same.

Conclusion

Satan's job is to destroy men's souls, and he is good at his job. However, when we are on the side of the Lord, Satan can't touch us. Resist the devil and he will take flight.

Works Cited

All Scripture references are from New King James
Version copied from <https://www.biblegateway.com/>
Woods, N. Guy. *Commentary on The Epistle of James*.
Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1965 Print.

The Devil Has A FaceBook Account: (Social Media)

Clifton Angel



Clifton Angel married Lara Savage July 14, 2014. Together, they have two children, David (2 years) and a daughter, Leah (4 months). Their son David was born May 9, 2016. Has been preaching for the Coldwater congregation in Coldwater, Mississippi since May 2010. He has a Bachelor of Science in Engineering from the University of Georgia. He completed the two year program at the Memphis School of Preaching in January 2011, and he completed his Masters in Ministry with Freed-Hardeman University in the spring of 2014. Clifton enjoys learning, preaching, teaching, automotive work, and time with family.

To the Southaven church of Christ membership, her elders, her deacons, and her preachers, thank you for another opportunity to proclaim the truth of God. It is my prayer that this endeavor may bring glory to Him.

Introduction
God created mankind as social beings. In fact, before creating Eve, God first helped Adam to see his need for social interaction and companionship:

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the

name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him (Gen. 2:18-20).

As the earth's population grew, the complexity of social interaction intensified. Miraculously, this complexity was exponentially intensified at the occasion of the Tower of Babel (cf. Gen. 11). Today, *Worldometers* estimates that there are over 7.6 billion people upon the earth ("World Population"). Over one-quarter – yes, over 2 billion – of the world's population can be found active on the social media website known as Facebook ("Facebook now").

February 4, 2004 is considered the birthdate of Facebook ("Facebook - About"), and this author had signed up for an account as early as November 2004. In just fourteen short years, Facebook has grown and evolved into something very different than its beginning. It has changed so much and so quickly that I cannot remember all the details of its simple beginnings. I do remember, that at the time I joined, Facebook was only available to major universities – not even private colleges, such as Freed-Hardeman, had access at that time – and in order to qualify to join, a person had to have a legitimate school email address. I also recall there being no such thing as a "Newsfeed," nor a "Timeline." Also nonexistent were Pages, Groups, Apps, Emoticons, Messenger, Games, Videos, Marketplace, and the list could continue. Think on this: I joined Facebook in 2004; I got my first smart phone in 2011. In 2005, Facebook opened to high school students, and in 2006,

the website opened its virtual doors to people of all ages (“Facebook - About”). Facebook’s current mission claim is: “Give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together” (“Facebook - About”).

Facebook is not the first, nor the only, form of online social media. Before Facebook, there was MySpace, which has been changed – or reduced – to a music-sharing platform. Before MySpace, there were some others that are now obsolete, including Friendster, which has been called “the granddaddy of social networks” (Wood). Since the inception of Facebook, numerous social networking sites have been developed and some maintain current popularity, such as: *YouTube*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, *WhatsApp*, *Snapchat*, *WeChat*, *Facebook Messenger*, and the list could continue (Constine).

I believe there are many, particularly Christians, who are seeking to do good and have a pure and innocent presence in social media. There is no other way, but through Facebook, to be in the same place as 2 billion other people at the same time; therefore, it is practical for Christians to seek to be salt and light in the world of social media. Jesus said to His disciples:

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men,

that they may see your good works, and glorify
your Father which is in heaven (Mat. 5:13-16).

Social media is a legitimate avenue for Christians to season the world and show the Way. Far too often, however, the devil convinces Christians to dilute their salt and hide their lights. For the rest of this discourse, it will be our endeavor to note ways that the devil uses social media for his devices.

Turn Up The Confusion

The devil is a liar. In fact, he is the father of liars (John 8:44). He is crafty (Gen. 3:1; 2 Cor. 11:3), and he is methodical (Eph. 6:11). He is wholly against the God of Heaven and His creation. “God is not the author of confusion” (1 Cor. 14:33); Satan is. Deception is his skill set (Gen. 3:13; Rev. 20:3; Rev. 20:10), and social media is one of his greatest tools, today.

False Information

Information, data, pictures, and videos can be spread via social media at an extremely rapid rate. Being over four years old, it is somewhat dated – note how quickly something can become outdated in the modern-day world of high speed technology – but consider this experiment published by Liron Segev. He reported on a practical experiment performed by a fifth grade teacher. She posted a picture of herself holding a hand-written sign explaining the experiment. Nine days later, Segev published some of the results on his blog. He writes:

The date on the note says 18th of November
2013. At the time of posting on the 27th

November 2013, this picture had been liked 180,730 times and had been shared 2,699 times. What is fascinating is just how quickly the number of people sharing and liking this image rose! When I took the first screen shot of the number, this picture had been liked 180,730 times and had been shared 2,699 times. After exactly 5 minutes after the first screen shot, the number of likes has changed significantly. The number of likes increased by 14,680 and the number of shares has increased by 277 – all in 5 minutes. A further 5 minutes later, the numbers had changed significantly again. The number of Likes increased by 13,517 and the number of shares had increased by 262 – all in the next 5 minutes. A further 5 minutes later, the numbers had changed significantly again. The number of Likes increased by 22,900 and the number of shares has increased by 456 – all in the next 5 minutes. So in 9 days, over 230,000 people have seen this image and this number is rising fast (Segev).

Could you imagine if the image was something that really riled the masses, or a meme – a picture or graphic with a message written on it – that motivated groups with particular agendas. What if it was a piece of information or news story that the majority felt was urgent? What if it was a video that produced immediate shock or stirred emotions? It is my guess that the aforementioned example is on the slow side of sharing speed compared to much of what is shared today.

Now, let us combine the ability for information to be spread at an exponentially rapid rate with the fact that Satan is the father of false information. Not only

has technology enabled our ability to spread information quickly; it has also impeded our desire and diligence to be investigative. Combining these, we now live in a world where false information is spread farther, faster, and many times by advocates of truth. Satan loves nothing more than to complicate the credibility of Christians, and we allow him to do exactly that when we share false information on social media. Many times, said Christians share false information unknowingly and with the intent to help others. However, in the same manner, we have no excuse to be unknowing about something we choose to share. If we do not know with certainty, and we do not want to take the time to investigate it, we do not need to help spread it. Christians must apply to Paul's principle written to the church in Thessalonica: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 The. 5:21). Furthermore, the words of James prove pertinent here: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19).

Flawed Sense of Connection

Let us be reminded of the mission statement of Facebook: "Give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together" ("Facebook - About"). Knowing that there are over 2 billion monthly users of Facebook, that information can be spread more rapidly and to a broader audience than any other avenue, and knowing the Christian commission to carry the Gospel into all the world (Mat. 28:18–20; Mark 16:15–16), it is logical for Christians to take to social

media to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. However, there is a scenario that must be considered.

Many Christian Facebook users are concerned with security of personal information. Therefore, they will only accept people they know as Facebook friends. Furthermore, they can set their privacy levels to protect their pictures and information they post. Next, they may want to filter out friends who post obscene images, videos, information, and language, since Christians must protect what they see and hear (Prov. 4:23–27). Finally, they may want to filter out any Facebook friends who post things they disagree with religiously or politically, and they have the freewill to do so. Also, our Facebook friends have the same freewill; therefore, they may filter us from their friends list when we post something they disagree with religiously or politically. Now, said Christian Facebook users are using social media in a way that satisfies Satan – anything Biblical that is posted is only seen by other Christians who have the same views. The Christian who does this and feels he is evangelizing the world is naive and deceived. It is a false sense of connection.

Facebook is just one avenue that can be used to for evangelism, and some may choose not to use it as an avenue of evangelism. Some may choose to use it primarily for family connections. Some may choose to use it for business. Of course, to be faithful, we cannot stop being salt and light Christians, nor can we neglect our obligation to spread the good news.

Fruitless Methods of Evangelism

The aforementioned scenario certainly could fit under this heading, also. In social media, “fruitless methods of evangelism” are not the genuine and loving attempts of Christians to reach the lost, invite the lost, and teach the lost with little to no response. For, part of our mission is sowing seed, which was often done by the method of scattering (Luke 8:4–15). However, Paul said, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6). We must constantly resist the temptation to become discouraged because we falsely view our mission as causing the increase.

The “fruitless methods of evangelism” to which I am referring may include the spreading of truth, but it is often done in an inefficient, and even sinful, way. If a person considers it evangelism to enter social media with the intent of starting or joining a Bible argument just for the sake of arguing and satisfying his ego, he is using a fruitless method. If a person considers it evangelism to enter social media to “air the dirty laundry” of the Lord’s church, he is using a fruitless method. If a person considers it evangelism to enter social media to “ride his hobbyhorse,” he is using a fruitless method. If a person considers it evangelism to enter social media and share very slanted, and sometimes entirely false, articles and videos from biased news sites, he is using a fruitless method. If a person considers it evangelism to enter social media with more passion for country than for the church, he is using a fruitless method. The devil loves nothing more than for Christians to use such “methods” in social media. In doing so, we allow him to remove

the seasoning ability of our salt and to cover our light with “a bushel” (cf. Mat. 5:15).

Futile Use of Time

“For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14). On December 15, 2016, *Mediakix* – a marketing company for advertising in social media – published an infographic portraying their calculations of how much time the average person will spend on social media during his life: 5 years, 4 months. Their lifespan number was 66 years, assuming that the average person would begin using social media at age 13 and die at age 79. Furthermore, the statistics used for extrapolation were as follows: An average of 40 minutes per day on YouTube, an average of 35 minutes per day on Facebook, an average of 25 minutes per day on Snapchat, an average of 15 minutes per day on Instagram, and an average of 1 minute per day on Twitter. I do not know the full scope of this data; however, my estimation is that these numbers have increased and may be much higher in the United States, compared to many areas in the world. To somewhat put these numbers into perspective, *Mediakix* also provided other common daily activities in the form of lifetime calculations: “Watching TV (7 years, 8 months);” “Eating/drinking (3 years, 5 months);” “Grooming (1 year, 10 months);” “Socializing (1 year, 3 months);” “Doing laundry (6 months)” (“How Much Time”).

Therefore, it is estimated we will spend more time in our lives on social media than we will sustaining our

physical energy (eating and drinking). Christians, are we allowing Satan to distract us with social media? Are we allowing it to waste our most precious commodity – time? Satan would love nothing more than for Christians to choose social media over daily Bible study, for Christians to choose social media over worshipping in spirit and truth, for Christians to choose social media over intimate time with family, or for Christians to choose social media to fill their minds with fear, folly, and gossip. To the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:15–17).

Fleshly Temptations Increased

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

Concerning adultery, Jesus said: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Mat. 5:27–28). From its inception, Facebook has had photographs at the center of its functionality and purpose – hence, the word “face”

in Facebook. Today, video is highly incorporated. While the company forbids pornographic material on its site, it does not prevent immodest photographs and what the world calls “soft porn” but incites the very same feelings, desires, and sins. Incidentally, the word “fornication” is translated from the root word (*porneia*) that has also been transliterated into the word “porn.” Uncleanness and lasciviousness fit into the same realm. Only God knows the amount of sexual immorality that has taken place via social media sites.

Idolatry and witchcraft certainly have a dominant presence in social media. Dare we say social media has become the idolatry of many? Furthermore, the word translated “witchcraft” includes in it the practice of using illicit drugs, which can be found in abundance in social media.

“Hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, (and) envyings” may be the sins with the greatest presence and prominence in social media. Unfortunately, many Christians readily commit such sins in social media and many times claim to be performing such actions – which they obviously do not consider sinful – for the cause of Christ. On July 27, 2016, I prepared and preached a brief devotional, which I titled “Forgotten Works of the Flesh.” In it, I used various translations and dictionaries to summarize them in these six words: “Enmity, Strife, Jealousy, Wrath, Faction, Division.” Two of the points I made concerning these were: (1) “They all lead to hell, right along with adultery, fornication, murder, idolatry, and drunkenness, if one does not repent (Gal. 5:19-21),”

and (2) “Too many Christians (including myself) forget about the sinfulness of these actions and attitudes” (Angel). Again, we need to hear the words of James, and this time let us go a little further: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (James 1:19–20).

The works of the flesh are prevalent and praised in the social media world. Let us not allow the devil to entice us into falling prey to these sins.

Tear Down The Home

While the church has been in the mind of God from eternity, the home has existed upon the earth longer than the church. Satan knows that home-life has a major impact on the rest of one’s life. He’s been attacking the home since the beginning and social media is a modern and real platform where he is actively warring against the home. Let us consider some ways the devil is actively attacking the home in social media.

Redefine Marriage

God designed man and woman. God designed marriage. He knows what is best (cf. Gen. 1-2). “Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4, ASV). Christians know this. Christians who try to refute it or argue against it are not true followers of Christ. However, non-Christians have used social media – and many other avenues, such as television – as a platform to push their redefinitions of marriage, and they have done so aggressively and

somewhat “successfully.” I am afraid we allowed adultery and fornication before marriage to become the societal norm prior to the existence of social media; however, since the origin of social media, homosexual fornication has been pushed militantly to be accepted as a societal norm.

Christians must continue to teach the truth about marriage and not succumb to the devil’s tactics of desensitizing us to sins. We must not become desensitized to sins like adultery, cohabitation, unscriptural remarriages, homosexual practices, and the list could continue. Jesus said, “Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mat. 19:4–6, ASV).

Revilement of Family

How many parents take to Facebook and other social media sites to complain about, belittle, embarrass, and treat as a burden their children? I am sure most Christians would never intentionally harm their children; however, they harm themselves and their influence by treating their children as burdens instead of blessings. “Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward” (Psa. 127:3).

Perhaps more frequent, and worse, than parents’ complaints on social media about their children are

spouses' complaints, mistreatment, and belittlement of one another in the public arena. "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life" (Prov. 31:10–12). "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her" (Prov. 31:28). "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Eph. 5:33).

Removal of Presence

Paul wrote, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). I am convinced that a great amount of sin is the result of fathers not having a proper presence in the lives of their children. I am convinced that this very real epidemic in our society can result in rebellion against those in authority (including the authority of God's Word), which can account for false teachings, murders, crime, and the list could continue, and rebellion against the natural order (actually governed by God's authority), which can account for debauchery, polygamy, homosexuality, bestiality, transgender identity, and the list could continue.

Let us now consider the words of Marvin Charles in his address recorded in the Congressional Record on June 7, 2016:

I believe – from personal experience – that the biggest problem facing our nation today is not

crime, drugs and alcohol, or gang violence. These are just the results of a larger problem, which is fatherlessness. So many of the problems in our communities today are direct results of fatherlessness.

Far too many of our young people have not had strong, responsible fathers engaged in their lives. As a result, too many go off the rails. They begin committing crimes, abusing drugs and alcohol, dropping out of school, and running away from home. Another common side effect is teenage pregnancies and out-of-wedlock births. The National Fatherhood Initiative has identified fatherlessness as the root cause of \$100 billion a year in taxpayer costs. A few statistics:

90 percent of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes.

85 percent of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes.

85 percent of all youths in prisons grew up in a fatherless home.

80 percent of rapists motivated by displaced anger come from fatherless homes.

75 percent of all adolescents in chemical abuse centers come from fatherless homes.

71 percent of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes.

70 percent of juveniles in state-operated institutions come from fatherless homes.

63 percent of youth suicides are individuals from fatherless homes (Charles).

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath” (Eph. 6:4). Fathers, be present, even when you are not absent. If we are not careful, through social

media and other outlets, we can be absent, even when we are present.

Restriction of Discipline

I suppose if someone would have photographed or videoed the disciplinary measures I received as a child and published it in social media, it would go viral. For those not aware of this terminology, it simply refers to something – a photograph, a video, a song, etc. – that is “circulated rapidly and widely from one Internet user to another” (“Viral”). My supposition is because many react and respond with more emotion when something is made visual. Some would spread it with emotions of agreement and thankfulness that parents are disciplining their children in a such a fashion – teaching them the seriousness of right and wrong. Others would have emotions of anger, hostility, and hatred toward my parents and sadness for me (the child) because they do not care for the things of God, for the context of the discipline, nor for the outcome of their opinion. Social media provides a broad and expedient voice for the individual. Many individuals believe their opinion is authoritative – that it should be the accepted norm or final word on a matter. Unfortunately, those who are passionate enough about their feelings and not the authority of God, could make the lives of many godly parents very miserable by suggesting that such discipline is child abuse, by reporting said videos and photographs and applying a spin that simply does not exist, and by pushing for legislation that would make it illegal for parents to discipline their children in a godly manner.

God knows His creation better than any human being. We need to heed His Word concerning discipline. “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Prov. 13:24). “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Prov. 22:15). “Withhold not correction from the child; For if thou beat him with the rod, he will not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from Sheol” (Prov. 23:13–14, ASV). “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” (Prov. 29:15).

Temper The Church

The word “temper” is a peculiar word. In noun form, it can be used to refer to a “fit of rage” or a moment of “composure.” In verb form, it can be used to refer to the act of strengthening or hardening a material, or it can be used to refer to the act of weakening, or decreasing the influence, of someone or something (“Temper”). The devil’s effort to temper the church is to seek to decrease its influence for good.

If the devil can succeed in **turning up the confusion** for the individual Christian, causing him to spread **false information**, to have a **flawed sense of connection**, to use **fruitless methods of evangelism**, to make **futile use of time**, and increase his **fleshly temptations**, he has already succeeded in **tempering the church**. Furthermore, if the devil can succeed in **tearing down the home by redefining marriage**, by enticing one to participate in **the revilement of family**,

by a family's **removal of presence** from one another, and by the ungodly **restriction of discipline**, he has already succeeded in **tempering the church**. Of course, the church that Jesus built will not be stopped. However, we must be aware that Satan will stop at nothing to lower her faithful membership and lessen her influence for good as much as he possibly can.

The fact that we are the church and that the world constantly has its eyes on the church must motivate us to avoid the enticements of the devil. Being the salt of the earth and the light of the world requires us to maintain our reputations and control our reactions. To the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote:

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:8-11).

God has put the church on display before the world and before heaven. That is you and me. Do we strive to live and act, in all arenas, including social media, in such a way that God will not be ashamed as He puts us on display to the world and to heaven?

Conclusion

To this author, it is not a fearful thing for the devil to have a Facebook account. Rather, it is my concern that the devil has Facebook **accounts**. In other words, he is in control of the content produced and spread by the majority of the 2 billion-plus accounts on Facebook. Even greater is my concern that many Christians are deceived into allowing him to use them in this very same fashion. Will Christians allow the devil to use them as ministers of evil? Will Christians be sober, vigilant, and steadfastly resist Satan in social media? While they were written in entirely different contexts, the principles in the following words of Paul are very applicable to our study: “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11); “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:10–11); “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Works Cited

- Angel, Clifton. “Forgotten Works of the Flesh.” 27 July 2016. Coldwater Church of Christ: Coldwater, MS.
- “Facebook - About.” *Facebook*. Web. 2 April 2018. < <https://www.facebook.com/pg/facebook/about/>>.
- Charles, Marvin. “Congressional Testimony to Representative Dave Reichert’s Law Enforcement Task Force.” *Congressional Record*. 114th Congress, 2nd Session. Vol. 162, No. 89, pos 183–184. Published June 7, 2016. Web. 9 April 2018.

-
- <<https://www.congress.gov/crec/2016/06/07/CREC-2016-06-07.pdf>>.
- Constine, Josh. "Facebook now has 2 billion monthly users... and responsibility." *Tech Crunch*. Web. 3 April 2018. <<https://techcrunch.com/2017/06/27/facebook-2-billion-users/>>.
- "The History of Social Networking: How It All Began!" 1st *Web Designer*. Web. 2 April 2018. <<https://1stwebdesigner.com/history-of-social-networking/>>.
- Holy Bible*, American Standard Version of 1901. Accordance Bible Software, Version 11.0.3: OakTree Software, Inc., 2014. Electronic.
- Holy Bible*, King James Version with Strong's Numbers. Accordance Bible Software, Version 11.0.3: OakTree Software, Inc., 2014. Electronic. All references are to this version unless otherwise noted.
- "How Much Time Do We Spend On Social Media?" *Mediakix*. Web. 9 April 2018. <<http://mediakix.com/2016/12/how-much-time-is-spent-on-social-media-lifetime/#gs.66TcZTo>>.
- "Temper." *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*. Oxford University Press, 2018. Web. 3 April 2018. <<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/temper>>.
- Segev, Liron. "How quickly can a photo spread on the internet?" *TheTechieGuy*. Web. 3 April 2018. <<https://thetechieguy.com/how-quickly-can-a-photo-spread-on-the-internet/>>.
- "Viral." *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*. Oxford University Press, 2018. Web. 9 April 2018. <<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/viral>>.
- Wood, Jenny. "Timeline: Social Media." *Infoplease*. Web. 3 April 2018. <<https://www.infoplease.com/science/timeline-social-media>>.
- "World Population." *Worldometers*. Web. 2 April 2018. <<http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/>>.

The Devil Is A Social Drinker

Wayne Rodgers



Wayne has been preaching the Gospel since 1996, working with congregations in Georgia, Florida, and now Mississippi, serving the Nesbit church of Christ as her minister and directing the *Standing In The Gap Lectureship*. He is also a part-time instructor of the Fishers of Men ministry teaching person-to-person evangelism. Wayne is married to Cindy and together they have two sons, Kris and Matthew.

The first thought that comes to my mind when I hear that title is that “social drinking” is, in fact, an unsocial blight upon our society and even within the realm of Christendom. The woes and horrors that have been brought upon every society in man’s history have been devastating.

I remember as a young preacher getting in my hands copies of three important, well-researched, and scholarly-written pieces of material that truly helped me as a preacher. These also helped me tremendously as a Christian encouraging others to abstain from such evils as beverage alcohol. These materials were “*Social Drinking: Unjustified Unsocial Unwise Unscriptural*” by Garland Elkins and Robert R. Taylor, Jr., W. D. Jeffcoat’s research book: “*The Bible and Social Drinking*,” and also “*Bible Wines or The Laws of Fermentation and Wines of the Ancients*” by William Patton. These materials along with

many others have helped in understanding the Social-Drinking Devil that tempts so many in our society and in the church of our Lord.

Statistical Analysis Of The Problem Of Social Drinking

As with most statistics, there are a number of sources and a lot of numbers and figures which most often get glossed over, but these certainly tell the tale of society's woes brought on by alcoholic consumption.

Alcohol poisoning kills six people every day. Of those, 76% are adults ages 35-64, and three of every four people killed by alcohol poisoning are men (Bernstein).

Alcohol-impaired driving accounts for more than 30% of all driving fatalities each year (NIAAA)

In 2016, 10,497 people died in drunk driving crashes – one every 50 minutes – and 290,000 were injured in drunk driving crashes (NHTSA).

An estimated 88,000 people (approximately 62,000 men and 26,000 women) die from alcohol-related causes annually, making alcohol the third leading preventable cause of death in the United States. The first is tobacco, and the second is poor diet and physical inactivity.

Each year, approximately 5,000 young people under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking; this includes about 1,900 deaths from motor vehicle crashes, 1,600 as a result of homicides, 300 from suicide, as well as hundreds from other injuries such as falls, burns, and drownings (NIAAA).

Kids who start drinking young are seven times more likely to be in an alcohol-related motor vehicle accident (Hingson online).

Excessive drinking cost the nation almost \$250 billion in 2010. Two of every \$5 of the total cost was paid by government, and three quarters of the costs were due to binge drinking. Several evidence-based strategies can help reduce excessive drinking and related costs, including increasing alcohol excise taxes, limiting alcohol outlet density, and commercial host liability (Sacks).

What is considered a “standard drink”? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: In the United States, a standard drink contains 0.6 ounces (14.0 grams or 1.2 tablespoons) of pure alcohol. Generally, this amount of pure alcohol is found in 12-ounces of beer (5% alcohol content), 8-ounces of malt liquor (7% alcohol content), 5-ounces of wine (12% alcohol content), and 1.5-ounces of 80-proof (40% alcohol content) distilled spirits or liquor (e.g., gin, rum, vodka, whiskey).

The CDC gives a list of both short-term health risks, as well as long-term health risks:

Short-Term Health Risks:

- Injuries, such as motor vehicle crashes, falls, drownings, and burns.
- Violence, including homicide, suicide, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence.
- Alcohol poisoning, a medical emergency that results from high blood alcohol levels.
- Risky sexual behaviors, including unprotected

sex or sex with multiple partners. These behaviors can result in unintended pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.

- Miscarriage and stillbirth or fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs) among pregnant women.

Long-Term Health Risks:

- High blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, liver disease, and digestive problems.
- Cancer of the breast, mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, and colon.
- Learning and memory problems, including dementia and poor school performance.
- Mental health problems, including depression and anxiety.
- Social problems, including lost productivity, family problems, and unemployment.
- Alcohol dependence, or alcoholism. (CDC).

More statistics:

Alcohol kills more teenagers than all other drugs combined. It is a factor in the three leading causes of death among 15 to 24-year-olds: accidents, homicides and suicides.

Youth who drink are 7.5 times more likely to use other illegal drugs and fifty times more likely to use cocaine than young people who never drink. One survey found that 32% of the heavy drinkers over 12 were also illegal drug users.

In 2005, 6.6% of the US population aged 12 or older, or 16 million people, reported heavy

drinking (binge drinking on at least five days of the past thirty days).

Of the 3.9 million Americans who received treatment for a substance abuse problem in 2005, 2.5 million of them were treated for alcohol use.

Alcohol-related traffic deaths in the US were 12,998 in 2007. This is more than three times as many American soldiers who died in combat in the first six years of the Iraq war.

There are 1.4 million drunk driving arrests in the US every year.

A US Department of Justice study found that as many as 40% of violent crimes occur under the influence of alcohol.

In 2005–2006, there were 187,640 National Health System alcohol-related hospital admissions in England.

There were 6,570 deaths in England in 2005 from causes directly linked to alcohol use. In 2006, alcohol-related deaths in England rose to 8,758. This amounts to an annual increase of 7% from the previous year.

According to one study, of the 490 million people in the European Union, more than 23 million are dependent on alcohol.

In Europe, alcohol contributes to nearly one in ten of all cases of illness and premature deaths each year.

39% of all traffic deaths involved alcohol in 2005.

40% of violent crimes occur under the influence of alcohol.

The Devil's media team, advertisers, and marketing gurus have for years only shown us the front of the billboards hiding the ugly rear. Billboards are positioned in such a way that as one drives by them one can only see the front. The commercials that show a mountain stream on a hot day with best friends having a good time fails to tell the rest of the story where one of those friends is developing alcoholic liver disease, which might include an enlarged liver, alcoholic hepatitis, or even cirrhosis of the liver (O'Shea 51). The advertisements of game day shows only a good time watching with friends cheering on a favorite team, but fails to show the real losing team, the family who was hit by the driver who was impaired because of his drinking alcohol. The billboards fail to tell of the after-work outing for drinks just to relax which turned into an adulterous affair between co-workers and the home and family destroyed as a result. The devil's advertising fails to give the rest of the story of a life-long grieving at the loss of a loved one who after a few drinks missed the curve and hit the light pole or a tree.

Statistics tell the facts, but they are vague as to the specifics of each of the lives affected in our society by what has been termed "social drinking." The problem is that it is not social at all as Elkins and Taylor concur:

Social drinking opens a deadly door that leads Down – Way Down – a long corridor. Down that corridor will be found heavy drinking, problem drinking, alcoholism, poverty, social ostracism, loss of health, and ultimately the damnation of precious souls. Beloved readers, to ply open that door is unjustified; it is unsocial; it is unwise; it is unscriptural (Elkins and Taylor 12).

The woes which have resulted upon our society of those who consume beverage alcohol show very simply that social drinking is not social at all. Nothing good comes from it. Society has picked up on this and has acknowledged its devastation. Yet, instead of deeming it as sinful activity, it simply labels it as a disease. Louis Rushmore in his exposition of the topic makes the statements:

Far from being hailed as sinful, in our society, alcoholism is said to be a disease. If so, it is the only disease that is taxed by the governments. It is the only disease that typically leads to auto accidents, divorce, murder and rape. It is the only disease for which one can be fined for having too much of it. It is the only disease gladly accepted by its victim. It is the only disease that employs people for its manufacture. It is the only disease regulated by government; and, it is the only disease allowed or disallowed in a community by popular vote. Alcohol[ism] is the only disease bottled and sold!

Various national, state and local governments have found cause against alcohol to legislate against it. Alcohol is a dangerous drug. Alcohol costs more than it earns in tax dollars. Alcohol is associated with crime. Alcohol is a safety hazard. Alcohol is poisonous and otherwise harmful to one's health (Rushmore 17).

W. D. Jeffcoat states:

...it should be observed that the reason alcoholic beverages are harmful to the human body, even in small amounts, is because ethyl alcohol is poisonous...In fact, the term commonly applied

to the abnormal conditions produced by alcohol, “intoxication,” is derived from the Latin term *toxicum*, meaning “poison” (Jeffcoat 116).

While so many outside the church and even the realm of Christendom see social drinking for what it is, the saddest woe of all is to see so many of our own brethren who attempt justification for beverage alcohol.

Are We Being Mocked And Deceived?

The wise man Solomon writes that “wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Prov. 20:1, KJV). Society and even the church is being mocked and deceived by the devil and beverage alcohol. When we consider all the statistics mentioned previously, how foolish would we be to engage in such even if it were not sinful behavior? It should be that which is so obvious to run from, yet so many are drawn to it as with those warned of the world by the apostle John:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

James also concludes by inspiration:

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I

am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren (James 1:12-16).

The following verses were given in a chart entitled, 54 Bible References On The Evils of Drinking (source unknown):

And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem. And Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, And he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; And Canaan shall be his servant (Gen. 9:20-27).

And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters. And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: Come, let us make

our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day. And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Benammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day (Gen. 19:30-38).

And the Lord spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses (Lev. 10:8-11).

He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried (Num. 6:3).

And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard (Deut. 21:20).

Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing...But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death...And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware. She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe (Judg. 13:4, 7, 31-14).

And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light. But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. And it came to pass about ten days after, that the Lord smote Nabal, that he died (1 Sam. 25:36-38).

And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house (2 Sam. 11:13).

Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is

merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? be courageous, and be valiant. And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him up upon his mule, and fled (2 Sam. 13:28-29).

In the twenty and sixth year of Asa king of Judah began Elah the son of Baasha to reign over Israel in Tirzah, two years. And his servant Zimri, captain of half his chariots, conspired against him, as he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza steward of his house in Tirzah. And Zimri went in and smote him, and killed him, in the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his stead (1 Kings 16:8-10).

And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord. And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the Lord, Even by the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the battle? And he answered, Thou. Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty two: and after them he numbered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand. And they went out at noon. But Benhadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him. And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Benhadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Samaria. And he said, Whether they be come out for peace,

take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive. So these young men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them. And they slew every one his man: and the Syrians fled; and Israel pursued them: and Benhadad the king of Syria escaped on an horse with the horsemen. And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter (1 Kings 20:13-21).

In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him: When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore days. And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace... On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him...(Est. 1:3-22).

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise (Prov. 20:1).

He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich (Prov. 21:17).

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again (Prov. 23:29-35).

It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more (Prov. 31:4-7).

I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life (Eccl. 2:3).

Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness (Eccl. 10:17).

Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands (Isa. 5:11-12).

Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink (Isa. 5:22).

And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to morrow we shall die (Isa. 22:13).

Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine... The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet... But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment (Isa. 28:1, 3, 7).

Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant (Isa. 56:12).

And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of

Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters... The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me... Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever (Jer. 35:5-8, 14, 19).

And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king... But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself... Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse (Dan. 1:5, 8, 16).

Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had

taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone (Dan. 5:1-4).

And this is the writing that was written, mene, mene, tekel, upharsin. This is the interpretation of the thing: mene; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. tekel; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. peres; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians (Dan. 5:25-28).

For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the Lord. Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart (Hosea 4:10-11).

And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink (Joel 3:3).

Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink (Amos 4:1).

Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people (Hab. 2:5).

Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory (Hab. 2:15-16).

But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mat. 24:48-51).

For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15).

But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken (Luke 12:45).

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares (Luke 21:34).

Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying (Rom. 13:13).

It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak (Rom. 14:21).

But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat (1 Cor. 5:11).

Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:10).

Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:21).

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous (1 Tim. 3:3).

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre (1 Tim. 3:8).

Having a Biblical vantage point from these verses, it is unlikely that we would walk away and think, “I think I need a drink of alcohol.” Rather, we would agree to abstain and reject every form and appearance of evil (1 The. 5:22). Deception is the tool of choice for the devil.

Some Seek To Justify The Use Of Beverage Alcohol

There are some common arguments used to justify the use of beverage alcohol. The Bible is clearly against getting wasted, hammered, stumbling-drunk, etc., as seen in the following verses:

“For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles — when we walked in lewdness, lusts, **drunkenness**, revelries, **drinking parties**, and abominable idolatries” (1 Peter 4:3, NKJV, emphasis mine).

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, **drunkenness**, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21, KJV).

This study is about the devil’s attempt to justify “social drinking.” This would be the moderate, non-medicinal consumption of alcoholic beverages. Consider the following attempts at justification for social drinking:

Wine Always Means Intoxicating:

Roman and Greek writers of antiquity like Aristotle, Athenaeus, and Pliny all testify to the fact that “unfermented wine existed in antiquity.”

The Greek term oinos, rendered “wine,” has been employed by ancient secular writers in several ways. (1) Anacreon, who wrote in 500 B.C.,

said, “Only males tread the grapes, setting free the wine (oinos).” (2) Varro spoke of “gathering wine.” (3) Cato referred to “hanging wine,” or grapes on the vine. (4) Columella spoke of “unintoxicating wine.” (5) Celsus said, “Gather the berries of the myrtle, and from them express wine.” (6) Ovid said, “And scarce can the grapes contain the wine they have within.” (7) Ibycus stated, “And newborn clusters teem with wine, beneath the shadowy foilage of the vine.” It can be seen, therefore, that during this early period, juice in the grape was referred to as wine. In fact, the Hebrew term yayin and the Greek term oinos were general terms in those early days (Jeffcoat 26-27).

Internal evidence (from within Scripture) evidences the same. Comparisons between Psalm 104:15-16 and Habakkuk 2:15 or in the New Testament where thirty-four times oinos is rendered “wine,” such as in John 2:10 and Ephesians 5:18 where the same words “wine” are found. The context must be used to bear out the meaning of the generic words used like yayin of the Old Testament and similarly oinos of the New Testament.

There Was No Way To Halt The Fermentation Process In Bible Times:

Actually, the ancients had several ways in which the fermentation process could be halted. **Boiling** was used to prevent fermentation. When the water was evaporated, a syrup or paste was left behind with its sugar intact. Later, the paste would be mixed with water making a sweet juice. **Filtration** was another method

used in the prevention of fermentation. “By filtration, the gluten or yeast is separated from the juice of the grape.” In this process, the elimination of yeast from the juice halts the process. Another method used was **Sulphur fumigation**. This “operation consists of partly absorbing oxygen, whereby the elimination of the yeasty particles are prevented.” Another way was to **exclude the air** by pouring into bottles, sealing them, and **reducing the temperature** by submerging them in water for the winter (Patton 21-36).

A Little Drink Here or There:

Some have advocated for social drinking simply by claiming that they see nothing wrong with a little drink here or there. Jeffcoat quotes Irving Fisher saying, “so-called moderate drinking merely means moderate intoxication” (Jeffcoat 101). Numerous studies conclude that “within two or three minutes after a few sips of whiskey or beer are swallowed, alcohol can be detected in the blood” (Jeffcoat 100). The quickness with which alcohol reaches the bloodstream enough to be detected in a blood test clearly shows its effect is immediate upon the nervous system of the body. Even before it might be felt physically or mentally one is affected near immediately. Fisher quoted by Jeffcoat goes on to say, “A mild drinker denies that he is drunk, if he does not stagger, but a man who has drunk one glass of beer is one-glass-of-beer-drunk” (Jeffcoat 101). While the effect is immediate, consider the justification, “just a little drink here or there.”

Christians are with an “apostolic imperative” told

not to drink (Taylor 110). Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus how they should “walk” as Christians:

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God (Eph. 5:15-21).

The context is about walking diligently and accurately. He then gives a series of comparisons such as “fools... wise... unwise... understanding... drunk... filled...” etc., including also, the results of drinking wine leading to riotous activity (excess, KJV) versus being filled with the Spirit leading to “speaking,” “giving thanks,” and “submitting.” The whole passage is about “understanding what the will of the Lord is.” This is difficult to do when one’s understanding has been impaired or dulled from drinking alcohol. The word “drunk” in the text is translated also as “drunken” in Luke 12:45. It is the word *methuskō* according to Strong’s (Strong’s 3182). W.E. Vine makes a distinction between the words *methuskō* and *methuō*. The latter is translated “drunk” or “drunken” in verses like Matthew 24:49 and Acts 2:15, which means “being intoxicated” and in the passive voice as in John 2:10 means “being filled.” The former *methuskō* is an inceptive verb,

marking the process of the state expressed in the root word. It is defined then as “to make drunk, or to grow drunk, to become intoxicated” as seen in Ephesians 5:18, Luke 12:45, and 1 Thessalonians 5:7 (Vine 318). This verse illustrates for us what Irving Fisher spoke of as one-drink-drunk because he is speaking of the process of becoming intoxicated. This is far from pure or holy Christian behavior, because we are to “walk as children of light...proving what is acceptable unto the Lord...walking circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise... understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:8-18; cf. Rom. 12:1-2).

Jesus turned “water to wine” in John 2:

Many assume that the word “wine” used in Scripture always denotes fermented or alcoholic wine. But, that simply is not the case. The word “wine” is represented by ten Hebrew and three Greek words (Rushmore 22).

Louis Rushmore continues: Sometimes wine means first fruits which are ripe (Num. 18:12-13). It can mean the cluster of grapes (Isa. 65:8). Wine can refer to raisins (Hosea 3:1, ASV). Sometimes wine equals the winepress (Neh. 13:15). Wine can be the pure juice of the grape (Isa. 16:10; Prov. 3:10). It can also refer to alcoholic wine (Gen. 9:21). The context is the overriding factor determining the definition of both the Greek and English words for wine.

With that in mind, consider John 2:1-11:

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:

And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

While the English word typically implies alcohol, this is not the case in the Greek language. The word for “wine” oinos is a general term that can mean either fermented or unfermented wine. As studied previously, Ephesians 5:18 gives an instance where the word oinos is used and obviously refers to fermented wine. Whereas, in John 2, the context of the passage and the character of Jesus shows us that this is unfermented. Allen Webster in his tract *Did Jesus Make Intoxicating Wine* asks some common sense questions when it comes to examining

the character of Jesus as called into question if “wine” is fermented in John 2:

Would Jesus do something that would harm His body – or assist others in harming theirs? Consider 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. It contains a poison (ethyl alcohol) which causes death unless sufficiently diluted. Brain cells die with each drink. Would Jesus drink?

Would Jesus do something that might cause Him to lose control of His mind – or others to lose control of theirs? His apostle wrote, “neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom. 6:13). Intoxicating wine intoxicates! It is a depressant drug. Can you picture Jesus handing out little packs of cocaine or marijuana cigarettes?

Would Jesus do something that might cause Him to harm others while under its influence – or put others in that position? He told us, “neither give place to the devil” (Eph. 4:27); and, “as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

Would Jesus do something that would be a stumbling block to others, or set an example which could be harmful to others (cf. Mat. 5:13-16)? One does not have to look far to see the evil that alcohol causes in people’s lives. A drunken coal miner was converted and spoke out for Christ. A friend tried to trap him by asking, “Do you believe that Jesus turned water into wine?” “I certainly do!” the believer replied. “In my

home, He has turned wine into furniture, decent clothes, and food for my children!" Christians are forbidden to hurt their influence (1 Cor. 8:9; 10:23, 31).

Would Jesus intoxicate another? If so, He violated the Old Testament: "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness" (Hab. 2:15). Yet, the Bible says that Jesus was without sin (Heb. 4:15). If Jesus made intoxicating wine and gave it to others, He sinned. If He sinned, He cannot be our Savior, for a sinner cannot be a sacrifice for sin (Romans 3). The wrong interpretation of John 2 impugns the character of Jesus! (adapted for manuscript, Webster tract).

While some continue in their justification for drinking in moderation by claiming the texts "good wine" and "well drunk" allow such acceptance (John 2:10), such cannot be found. In regard to "good wine," many assume it must be intoxicating because it is characterized as better. The ruler of the feast calls the bridegroom into question concerning the normal order of things concerning the "wine" noticing the difference in quality (John 2:9-10). Ancient historians concur that the better wine was that which was prior to fermentation because it was pure, not having begun the decaying or rotting process, where the sugars are destroyed and begin the fermenting processes.

The phrase "well drunk" simply refers to being filled regardless of the drink. "*methuō*" as mentioned above also could be translated as "filled," "saturated," or "satisfied." We might read the verses as: When the master

of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine... And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests are satisfied, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!" (Cooper 29). Much of the confusion has to do with poor translations of these words, such as found in the New International Version. Consider also six waterpots which have been estimated from one hundred to one hundred eighty gallons of wine. If alcoholic wine, then Jesus made available for the wedding party six full-size kegs which is the equivalent of nearly 2,000 cans of beer. Supposing even that wines in ancient cultures were not as strong in quantity of alcohol as a modern alcoholic drink that is still a staggering, unprecedented picture of our Lord supplying such for this event (1 Cor. 5:11; Gal. 5:21). Would not our Lord's sinless nature be called into question (Heb. 4:15)? How could He be our Savior?

Patton asks the question: "Wherein was the miracle?"

We read in Matthew 15:34 that Christ fed four thousand persons, and in Mark 6:38 that He fed five thousand persons, in each case upon a few loaves and fishes, taking up seven and twelve baskets of fragments. In these cases, Christ did instantly what, by the laws of nature which He had ordained, it would have taken months to grow and ripen into wheat. So, in the case of the wine, Christ, by supernatural and superhuman rapidity, produced that marvelous conversion of water into the "pure blood of the grape" which, by His own established law of nature, takes places annually through a series of months, as the vine draws up the water from the earth, and

transmutes it into the pure and unfermented juice found in the rich, ripe clusters on the vine.

In Psalm 104:14,15, we read: "...that He may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man..." Here the juice of the grape which is produced out of the earth is called wine. This wine was made by the direct law of God – that law by which the vine draws water from the earth and transmutes it into pure juice in the clusters (Patton 76).

Patton also references early church Fathers, such as Augustine and Chrysostom, and historians who considered the same. Quoting a French chemist, Patton wrote: "Nature never forms spiritous liquors; she rots the grape upon the branch, but it is art which converts the juice into (alcoholic) wine." Dr. Henry Monroe, in his Lecture on Alcohol, says: "Alcohol is nowhere to be found in any produce of nature; was never created by God; but is essentially an artificial thing prepared by man through the destructive process of fermentation" (Patton 76-77).

A Little Wine For Your Stomach's Sake

Some advocate for social drinking by using the argument that Paul told Timothy to "drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (1 Tim. 5:23). Clearly, Paul has to tell Timothy to do something he has not been doing (partaking of wine). Timothy has been abstaining from such. The water was likely the source of his ailments; therefore, Paul would tell Timothy to use a "little wine." The problem with this argument is that it has nothing to do with social drinking. In fact, quite the

opposite, because Timothy who has been encouraged to “be an example to the believers (many of whom likely had participated in idolatrous worship involving the drinking of alcohol) in purity” and to teach men and women to be of a certain character that they might lead in the church (1 Tim. 4:12; 3:1ff). It is also possible that this wine was filtered or strained, at least weakening it, but it is likely even a reference to the actual filtration process rendering it “unintoxicating.”

Jeffcoat refers to Pliny who mentions in his writing “a wine in good repute, aduminon – that is, without power, without strength. He states that the wines most adapted are “for all the sick...most useful when its forces have been broken by the strainer” (Jeffcoat 97-98).

Deacons Are Allowed

1 Timothy 3:8 “Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre” is the verse in question. Paul had stated earlier of “bishops” that they must be “not given to wine” (verse 3). “Likewise...” enjoins the qualifications together in a way as to encourage the highest quality of men serving in these offices (verse 8). The argument given is that because the word “much wine” is used concerning the deacon, then it must follow that they are able to drink alcohol a little, whereas the elders would not be able to drink any.

First, there are three words or phrases used in describing the man qualified to serve as a bishop: “vigilant,” “sober,” and “not given to wine.” Each word has its own reminder of a life that abstains, is of sound

mind, and is not even near wine. The difference is only slight as seen in the English with the word “much.” However, consider the original language, *prosechō*, which meant to “hold the mind to, pay attention to, apply oneself to, to give heed to” (Strong’s 4337). In the original, it does not give the idea that one has permission to imbibe in it. Consider the English, as well, a similar phrase is used by Solomon, “Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish...” (Eccl. 7:17). Of course, it would not be acceptable to be over a little wickedness, nor is it okay to be given to a little wine. In Romans 6:13, Paul wrote: “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body.” Certainly, we can see the folly in the idea that as long as sin does not completely consume our lives, it is okay? Both qualifications to bishops and deacons, likewise, give a command to abstain from alcohol.

In 1 Timothy 3:11, wives were also told to be “sober,” which comes from *nēphalios* meaning “vigilant,” “circumspect,” and “temperate;” having to do with abstaining from wine (Strong’s 3524). This is a common exhortation seen in Scripture: “be sober” (1 The. 5:6, 8; 1 Tim. 3:2-3, 8; 1 Peter 1:13; Titus 2:3). Alcohol robs one of such sobriety and of a sound mind.

What About Our Influence?

Jesus taught His disciples saying:

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor

do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven” (Mat. 5:13-16).

What kind of influence can we be for that which is good if we contend that social drinking is acceptable to God. It is obvious the world sees the hypocrisy in that kind of thinking; why can't we? Answer the following true/false questions:

(T/F) Drinking does not damage my reputation or influence.

(T/F) I can convincingly talk to a person about Christ and His church with an alcoholic beverage in my hand.

(T/F) My interest and involvement in the church is as strong now as it was before I began to drink.

(T/F) I have become more generous in my giving to the church and other good causes since I began drinking.

(T/F) When Jesus returns, I would feel perfectly comfortable meeting Him with an alcoholic beverage in my hand.

If we are honest with ourselves in this assessment, we soon realize there is no way that we can be pleasing unto God drinking alcohol. Again, it is “unsocial” and unacceptable before God!

Other Considerations

The Levitical priests of the Old Testament were commanded to abstain from consuming alcohol under

penalty of death (Lev. 10:8-11). As Christians, we are a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:5, 9). We should consider the warning, as well. Civil leaders were also forbidden to drink alcohol lest they pervert judgment (Prov. 31:4-5). Jews were not allowed to look upon wine in its intoxicating state (Prov. 23:31). Drunkenness was punishable by death (Deut. 21:20-21). Alcohol contributes to poverty (Prov. 23:21). Drinking alcohol demonstrates a lack of wisdom (Prov. 20:1). Jews were not to be in the company of those drinking alcohol (Prov. 23:20). Alcohol leads to other immorality (Prov. 23:29-35). Alcohol has caused God’s servants to err (Gen. 9:21-22; Isa. 28:7). Daniel considered alcohol as “defilement” to partake of the wine of the King (Dan. 1:5-8). It was sinful to give alcoholic beverage to another person (Hab. 2:15). Alcohol is associated with violence (Prov. 4:17). Abstinence was praised by God (Jer. 35:2-19).

CONCLUSION

No alcoholic exists that did not take their first drink. Don’t do it!

No drunk driver exists that did not take their first drink and attempt to justify themselves.

Alcohol damages the body (1 Cor. 6:19-20). The health risks that occur with drinking alcohol outweigh any possible benefits that might be attained by so doing. Especially when we consider evidence that grape juice bears the same health benefits, yet without the health risks and adverse effects upon our bodies, those around us, and society as a whole.

While some argue that “I’m not harming myself or others” or “I have it under control,” that is just not true. Hence, the words of Solomon: “wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.” Solomon also concludes:

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again (Prov. 23:29-35).

The effects of the intoxicant are seen by Solomon: woes, sorrows, contentions, babblings, wounds, redness of eyes, strange women, hearts bent on perverseness, no good place to sleep, stricken, sick, and still wanting it again (addiction). Somehow, the devil has convinced many to go social drinking with him and that “ye shall NOT surely die” (Gen. 3:3). Let us not be “mocked” and let us not die in the sin of drinking beverage alcohol (Prov. 20:1; Eph. 5:18; 1 Peter 4:3). May we see the Devil for what he is: A Social Drinker and let us flee from him and the sin of drinking beverage alcohol!

Works Cited

- “*Alcohol Alert.*” <https://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/AA67/AA67.htm>, 2004.
- “*Alcohol Facts.*” <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/alcohol-use.htm>
- “*Alcohol Facts and Statistics.*” National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, June 2017.
- “*Alcohol and Public Health.*” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 3 Jan. 2018, www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/alcohol-use.htm.
- American Standard Version.* (1995). (Jn 14:8–12). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.
- Bernstein, Larry. “Six people die each day of alcohol poisoning and most are middle-aged white men, CDC reports.” *The Washington Post*, January 6, 2015.
- Cooper, Carl O. “*Does God Drink Wine? The truth about Bible wine.*” Printed in China. 2010.
- Jeffcoat, W.D. *The Bible and “Social” Drinking: In-Depth Research of a Universal Problem.* Publishing Designs. Huntsville, Alabama. 2006 reprint.
- “*International Statistics.*” <http://www.drugfreeworld.org/drugfacts/alcohol/international-statistics.html>
- O’Shea, R.S., Dasarathy, S. and McCullough, A.J. Hepatology from “*Alcoholic liver disease: AASLF Practice Guidelines.*” January 2010.
- Rushmore, Louis. *Beverage Alcohol.* J.C. Choate Publications. Winona, MS. 2008.
- Sacks, Jeffrey J., et al. “2010 National and State Costs of Excessive Alcohol Consumption.” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, vol. 49, no. 5, 2015, doi:10.1016/j.amepre.2015.05.031.
- Strong, James. *The Exhaustive Concordance of The Bible.* Hendrickson Publishers. Peabody, MA.
- “*Statistics.*” <https://www.madd.org/statistics/> link to: Hingson, Ralph, et al. “Age of Drinking Onset, Driving After

Drinking, and Involvement in Alcohol-Related Motor Vehicle Crashes.” DOT HS 809 188. Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, January 2001.

Taylor Jr., Robert R. *Studies in Ephesians and Colossians*. Taylor Publications. Ripley, TN. 2010.

The King James Version. (1995). (electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Jn 14:11). Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

The New King James Version. (1982). (Jn 14:3–4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“*Traffic Safety Facts 2016: Alcohol-Impaired Driving*.” National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Washington DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2017.

Vine, W.E. *New Testament Greek Grammar and Dictionary*. Thomas Nelson publishers. Nashville, TN. 2012.

Webster, Allen. Did Jesus Make Intoxicating Wine? *House To House Heart To Heart*. Tract

www.drugfreeworld.org/drugfacts/alcohol/international-statistics.

The Devil In The Workplace

Jim Dearman



Jim Dearman, a native of Smithville, Tennessee, is the producer and host of the *Good News Today* television and radio program, overseen by the elders of the Dunlap, TN church, where he and wife, Janis, are members. Jim now devotes full-time to the broadcasting work and to preaching and teaching appointments. Also, for several years, he has served as master of ceremonies for the annual Great Smoky Mountain Marriage Retreat. He is a graduate of the University of Tennessee with a degree in communications, he also attended Memphis School of Preaching and earned his Master's degree at Alabama Christian School of Religion (now Amridge University). He has preached for over forty years and has served as a located preacher in Alabama, Tennessee, and Texas. He also worked with the church in Klang, Malaysia, and, upon returning from Southeast Asia, taught at the Memphis School of Preaching. The Dearman's have three children, six grandchildren, and a new granddaughter-in-law.

On the day when Satan came before the Lord among the sons of God, the Lord asked him, "From where do you come?" Satan responded, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it" (Job 1:7, NKJV). Given the universal presence of sin, there is no place on earth where the author of sin has not gone. Peter reinforces the pervasive power and presence of Satan when he warns: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Therefore, it should not be surprising to find the

devil hard at work in the workplace.

In this study, we will look at five ways in which the devil penetrates the workplace. In compliance with Peter's warning, the child of God must be sober and vigilant in the workplace to avoid being deceived and destroyed by Satan. Of course, it is important to make certain the work in which the Christian is involved is in harmony with God's Word. Without listing specific occupations which the Christian should avoid, it is sufficient to point out that the follower of Christ cannot accept employment that would result in compromise or complete surrender of one's Christian principles. However, even when employed in an honorable and scriptural occupation, one must beware of Satan's devices.

Performance

One temptation Satan presents in the workplace relates to one's performance on the job. The Bible is replete with admonitions to the Christian to be an exemplary employee or employer. Paul's treatises in Colossians and Ephesians concerning the master-slave relationship of the first century have clear application to the workplace today. To the Ephesians, he writes:

Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a

slave or free. And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him (Eph. 6:5-9).

Paul issues a similar admonition in the Colossian epistle:

Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven (Col. 3:22-4:1).

The New Testament advocates industry and condemns indolence. Paul writes:

But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord

Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 The. 3:6-15).

The Christian cannot leave Christ at the workplace door. In fact, Paul reminds us in the passage cited earlier from Ephesians that the employee serves “as to Christ” in his job. Elsewhere in the Ephesian epistle, Paul admonishes: “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need” (Eph. 4:28).

The Christian’s standard must be based upon the teachings of the New Testament, and those teachings make clear the absolute necessity of being the best employee any employer ever had. The Christian employer has a mutual obligation to oversee the worker with heaven in view, recognizing there is someone far greater who is watching every action in the workplace. This is the ideal relationship between the employer and employee who follow God’s will. However, Satan seeks to disturb the peace by creating an environment where sin can and, often, does occur.

What if an employer is unappreciative, even threatening to an employee? This attitude can produce such discouragement in the Christian worker that he finally determines his best efforts are not appreciated, and he begins to do just enough to get by on the job. He loses sight of his heavenly employer and does less than his best for his earthly boss. This is wrong. It would be far better

to seek other employment than to become slack in one's present job. Also, the Christian who gives his best, even in less than ideal circumstances, must trust God to bless him with open doors to better employment, or with other changes that will improve his present situation.

Promotion

Another avenue through which the devil penetrates the workplace is in the pursuit of promotion. No doubt, there have been many occasions when employees have been tempted by unscrupulous employers to bend the rules or ignore them altogether, with the promise of a pay raise or promotion in position within a company. A superior may indicate to an employee that certain practices are just part of doing business and that "everyone does it." The employer may indicate that, unless one capitulates, one can never hope to get ahead in the company. Obviously, a Christian cannot succumb to this device of Satan. This writer has known of situations where Christians have left good jobs upon learning of business practices in which they could not participate. Again, one must trust God to bless His child who makes such a decision.

There is another aspect of this pursuit of promotion that must be considered. Even in ideal circumstances, the pursuit of promotion at the expense of more important things is wrong. Mothers and fathers have God and family as their two top priorities. Allowing work to interfere with either of these duties is welcoming the devil into the workplace. The term "workaholic" runs counter to fulfilling life's primary responsibilities

to God and family. Neglecting family in the pursuit of “wants” versus “needs” is contrary to God’s will. A balance based on Bible principles must be maintained. One must never lose sight of the Lord’s promise: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God; and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Mat. 6:33).

Proximity

Another avenue through which Satan penetrates the workplace is proximity. In other words, getting too close to a co-worker of the opposite sex can spell disaster for the Christian and bring delight to the devil. Marriages are not always smooth sailing and occasionally couples encounter some rough seas. One is asking for trouble by sharing one’s marriage troubles with a co-worker of the opposite sex. In fact, forming extremely close relationships with those of the opposite sex, in or out of the workplace, is a recipe for disaster.

Of course, this is not to suggest that brothers and sisters in Christ cannot sustain a close spiritual relationship, but it must be tempered by the teaching of Scripture and good common sense. One should have only one’s spouse as a closest friend of the opposite sex. “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). This text provides a transition to the next workplace device the devil employs.

Pornography

Another of the devil’s penetration points in the workplace is pornography. While this evil is evident

outside the workplace, it seems to be a particularly tempting sin at work, where computers are used in settings where the content is seen only by the user. Sometimes, it may be the case that a worker accidentally stumbles upon a pornographic site while seeking other information. No doubt, certain web devices are designed to lead the unsuspecting worker to an inappropriate site. However, based on statistics, regardless of how they are getting there, far too many are settling in and becoming addicted to this sinful tool of Satan.

The very excellent DVD series entitled, *“The Truth About,”* produced by World Video Bible School and hosted by Don Blackwell, features lessons on moral issues (2010). It includes a lesson on pornography that is well researched, well presented, and provides some sobering statistics on the use of pornography in the workplace. For example, brother Blackwell points out that 70% percent of all internet porn traffic takes place in the 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. workday. 30% to 40% percent of internet use in the workplace is unrelated to business. Also, 21% of all adult sites are accessed from work. In this excellent video, brother Blackwell also cites a survey in which 70% percent of those questioned admitted to viewing or sending adult-oriented email at work. There is no denying that the devil has penetrated the workplace through pornography; and, tragically, some Christians have been adversely affected by this sin.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addresses the sin of lust with these words: “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust

for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mat. 5:27-28). Paul’s admonition to Timothy is relevant to the sin of pornography, also: “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). The Christian cannot pursue pornography and righteousness, faith, love, and peace at the same time. Such a one has forfeited the privilege of calling upon the Lord out of a pure heart and possesses a heart dominated by impure thoughts and images.

The remedy for this sin is the same as for all transgressions of God’s will – a return to God and His Word. Jesus declares: “And if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell” (Mat. 5:29). In the excellent video lesson from Don Blackwell, mentioned earlier, five suggestions are offered for overcoming this sin. They are: (1) strong desire; (2) strong determination (Job 31:1); (3) prayer and Bible study; (4) an accountability partner; and (5) elimination of the sources (1 Cor. 6:18). If one implements these suggestions, one can drive the devil from the workplace and from the heart.

Peers

A fifth avenue through which Satan penetrates the workplace is peers. Peer pressure is a powerful tool Satan uses. While younger people may be more susceptible to this device than those who are older, no one is immune. Peter is an example of how one who had been with the Lord, an apostle of Christ, could yield to the pressures

of his peers. In Galatians 2: 11-14, Paul recounts how he had to withstand Peter to his face because he played the hypocrite in a certain situation. Before certain men came down from James, Peter would eat with the Gentiles; but he separated from them when these Jewish Christians came, “fearing those who were of the circumcision.” Peter’s influence may have adversely affected other Christians of Jewish background, including Barnabas, whom the scripture reveals “was carried away with their hypocrisy.” If these men could be susceptible to peer pressure, surely, Christians in any generation can become guilty of the same.

In many places of work, there are worldly people who have difficulty understanding why the Christian does not go along with their worldly ways. It is reminiscent of Peter’s statement in 1 Peter 4:3-4: “For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles – when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.”

This is descriptive of how many in the workplace respond to the Christian who does not attend the cocktail parties, or who will not join fellow workers for a drink after work during happy hour, or who will not participate in the office betting pool on sports events. Abstaining from such activity can produce ridicule from one’s fellow workers. However, it can also produce respect from some for one’s convictions, and it could lead to opportunities to teach the truth to honest hearts

in the workplace. Regardless, the Christian must always do what is right, while never losing sight of the scriptural truth Paul reveals in 1 Corinthians 15:33: “Do not be deceived; ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’”

Conclusion

In the introduction to this study, we established the pervasive power of Satan with Peter’s words: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). As we conclude this study, let us ask: “Is there any place we can go where the devil has no power over us?” Thankfully, the answer is “Yes.” In Christ, we are victorious over Satan; and, as we remain faithful to the Lord, we can overcome the world and the prince of this world. The apostle John assures us: “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5). Continual obedient faith is the solution to the problem of sin in the workplace and in the world!

Works Cited

- Blackwell, Don. *The Truth About ...* Maxwell, TX: World Video Bible School, 2010. DVD.
The Holy Bible: New King James Version. <https://www.bible.com/bible>.

The Devil In The Garden Of Eden

Denny Petrillo



Denny is married to the former Kathy Roberts. They have been married since January, 1978. They have three children (Lance, Brett and Laura), and five grandchildren (Chloe, Ashlyn, Sophie, Easton and Brelyn). He has served as the President of the Bear Valley Bible Institute since 2004 and has been a full time instructor since 1985. He has preached in Mississippi, Arkansas, Nebraska and Colorado. He has taught numerous classes for the World Video Bible School and has authored several books and commentaries. He graduated from the Bear Valley School of Preaching (now Bear Valley Bible Institute), received an AA degree in Bible (York College, York, Nebraska), BA in Bible and Biblical Languages (Harding University), MA in Old and New Testaments (Harding Graduate School of Religion), and a Ph.D. in Religious Education (University of Nebraska).

Typically, when one reads a book they start at the beginning. Many who have picked up a Bible did exactly the same thing. They began reading at the beginning. They would have learned how God carefully created the earth in six powerful days. They would have seen the story of God forming man from the dust, and the beautiful, heart-warming account of the creation of the first woman, Eve. They would have read the words that summed up God's creation: "Then God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good" (Gen. 1:31. All quotations from the American Standard Version). The perfection

of God's creation was also seen in the location where God placed man, the "Garden of Eden." Even the word "garden" brings up pleasant thoughts and images. It represents beauty and well as productivity. God had certainly blessed the first man and first woman greatly.

Sadly, as one continues reading, the perfect situation in the perfect setting is soon brought to an end. Satan is introduced into the narrative. And, as every reader knows, Satan initiated the fall of man, his separation from God and his removal from the Garden.

This Genesis account is foundational to so many teachings of the Bible. It introduces us to theologically important topics like: Satan, sin, temptation, law, separation, consequences, forgiveness, etc. Imagine trying to understand what Paul was talking about in 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:3; Romans 5:12-21; and 1 Timothy 2:9-15 without Genesis 3:1-6. Imagine attempting to grasp what John was referring to in Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 or Jesus in Matthew 4:10; 12:26; 16:23; Luke 10:18 and John 8:44 without this text.

Yet there are those who question many aspects of this narrative. It will be the purpose of this paper to consider Satan and his activity in four categories: (1) The historicity of Satan in the Genesis account, (2) the role of the serpent in the work of Satan, (3) the methodology used by Satan to tempt Eve, and (4) the short term and long-term consequences of Satan's success in the Garden.

Is The Account Of Satan In The Garden Myth Or Historical?

The first eleven chapters of Genesis has been much maligned. College, University and Seminary professors all over the U.S. and the world have discredited these chapters. Generally, there are three views:

(a) Chapters 1-11 (and, therefore our section in 3:1-6) are nothing more than a fable, a fanciful myth that has evolved through time.

If one accepts that Genesis contains at least **some** world view, then the creation account must be either literal or non-literal. For the theistic evolutionist, of course, that question already has been answered. There is no possibility whatsoever that a theistic evolutionist will accept the Genesis account as literal history, since to do so would align it squarely against evolution. Eventually, then, the events recorded in the first eleven chapters of Genesis somehow must be relegated to the status of a myth or an allegory; they **cannot** be viewed as literal, historical events that actually transpired. This simply is not an option for the theistic evolutionist (Thompson 39).

The view that Genesis 1-11 is a fable has a considerable number of weaknesses. It does not account for the many references to these chapters throughout both the Old and New Testaments; it does not offer an explanation of how Jesus could refer to these events, portraying them as historical; it does not fit the nature of mythological literature; nor does it account for the fact that for centuries these chapters were the foundation for beliefs in a number of civilizations.

(b) Chapters 1-11 are allegorical, or a combination of history and allegory. To this point Horsley said:

No writer of true history would mix plain matter of fact with allegory in one continued narrative, without any intimation of a transition from one to the other. If, therefore, any part of this narrative be matter of fact, no part is allegorical. On the other hand, if any part be allegorical, no part is naked matter of fact: and the consequence of this will be, that every thing in every part of the whole narrative must be allegorical. If the formation of the woman out of the man be allegory, the woman must be an allegorical woman. The man therefore must be an allegorical man; for of such a man only the allegorical woman will be a meet companion. If the man is allegorical, his paradise will be an allegorical garden; the trees that grow in it, allegorical trees; the rivers that watered it, allegorical rivers; and thus we may ascend to the very beginning of the creation; and conclude at last that the heavens are allegorical heavens, and the earth an allegorical earth. Thus the whole history of the creation will be an allegory, of which the real subject is not disclosed; and in this absurdity the scheme of allegorizing ends (Chafer 270).

The allegorical view is so full of holes and weaknesses that no logically thinking person would adopt it. The language is not allegorical, plus the proposed meanings of the allegories are so fanciful and wildly speculative that the entire section becomes worthless (because one cannot possibly understand what the allegorical symbols represent). In addition, one might wonder why Jesus, Paul, John and numerous Old Testament writers

regarded this material as true history.

(c) *Chapters 1-11 are literal.* This is certainly the correct view. Plus, its being literal does not prohibit our seeing deeper spiritual truths than what this text reveals (for example, Satan is not personally named here, but we find out later that he was the force that used the serpent).

That it is a literal account is proven, first, by the fact that it is a part of a continuous history. The narrative goes on without a break into all subsequent history. If this record be fable and not history, the historical character of the entire Pentateuch is to be called in question, for none could point out a convenient place where early fable becomes history. The argument based on a continuous history cannot be refuted. The story is as clearly literal at its beginning as it is at its end, or at any point in its progress. In the second place, the literal character of this record is evidenced by the fact that reference is made to it in all candor in later Scriptures and is there made the basis of instruction and appeal which would have no weight if drawn from a fable. The Bible, as a whole and without exception, treats the Genesis record as literal. This suggests an extensive theme which can be pursued here only to a limited degree (Chafer 270).

The objections offered to our text (Gen. 3:1-6) always center around three parts: Satan, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life. Of course, naturalists are not going to acknowledge the existence of any spiritual being, good or evil. They will quickly dismiss the existence of Satan, God and trees

that had special powers. Yet those who acknowledge the existence of God can also logically reason to the existence of Satan. And, since God frequently used instruments to teach spiritual truths (Moses' staff, the pillar of fire that guided the Israelites, the implements in the tabernacle, etc.), it is not unreasonable that he should here employ trees. Of course, God could have created man to be immortal, and he could have given him the knowledge of good and evil. But the design of the garden was to test man's faithfulness. Having access to the forbidden fruit was necessary if God was going to be consistent with his desire for man to be free moral beings. So, everything mentioned in this text should not only be viewed as historical, but also seen as absolutely necessary. So much is understood by their being literal; so much confusion is created by their being figurative.

The Role Of The Serpent In The Work Of Satan

The fundamental question is: Was the snake Satan, or did Satan merely use the snake as his instrument? Five initial observations need to be made. *First*, there is nothing in the Genesis account to identify the tempter as Satan. The text merely identifies him as the "serpent." *Second*, it is not until Revelation 12:9 that Satan is called the "old serpent," thus using the terminology unique to the Genesis account. *Third*, the New Testament identifies Satan as the tempter in the garden (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14). *Fourth*, the oldest Jewish interpretation (found in the third century B.C. Septuagint) argued that the serpent was merely symbolic

of Satan (Palestinian Targums: Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan, Neofiti I and Fragments. See Wenham 80). *Fifth*, it is significant that the condemnation issued in verse 15 is only to the serpent, not to Satan.

With these points in view, it seems most logical to argue that Satan assumed the body of the snake, using it as his instrument to tempt Eve. If this view be correct, there are several interesting observations to be made:

First, it demonstrates the ability of Satan to inhabit the body of one of God's creatures. This point ought not to surprise us, because we see frequent demon possession in humans in the first century. In addition, it reminds us of the Lord speaking to Balaam through a donkey in Numbers 22:28.

The serpent is not a merely symbolical term applied to Satan; nor was it only the form which Satan assumed; but it was a real serpent, perverted by Satan to be the instrument of his temptation (vv. 1 and 14). The possibility of such a perversion, or of the evil spirit using an animal for his own purposes, is not to be explained merely on the ground of the supremacy of spirit over nature, but also from the connection established in the creation itself between heaven and earth; and still more, from the position originally assigned by the Creator to the spirits of heaven in relation to the creatures of earth (Keil and Delitzsch 1:58).

Second, it shows the craftiness of Satan. He knew that if he should approach Eve in human form, his evil intentions would have been revealed, because Eve certainly knew that the only humans in the Garden were Adam and herself (and seeing another would

have frightened her or at least made her suspicious). In addition, Satan would not have wanted to show himself to Eve in his spiritual state lest he frighten her with his superior condition and ability. Rather, Satan chose an animal that Eve would have recognized as an inhabitant of the Garden. Her familiarity with snakes would have reduced the level of fear and made her more comfortable in his presence. Also, it needs to be noted that the form of this creature apparently was not like today. Rather, Moses simply describes the serpent as one of the beasts “of the field which Jehovah God had made.”

Third, it manifests the character of Satan. The Genesis account notes that the serpent was more “subtle” than any beast of the field that God had made. This word is the Hebrew *a’rum*. The basic meaning is “nude” or “naked.” It is the word that described Adam and Eve in 2:25 (“And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”), as well as in 3:7, 10. The word itself is used in both a good sense and a bad sense. Proverbs 12:16 and 13:16 both recognize the value of being “prudent” and cautious. Yet the Old Testament also uses this word in an evil sense. Job 5:12 claims that God frustrates the plotting of the “shrewd.” Job 15:5 claims that the evil man chooses the language of the “crafty.” Exodus 21:14 condemns the one who plots to kill his neighbor through “craftiness.” Joshua 9:4 identifies the “crafty” approach of the Gibeonites to deceive Israel. Therefore, it seems clear that Satan picked a creature that was more like his nature, or one that would manifest the characteristics that he most admired.

Satan needed to deceive or trick Eve. Choosing a creature that had an ability to be subtle was a perfect fit.

Fourth, it demonstrates the awareness of Satan. He was well aware of the command of God, and knew exactly what needed to be done to bring about the fall of man. And, knowing the command of God, Satan also had to devise an approach that would reduce the significance and consequences should one violate God's edict.

The Methodology Used By Satan To Tempt Eve

As noted above, Satan picked an animal that was "crafty," because he himself is crafty. His approach with Eve was brilliant, simple and effective. We shall analyze the approach of Satan in sections.

First, Satan began by asking a simple question: "Yea, hath God said, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" On the surface this seems like a harmless question. What could be so bad about simply asking about God's ruling? What did God say? Yet in this approach one notices a subtle attempt to expose the injustice of God. "Did God restrict you from every/any tree in the garden?" Why didn't Satan only include the one tree from which she was restricted? Why include "every" tree? Also, the question was posed in such a way to draw out the feelings of the woman, and her perception of God's ordinance.

Second, the question does not give God the full respect He deserves. As we look at the entire text, we see that the phrase "Jehovah God" frequents the text, including verse one: "Now the serpent was more subtle

than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made” (the phrase “Jehovah God” occurred 11 times in chapter 2). By omitting the personal name of the Lord, Satan accomplishes his primary goal: minimizing the power of the Lawgiver. Later on he will claim that by eating of the forbidden tree, Eve will also achieve godhead, being every bit as powerful as God. Yet there was no way that Eve would want to become “Jehovah.” That is the personal name of the Almighty. To have included it would have been a clumsy mistake on the part of Satan. Instead he sticks with her becoming ‘god.’

Third, Satan capitalized upon Eve’s weakness. Whether Satan perceived resentment in her response cannot be proven with certainty. Yet, her response demonstrated a bold addition to the divine command: “neither shall you touch it.” This was no small alteration to the Divine command!

Fourth, Satan presents an overt contradiction to God’s edict. He boldly asserts: “you shall not surely die!” This statement is startling as it is audacious. In making it, Satan is equating himself with the One who made the law; or better, showing himself superior to the Lawgiver. Somehow, Satan knows the truth. Somehow, Satan knows better the true result of violation. Inherent in this claim is that Satan himself will protect them; that he will be able to bring about a different result than the one God decreed.

Fifth, Satan minimizes or reduces to insignificance the consequence of violating God’s command. Here he asserts: “you shall not surely die!” God said she would die, Satan says she won’t. So who is to be believed? Satan

is betting that he will be trusted. If he can get Eve to believe that God will not do what He said He would do, he wins.

Sixth, Satan glorifies the value or benefits of sin. Here he explains to Eve that by eating, she will achieve the ultimate: she will “be as God.” It has always been a ploy of Satan to sell the benefits over the consequences. The pleasures of sin are worth it, so he claims. Verse five has the word “God” twice, and it is significant. Virtually Satan is saying that “God knows that you will become gods yourselves,” implying that God is withholding a wonderful blessing to them. Equally, this implies a sick and covetous jealousy on the part of God. He does not want to share his ‘godship’ with anyone else. In addition, Satan claims that by eating, her “eyes will be opened,” and that she will be able to discern “between good and evil.” This proposition seemed strangely attractive to Eve. Perhaps it was only the first part that proved attractive (you shall become as God), and that she gave little thought to the second part. Or, perhaps she saw some benefit in being able to discern between good and evil (a benefit that escapes the modern student, since we so clearly see the horrors evil has brought into the world).

Since Adam and Eve had known enough of the difference between right and wrong to form a basis for right action concerning the will of God as involved in the one prohibition placed upon them, it is evident that the new knowledge of good and evil which came to them through their disobedience was deeper and of a different character. Though there was nothing attractive in

the exploit of coming to know evil by the sorrow which the experience of it secures and the value of good by the loss of it, there is, nevertheless, a strange zest in free action (Chafer 279).

Seventh, Satan appeals to three areas of human weakness. John notes that sin takes shape in three distinct categories: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life (1 John 2:15-16). We should note the similarities individually: (a) the lust of the flesh. The Genesis account states that Eve saw the forbidden fruit as “good for food.” There was no logical reason to think that this fruit, whatever it was, would taste better than the many other fruits that were freely available. It was the draw of the prohibited, the mystery of the restricted, and the allure of the forbidden. (b) the lust of the eyes. Eve saw that the fruit “was a delight to the eyes.” Some might suppose that God made this particular fruit more attractive and appealing than the other fruit in the Garden. Such might be the case, although the text does not prove it either way. Simply stated, the fruit looked good. And, as noted earlier, it may have looked even better when the divine prohibition was placed upon eating it. This is why it is called a “lust.” (c) the boastful pride of life. Eve saw “that the tree was to be desired to make one wise.” She determined that she could improve herself, even to the point of being god, by eating. This prideful attitude proved motivation enough. Rather than be content in her humble state as a child of the Almighty God, she allowed this pride to induce her to act. She wanted a greater position.

Eighth, Satan uses what is available in one's environment. In the garden, he had one tool – the tree of knowledge of good and evil. That was it (unless you want to include the command to work). That certainly isn't much to work with, yet Satan takes advantage of it. With us today Satan has numerous things he can use. He can use alcohol, riches and fame. He can use the computer or the shopping mall. Our job is to minimize those things which Satan can use against us.

The Short Term And Long Term Consequences Of Satan's Success

Short Term Consequences

Satan's victory in the Garden, in many ways, was surprisingly easy. It would be interesting to know what his "plan B" might have been had "plan A" failed. But it did not fail. Now Adam and Eve will experience the full consequences of their sin. As we consider this text, we can discern a number of short term consequences.

First, Satan learned about mankind's lusts. Despite the fact that Eve had an abundance of fruit from which to eat, there is always an allure for the forbidden. Her desire for this fruit was exposed in two categories: lust of the eyes ("delight to the eyes") and lust of the flesh ("good for food"). By learning about man's lusts, Satan found a powerful way to tempt man to sin. From this point on, lust would be a powerful tool in Satan's hands. The problem of lust is frequently seen in the book of Ezekiel (16:26; 23:5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 16, 20; 33:31). Jesus warns about the dangers of lust (Mat. 5:28),

Paul says that men can become so ingrained in lustful behavior that God will give up on them (Rom. 1:24). He pleads that we must not let sin reign in our mortal bodies “so that you obey its lusts” (Rom. 6:12, NASB; cf. 13:14). Paul also notes how days spent before putting on Christ as “enslaved to various lusts and pleasures” (Titus 3:3, NASB). James identifies the problem of sin: “Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust” (James 1:14, NASB).

Second, Satan learned about man’s prideful nature. Eve was certainly attracted to the promise that she would become “as God” if she would eat. In addition, the promise of increased knowledge would also have been a point of pride. As with lust, Satan has frequently used man’s pride as a way to bring him down. Pride is condemned in over 50 passages in the Old Testament alone. Asaph noted that with the wicked “pride is their necklace; the garment of violence covers them” (Psa. 73:6, NASB). Solomon warns that “pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling” (Prov. 16:18, NASB). God said “pride, arrogance, the evil way and the pervaded mouth, I hate” (Prov. 8:13, NASB). As noted earlier, John said that the “boastful pride of life” does not originate with God, but is of the world (1 John 2:16).

Third, Satan learned how one person can influence another person to sin. After Eve had eaten, the text simply says that “she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate” (Gen. 3:6; See Stitzinger 23). Why did Adam also yield to the sin? Was it because Eve did not die (as God had said) and so determined that the consequences were insignificant or untrue? Did he also

like the look of the fruit and it appealed to his lusts? Did he determine that he could not live without Eve, and so whatever punishment she would endure he would endure with her? Paul notes in 1 Timothy 2:12 that “Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression.” Whatever motivated Adam to sin, he did it with his eyes wide open, fully aware of what he was doing. Satan did not trick him. But, by getting the woman to sin he succeeded in getting the man to follow.

Fourth, Satan learned how God would respond to sin. As the Genesis text notes, God punished both Adam and Eve in ways that would impact them immediately (removal from the Garden), but also for the rest of their lives (pain in childbirth, difficulty in getting the earth to be productive). He also learned what “death” meant. God had declared that the day they ate they would surely die. Death meant separation from God. Whereas Adam and Eve enjoyed the presence of God in the Garden, when they were removed from the Garden they also were separated from God. They also “died” in two ways, one physical and one spiritual. They died physically, in that, from that day forward they began the road to death. Without continual access to the Tree of Life, they were destined to grow old and die. In addition, they died spiritually. Sin separates one from God (Isa. 59:1-2). Paul writes that one is “dead” in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1).

Long Term Consequences

It is clear that the sin of the first parents had a profound impact on all of mankind. Here are a few of

those enduring consequences.

First, it set an example that all men, in every succeeding generation, has followed. The first sin is always the most important sin. Adam crossed that line, violating God's mandate, and so men ever since has equally crossed that line. The significance of this first sin is noted by Paul in Romans 5:12. He states clearly that "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world..." Before, the world knew of no sin. Now, because of Adam, sin was introduced into this previously pristine, sinless realm. But this does not mean, as some have supposed, that Adam's sin was passed on, or inherited by future generations (known as the doctrine of "original sin.") Paul goes on to state clearly that sin continued "for that all sinned." Earlier he noted that "there is none righteous, no not one" (Rom. 3:10) and that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

Second, it brought death into the world. God's clear prohibition to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil also had a clear consequence: death. Paul notes that it was through the transgression of Adam that sin entered into the world, and death through sin (Rom. 5:12). It is Satan's desire for man to experience the same separation from God that he received when he rebelled against God. Paul notes that, with each man who sins (like Adam sinned), he equally will die. The remainder of this section (Rom. 5:12-21) is to identify the good news of how the work of Christ has enabled us to become righteous and to enjoy the blessings of eternal life (v. 21).

Third, we learned about the insidious nature of sin and about the nature of Satan, the tempter.

Even without this striking but uncertain evidence, the Devil has quite clearly, if inadvertently, let out what his motives have been right along. When “that old serpent” met the first pair [the first Adam] in the Garden and suggested his own goal as a goal for the man and his wife, he said, “Ye shall be as gods” (Gen 3:5). When “late in time” Satan met the “last Adam” in the temptation contest, and knowing, as did the demons, that he was the “holy one of God” (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34), he tempted Jesus, “and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and he said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matt 4:8–9). This reveals an unmistakable ambition to be like God, to replace him as object of universal worship. In other words, Satan’s basic motive is pride. It may be called selfishness (Culver 114).

Satan does not want us to see sin for what it really is. This is the allure of drugs or sexual promiscuity. Satan wants us to see the fun, the euphoria and the excitement of sin. He does not want us to see destroyed lives, broken marriages, lost jobs and wealth. The ugly truth of sin is well cloaked by Satan. Meanwhile, God does not want us to be blind to the consequences of our sin. They are real!

Very much has been written with reference to the action of the will of unfallen Adam. The problem is difficult and psychological in character. The influence of the tempter over Adam cannot be estimated. There was a kingdom of evil already abroad in the universe when Adam was created.

God had permitted the fall of the greatest of the angels and he had led, by the same permissive will, an unnumbered host of angels into rebellion against God. The problem arises rather with Adam's own desires. If he were lusting after forbidden knowledge and independence of God, he was fallen already. The situation is exceeded in complexity only by the fall of Satan; in which instance there was no tempter nor was there any inward urge which springs from a fallen nature. Yet Satan was lifted up with pride (1 Tim 3:6) and became subject to unholy ambition desiring to reach beyond the sphere into which he was placed by creation—a sphere determined by infinite wisdom, in which he might know the benefit of infinite power, and be sustained and blessed by infinite love. The same sin is reenacted by Adam. It is written: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom 5:12). The precise nature of sin was not changed by its entrance into the world (Chafer 280).

Fourth, Adam's sin has proven to be the springboard to centuries of failure. His sin reminds mankind of our own frailties and weaknesses. Whereas one might have hope of sinlessness if the first man had succeeded. But his failure merely represents the failure of all of mankind.

The mental process through which Eve passed is more fully disclosed than that through which Adam passed. She had observed the tree and was aware of the divinely imposed restrictions placed upon it, but quite suddenly she saw that it was beautiful to the eye, that it was good for

food, and that it offered an avenue into greater wisdom. These new impressions were but for the moment. Had they been resisted, the test would have passed forever. The experience of these two parents is not a norm or pattern of temptations which beset fallen humanity, whose experience is that of a ceaseless stress and trial with the depressing consciousness of many failures and defeats (Chafer 282).

Fifth, we learned about God. What does this first event teach us about God Himself? We learn: (1) Sin is serious. While Satan works to minimize the grave, somber reality of sin, God takes it quite seriously. It is an affront against Him. (2) Consequences are real. God is not playing games. When Adam and Eve defied God's edict, they endured the bitter reality of God's judgment. So also with us we need to learn that the consequences of disobedience will be real for us. There truly is a Hell, and a majority of people will go there according to Matthew 7:13-14. (3) God will not change His rules. While God is loving and forgiving, He will not disrespect His own laws by foregoing the consequences of violation. (4) God expects obedience. His restriction to not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was not an unreasonable request. He had every right to expect compliance. So with us, His commandments are not overbearing or unreasonable, 1 John 5:3.

Conclusion

There is much to be learned by studying the work of Satan in the Garden. Hopefully, by learning about his methods we can be aware of his character and his tactics

(1 Peter 5:8). As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2:11, we need to be alert so: “that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” Equally, we can learn something about ourselves through what Adam and Eve did. They had so much going for them, and thus so much to lose (and, of course, did lose). We have all “spiritual blessings” by being in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Like Adam and Eve, we have much to lose. We cannot allow Satan to be victorious over us.

Works Cited

- Chafer, Lewis Chafer. “Anthropology: Part 6.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 101:403 (July 1944): 270.
- Culver, Robert D. “The Nature and Origin of Evil.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129:514 (April 1972):114.
- Harrison, Roland K. “Eden,” in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* 2:17. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982.
- Keil Carl Friedrich and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. 1*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002.
- Stitzinger, Michael F. “Genesis 1-3 and the Male/Female Role Relationship.” *Grace Theological Journal* 2 (Spring 1981): 23.
- Thompson, Bert. “Genesis 1 thru 11--Mythical or Historical?” *Reason & Revelation* 2:9 (September 1982): 37-40. Revised 2001.
- Unger, Merrill F. “Archeology and Genesis 3-4.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 110:437 (Jan 1953): 12.
- Wenham, Gordon J. *Word Biblical Commentary : Genesis 1-15*. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002.

The Devil And Worship

Eric L. Owens



Eric Owens is married to Vanessa and they have three daughters. He is the Pulpit Minister at the Avondale Church of Christ, where he has been since 1997. Eric graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching in 1994. He was also appointed as an elder at Avondale in 2009. He has written a book entitled *“So You Want To Be Happy.”* Eric is a frequent speaker in Gospel Meetings, Lectureships, and Marriage Seminars all over the country.

It is always a delight and honor to be a part of the Power Lectureship. The Southaven congregation has a warm place in my heart, and I pray for her continued success in praising and pleasing our Heavenly Father.

Our topic is an interesting one for at least two reasons. First, the object of our study is the devil, and he is always an interesting study. Second, the occasion of our study is worship and this is certainly of interest to God’s children. Putting the two thoughts together seems inappropriate if not diametrically opposed to one another. These thoughts raise what the writer believes are some obvious questions.

Can the devil come to worship? Who would invite him into the assembly of our God? How would we recognize his presence among us in worship?

The Devil's Children At Worship

In Scripture God, the devil, Abraham and Sarah spiritually have children. Being someone's spiritual child is a matter of influence and imitation. Consider the following passages:

They answered him,

We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? ... I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. ... Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:39-44).

Jesus knew and acknowledged that the Jews were Abrahams seed physically, but they were not children of Abraham spiritually. The reason the Lord gave for this is that they did not do the works of Abraham. Instead they were actually children of the devil, because they imitated the thoughts and deeds of the devil.

John would also record,

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is

righteous. 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. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother (1 John 3:7-10).

Peter expressed the same sentiments of influence and imitation when speaking of Sarah.

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement (1 Peter 3:1-6).

One can be a daughter of Sarah if she emulates Sarah or she can be a daughter of Jezebaal if she chooses to emulate her instead.

The Devil Temptation And Sin

“The devil made me do it” has never been a truism. Even before the cross of Christ no passage in the Bible suggests that the devil has or could make anyone sin against God. Peter says angels are greater in power and might than man (2 Peter 2:11). Therefore it is simple to reason that if the devil is greater in power and he could use that power to make us sin, holding us responsible for the sin would be unjust.

Yet when the Bible talks about sin, the responsibility and accountability for sin always rests on humanity (Col. 3:25; 1 John 3:4-8). Obviously, God is neither unjust nor unrighteous. Therefore, God would not hold us accountable if we weren't wholly responsible. Thus the unfolding mystery of God from beginning to end shows God holding man responsible for his own actions. A few examples should suffice, Adam and Eve were held responsible for eating of the fruit of the tree (Gen. 3).

Even though Eve had a conversation with the devil himself, God held her responsible for her actions. The record of inspiration is that she was deceived (1 Tim. 2:14). Yet God held Eve responsible and punished her for her own choice to eat the fruit. In another instance, Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel (1 Chr. 21:1). God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel. And David said unto God, “I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing; but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly” (1 Chr. 21:7-8). God held David accountable and David

accepted responsibility for his actions.

In reference to Judas betraying Jesus, John wrote, “And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son to betray him” (John 13:2). Even with “the devil putting it into his heart” every account of Judas betraying Christ places the responsibility of the action squarely and exclusively in the hands of Judas. The Bible writers always reference Judas as the one who betrayed Christ. The devil has never and can never make anyone sin against God.

James makes the Bible’s case for temptation and sin, and he doesn’t even include the devil in the discussion.

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (James 1:13-15).

James makes a universal statement, “let no man say” that means no man who is tempted can attribute that temptation to the actions of God. The pure, holy, infinite, good and perfect God cannot be tempted and His perfect character will not allow Him to tempt any man to do evil. God is then absolutely and permanently excluded from ever being the cause of any man’s temptation.

Two options are left if we should find the culprit and James makes it universally clear who it is. He makes another universal statement, “but every man is tempted.” If one believes the Bible he must take the

inspired statement as true. Let no man say it was God but every man must then only say it was himself. John tells us how temptation comes: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-17).

James tells us when temptation comes, every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed. Jesus informs us that we are defiled from within. Out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts and sin, not from without (Mark 7:21-23). Temptation then is the result of our lusts. In James' passages concerning temptation and sin God is excluded. Only man is included. Even the Devil is not mentioned.

If we sin, it is our desires leading us to do so. The devil has never, could never, nor can ever make anyone sin against God. Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. We should be very clear, the devil can't make anyone do anything. Those who imitate him, however, follow his ways.

The Devil's Influence

Pride

One of the ways of the Devil is pride. Paul wrote that a man that is new to the faith could not be an elder. "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:6). The same man, if he didn't have a good report among the world, could fall into reproach and the snare of the devil (1 Tim. 3:7).

Pride among the people of God is among the most insidious and destructive influences of the devil. Pride

separates chief friends; only by pride comes contention. The church is hurt and hindered when pride is found in her midsts. Pride will not submit to God; pride causes us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. Pride causes us to push our agendas, not the Lord's ways. Pride causes us to fight for our rights rather than fight the good fight of faith. Pride is of the devil not of the Lord, and pride goes before destruction.

False Doctrine

Jesus taught that if those who believed would continue in His word they would know the truth and by that truth be made free (John 8:31-32). Just a few verses later the Lord said of the devil, "he abode not in the truth." Jesus went on to say that the devil was a liar and the father of lies. Here is a great indication of what the Lord has in mind, false doctrine is not making a mistake. Neither is it not knowing everything about a specific doctrine. Apollos is an example of one who was sincere and yet sincerely wrong but in all of my years I've never heard anyone refer to the eloquent preacher as a false teacher.

False doctrine is not simply the transmission of inaccurate information but the concept of one not being willing to "abide in the truth," for that one to also be willing to tell a lie and deceive others. The Lord address both the character and the communication of the false teacher. The Jews were guilty of this as they interacted with Jesus. Their miscarriage of the truth was exposed by the Lord many times in his personal ministry. But their falsehoods were also known even by Pilate, "for

he knew that for envy they delivered him.”

The Old Testament saints suffered with false prophets, the New Testament church with false teachers and we suffer the same today (2 Peter 2:1-9). The truth of our Lord has not changed. The faith once for all delivered does not need, and neither can, be updated. Methods change approaches change but the word of God does not and will not change.

God still says sing, and when men, or these days women, stand among God’s people and say otherwise these individuals are refusing to abide in the truth. When we sing we teach and admonish. Neither of these can be done through playing instruments, even if I am the instrument (Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16).

The truth has not changed about the roles of women. Some among us are now saying that Paul’s words to Timothy were for the first century culture in the eastern part of the world and is no longer relevant to us today. God has not changed His word. Brothers and sisters simply refuse to abide in the truth (1 Tim. 2:8-15).

The preaching of the gospel remains the only thing God wants preached (Mark 16:15-16). The gospel is God’s power to save every man (Rom. 1:16-17). The good news is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). The message of hope must be heard, believed after which one must repent, turning away from sin and toward God. He must confess the name of Jesus and be immersed in water for the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4). Those who teach otherwise are refusing to abide in the truth.

Immorality

The changed minds of God's children results in changed lives lived by God's children. The idea of not judging, and "no one can tell me I'm wrong," are tools and tricks of the devil's influences.

The Lord taught that men were to come to him and learn of him (Mat. 11:28-30). Once men learn of Jesus they can then think like Jesus (Phil. 2:5). You can't have the mind of Christ if you don't first learn Christ.

Having learned changed his mind, the expectation from God for this man is to now live like Jesus, or to "follow in his steps." For these reasons Paul was shocked when immorality was allowed to thrive among God's people in Corinth. The immorality that was among them was not even named among the Gentiles. Paul explains that those in Corinth were to judge that this deed was wrong while seeking to save the brother's soul (1 Cor. 5:1-5). If they refused, Paul warned "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6-7). Instead of being puffed up they were encouraged to purge out the leaven.

Paul was even more emphatic when discussing immorality to the brethren in Ephesus.

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain

words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them (Eph. 5:3-7).

Please note the last two admonitions Paul makes: “let no man deceive you” and “Be not ye therefore partakers with them.” Sin is still sin and it is only the influence of the devil that could have any of God’s children calling good evil and evil good and putting darkness for light and light for darkness, sweet for bitter and bitter for sweet. Brothers and sisters, let no man deceive you and be not partakers with them.

Man Made Rules

Among the Lord’s strongest condemnations was to those who put their traditions and their teaching above God’s teaching (Mat. 23:1ff). The influence of the devil is seen when men go beyond God’s word as well as when men bind on God’s people their opinions and their rules.

Jesus often addressed this issue and the apostles continued to deal with the same spirit of Satan. Romans 14 is a clear call from God that each man is to be allowed to have his own conscience about matters of indifference that seem like they make a difference. Brethren are to receive one another but not to argue and convince each other where they are wrong on these matters. One man can hold a day above another while another man esteems every day the same. Both men are accepted by God and therefore must be acceptable to each other.

The Pharisees entered the church and sought to do

to Christianity what they had done to the Law of Moses (Acts 15:1-5). They were ready and willing to bind on men grievous burdens to be borne which neither they nor their fathers could bear. Paul urged the brethren in Colosse to reject and refuse man made rules and regulations.

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh (Col. 2:16-23).

God's people are free from sin, free from guilt and also free from other men binding their extra opinions, traditions, rules and regulations upon them. Some among us are very skilled at telling us how long, how many and how often. Opinions are like belly buttons, everyone has one, and there is nothing special about yours. Only the influence of Satan can be charged with causing division, confusion and evil among God's

people. Satan influences some to bind where God has not bound, and others are influenced to loose where God has not loosed. Jesus condemns both.

Conclusion

Worship remains an act or acts of prostrating oneself before the God of heaven. Worship is only acceptable when it is offered with a sincere spirit and according to truth. Satan has influenced men to leave the word of God and offer anything they see fit to God. This attitude refuses to abide in the truth. The counter to such a spirit is often those who in an attempt to hold on to truth not only lose the proper spirit but also add their traditions, doctrines and beliefs to control the actions of the first group.

Satan's influence and Satan's children are avenues through which he is present in worship. God's wisdom is pure, peaceable, gentle and easy to be approached. The wisdom from beneath is earthly, sensual and devilish (James 3:13-18). Let us follow the admonition of Joshua and the words of the Lord.

Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD (Josh. 24:14-15).

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

In this worship the devil will have no place.

Works Cited

The Holy Bible, King James Version. Print.

Disguises Of The Devil

Jake Sutton



Jake is a Georgia native, he was born in Adairsville. He is married to Missy, and together, they have a son name Stone. He is the minister of the Moultrie congregation in Moultrie, GA. Prior to preaching full-time, Jake served as a police officer for the city of Adairsville. Jake has received his education from Faulkner University and the Memphis School of Preaching and served as vice president of his class. Jake serves as the director of "Campaign: Capitol Hill" where brotherhood preachers preach from the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall. Jake also serves as the director of the "Southern Summit," an edification conference held in Valdosta, Ga every January. He serves as director for the Moultrie satellite campus of the Georgia School of Preaching. He has also done mission work in the Philippines with Demar Elam.

He is a liar. It is how I would best describe him and the Spirit supports that statement by describing him as, "the father" of falsehood (John 8:44). He is not a friend nor a person we look to for guidance, companionship, nor should anyone desire to be in his company. He wants my soul in eternal torment and yours too, dear friend. His work has been of pride and self-will from the beginning of Scripture and he continues to influence people in that darkness even today. He is the false shepherd of the world and sadly, false sheep love a false shepherd:

For the time will come when **they** will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will

heap to **themselves teachers** after their own lusts; and will turn away **their ears** from the truth, and turn aside unto fables (ASV, 2 Tim. 4:3-4, emph. JS).

Notice the false sheep and false shepherd are clearly the context of this verse. The “they” hear Jehovah God and His voice through the Scriptures yet respect themselves as their own gods and raise up their own standard. The True Shepherd said on one occasion that His sheep hear His voice and that true voice is their desire (John 10:27-28). The True Shepherd has His true sheep. Today it takes the intervention of the false shepherd and those who serve him to contour with wickedness, the Scriptures which we so purely need. The Holy Writ is still perfect in converting and returning the soul of every man back to the God of Heaven (Psa. 19:7). However, the question remains unanswered for some today within the fellowship of our brotherhood, “Who is wearing a disguise?” The verse given for our consideration on this topic is 2 Corinthians 11:14 which states: “And no marvel; for Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light.” (ASV, 2 Cor. 11:14).

Before we delve into this verse specifically, it would behoove us to take a broad look into the context of the entire letter of 2 Corinthians.

Corinth In The Time of Paul

Paul had left Athens and traveled west, roughly 46 miles to Corinth on what is known as his second missionary journey in 52 A.D., perhaps in the spring. Corinth was a Roman colony and was very influential

as a city in the province of Achaia, both politically and economically (2 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 11:10). Being a major port city, Corinth was steeped in paganism to encourage a welcomeness to trade of all kind. In Paul's day, the great Doric-style temple to Athena or Apollo remained from the sixth century B.C. as well as other temples to specific deities. The Serpent, that is the devil, had done an outstanding job in producing these deities in the minds of man and the remnant of his work was rampant and evident.

Acts 18 gives us a description of how the work was established and the parties involved at Corinth. Aquila, a dispersed Jew from Rome and his wife Priscilla, were tent makers by trade and Christ-followers by heart (Rom. 16:3-5). The household of Stephanas was noted as the "firstfruits" or "first converts" of Achaia and was praised through the pen of Paul for their labor in the Lord. Fortunatus and Achaicus were found as a refreshment to Paul's spirit as well to the whole church in Corinth (1 Cor. 16:15-18). They all proved to be true yokefellows with Paul as he reasoned from the Scriptures that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. He did this from the heart of public discourse, the synagogue, as was his custom. It was from that public proclamation he used the words of the Spirit to persuade the Jews and the Greeks. However, they refused the word preached unto them and shook their garments as a sign of rejection. Paul quotes Ezekiel's thoughts, "Your blood be on your own heads" as Paul was exercising his "watchman" responsibility (Eze. 33:1-7). He then proceeded to the Gentiles by one household in particular, that of

Titus Justus, a God fearer which then by location and openness of heart, brought the conversion of the entire household of Crispus. Crispus served as the ruler of the synagogue and sealed his confession of the Christ by being immersed into Him and the New Covenant. Many Corinthian Gentiles followed after this pattern of doctrine and were baptized (Acts 18:1-7).

This was the start of the church at Corinth and Paul labored with the brethren there for a year and 6 months after. He was visited by God in a night vision to boldly proclaim the gospel and that despite the threat of attack, no harm would come to him (Acts 18:9-11). After Paul was brought before Gallio and there was no legal fault found, the Jews seized Sosthenes, and beat him. Paul continued to labor with the brethren there, but left after some time with Aquila and Priscilla for Ephesus.

Multiple Atrocities In The Faith

It did not take long in the heathen city for the enemy to cause division in the church, of which news came to Paul's ears (1 Cor. 1:11). It appears that some, if not most, in the church refused to believe Paul and his apostolic authority, and the church as a whole refused to withdraw from the brother who took his father's wife, which required a visit with "sorrow" (1 Cor. 5:1-3; 2 Cor. 2:1). The Corinthians repented of this error with this sexually immoral brother; however, there was still issue with the authority of Paul in regards to his apostleship.

Paul finalizes his reconciliation in the first 7 chapters with the Corinthians. He opens the letter by

thanking God for His comfort in their time of suffering in all things (2 Cor. 1:3-4). We come to find out in the later half of this letter that they rejected him because of his undesirable traits. He was poor in their eyes, had no place to call home, he earned a meager living, was constantly persecuted, suffered immensely, and he was not an impressive speaker. The church at Corinth had given ear to impressive and wealthy leaders who boasted in themselves and not Christ. Paul earnestly wrote to them in showing that true Christian leadership is not about upper social status or self-promotion, but that only through bondage to King Jesus was one exalted by God. His job was not to be wealthy or impressive but to point the souls of the world, with fervor, to the One who is. That it is in fact Christ who was leading Paul and the other apostles in “triumphal procession” in their work, being the “aroma of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:14-15).

Paul then alludes to some letters of recommendation the Corinthians required to prove his authority in his labor for the Lord. Satan had disguised his ministers with such letters which brought confusion to the church, but had it not been for Paul and his loving obedience to the work of God, the church at Corinth would not have existed. He tells them specifically that they, each soul of the body of Christ, were physical and spiritual letters of proof (2 Cor. 3:2-4). This brought fulfillment of Ezekiel’s words in prophecy:

And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh (ASV, Eze. 11:19).

Paul shows contrast with the Old Covenant, in which God wrote on the tables of stone (Exo. 24:12; 31:18; 32:15; 34:1; Deut. 9:10), with the apostolic ministry of writing on tablets of human hearts. Paul writes on hearts “not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God” and his sufficiency is from God, not from self-boasting or by the will of man (2 Cor. 3:3-6). The mention of the New Covenant by the Spirit led Paul to show the paradox of the cross of Christ in chapters 4-7.

He turns upside down the Corinthians’ ideas of glory and success: after all, Jesus’s exaltation of King took place through His suffering, execution, and death. On the cross Jesus revealed God’s salvation in that He died for the sins of the world to reconcile people with God (1 Peter 3:18). However, the cross shows us even more and reveals God’s character of utter self-giving love that seeks the well-being of others, namely, altruistic love. The cross also revealed a new cruciform way of life and Paul’s goal was to mimic this very thing.

It was true that Paul’s ministry had been marked with humility, suffering, and poverty – all to serve the Corinthians and by default, prove his genuine apostolic authority. So if the Corinthians rejected this lifestyle of forsaking all for Jehovah and for the well being of others, they are in fact rejecting the heart of the Gospel. They must be transformed and embrace this cruciform way of life or they are removing themselves from the glory of God and replacing it with the glory of man.

In chapters 8 and 9, the Spirit addresses this topic of forgotten generosity. The Jewish Christians in Jerusalem had fallen into poverty due to a famine, and to aide

in this effort would have proved “through earnestness of others the sincerity also of your love” (2 Cor. 8:8). This effort to relieve the Jews in their affliction was met joyously by extremely poor Macedonians and those in Galatia (Rom. 15:23-33; 1 Cor. 16:1-3) and Paul shares that with the Corinthians to stir them to help. Of course this wasn’t just about money, but another issue of their hearts not being transformed by the Gospel, which in itself is a beautifully woven picture of generosity and sacrifice. Paul wrote:

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was **rich**, yet for your sakes he became **poor**, that ye through his **poverty** might become **rich** (ASV, 2 Cor. 8:9, emp. JS).

Paul is very specific in showing that He, Christ, became poor for their sake. Paul uses financial terms so that they do not miss this valuable point. The very traits they are esteeming for themselves and these “super apostles” are in fact in opposition of the Gospel. Jesus freely gave up His glorious honor or wealth, if you will, and humbled himself to die like a poor slave so that the world, impoverished through sin and death, could be exalted and rich in God’s grace. Paul could not stress enough to them that this is a picture of the True Angel of Light and His will for His true sheep.

Paul’s Foolishness Undermines Their Work

In the final 3 chapters of this letter, Paul deals with the main source of this conflict and for our study, these disguised fakes. Paul uses sarcasm in certain points

of these chapters in rebuttal to these “super apostles” so called (2 Cor. 11:5). These men came to Corinth, promoting themselves and bad-mouthing Paul as a poor, unsuccessful and weak leader. At the risk of sounding self-promoting and for sarcasm sake, Paul tells them to bear with him in this foolishness of boasting, only for the sake of proof of his work. In reality, there was no need for Paul to compare himself to these false apostles and he called it “foolishness” and he himself was a “fool” for doing so (2 Cor. 11:16). But if this brought the truth to light, then he would go down this road with them in comparison.

Paul was meek in presence but bold in his writings because it is not in physical stature of his apostleship that is of account, but the spiritual weapons with which we fight in the spiritual heart of man that is of worth (2 Cor. 10:4-6). Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee (Phil. 3:5). He spent three years in Arabia learning of Jesus and the revelation of His work (Gal. 1:11-24, emp. Gal.1:16-17). He had heavenly visions and was taken into the third heaven; the paradise of God (2 Cor. 12:1-4). He suffered immensely for the sake of Christ’s work and proved himself to be committed even in the face of death (2 Cor. 11:23-29). To bring his defense to their financial heart, he reminds them he never once took a wage from the church at Corinth, unlike the “super apostles” who charged for their labor. Rather, he was supported by the Macedonians to ensure his labor was without burden to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11:9). Paul makes the bold statement that he would continue to do what he is doing, in order to undermine

the claim of those who took their lot in the work (2 Cor. 11:12). He closes his defense to them in saying he wouldn't boast in his efforts or historical devotion, but in his weakness (2 Cor. 11:30-31), because therein lies the truth of his work and apostleship. Paul calls these false ones to the table and reveals their hand as fakes, deceitful men, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ (2 Cor. 11:14).

Paul ends the letter in chapter 13 as it is divided in our copies of the Writ, that they needed to check themselves (2 Cor. 13:5). A sober warning is laid out to the church in regards to their faith and lack of devotion to the cruciform way of life. Their contempt for Paul and his pattern of service and their love for these false apostles show that they do not hold to the fundamental life of Christ and His Gospel. They are not living like ones who have been born again. The paradox of the cross challenged their values with that of God's values. God seeks out humility and weakness so that His love and power could be made known in them through the suffering death and resurrection of Jesus. By following this cruciform life, they could be transformed by the Spirit and make His ways their ways.

The Heart Of Our Matter

Today we are still not without those in the fellowship of our brotherhood who delight in the work of darkness for the sake of self. The Truth of Scripture will never need altering because the will of sinful man will never alter. We are creatures of habit and have had the same consistencies since the fall in regards to our

sinful desires. Man has the knee-jerk reaction to refuse that which is in contrast to him. Cognitive dissonance is something that can resonate within us all, but more so with those who are hard-hearted.

Satan is still the angel of darkness who does his work in both the thick of night and bright of day. As preachers of the gospel and servants of the body, we may see this work of Satan firsthand through men and women who have given themselves over to darkness, yet wear a costume of light. I say costume because we understand the ideology that a costume is a representation of something you are not. A disguise, meant to purposefully deceive with the action of covering oneself or situation. This word is as a transitive verb which means “a: to change the customary dress or appearance of, and b: to furnish with a false appearance or an assumed identity; to obscure the existence or true state or character of; conceal” (Webster, “Disguise”).

Jesus places perfectly the heart of this problem of disguise before us in John’s record. It was in Jerusalem, the cross was just a few days away and He had recently raised Lazarus from the dead. It was because of these actions and Jesus’s bold comments that He and the Father were one that sealed fates envelope for the Nazarene. His hour had come. What lies in these verses is the root of the false shepherd and false sheep:

While ye have light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light. These things spake Jesus, and he departed and hid himself from them. But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him: that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled,

which he spake, 'Lord who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and he hardened their heart; Lest they should see with the their eyes, and perceive with their heart, And should turn, And I should heal them.' These things said Isaiah, because he saw his glory; and spake of him. Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the glory that is of men more than the glory that is of God (ASV, John 12:36-43, emph. JS).

Simply, false sheep love the glory of the world more than the shame of the cross. Isaiah spoke of the brightness of God blinding those who would not receive Him in their hearts. Not as though salvation could not be theirs because Christ Himself offered it to them, but because the contents of their character could not bear the thought of losing the glory of the world. The same sun that melts butter hardens clay, just as it is with our hearts.

Preachers, shepherds, deacons, missionaries, teachers – all saints have this same fight before them. Professors of God who secretly give into their desires to bask in the glory of man are not of God and are ministers of the Enemy. This is an age old problem that will continue as long as this world will stand. The Father does not bid welcome to the false sheep and their shepherd at the marriage feast. Only the pure bride of Christ that will be presented on that marriage in the sky will be filled with true sheep and their Shepherd.

This should comfort the true sheep of Christ to know that though we may have to bear and endure the disguised ones for a time, their end will come. It is not our desire, nor that of God to welcome the eternal departure of a soul into outer darkness, but God allows it and we welcome that rest. God knows who the false sheep are and the misery they have to bear is this fact: they know they are only wearing a disguise. Make no mistake, those before your eyes who are ministers of Satan are to be sorted and sent out from the fold of God for the saving of their souls and the purification of the bride (Mat. 18:15-20). It lies upon the shoulders of God's men and women to recognize any falsehood in the church and to correct it with patience and meekness (Gal. 6:1). Preachers, elders, deacons—no one is exempt from this process. If one, or several, of these disguised Christians do not repent, remove them. Christ is with you (Mat. 18:20).

Christ's church is not for sale and no man or woman nor group of them will take His sheep from His hand (John 10:28). It is high time and past time for the warriors of the cross to fight this battle in the power of the Lord (Eph. 6:10). May God give us His strength and honor for this fight. May we forever send praise to Yahweh and arrows to the Enemy.

Works Cited

The Holy Bible. American Standard Version
"Disguise" *Merriam-Webster.com/dictionary/disguise*

Pride: The Darling Sin Of The Devil

Tony DeBerry



Tony is a 2012 graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching. Tony is the assistant minister and serves as one of the elders of Coleman Avenue Church of Christ. He has preached on several lectureships across the country and is currently going into his 21st year in the ministry. He has worked in the church all his life and is the son of a minister; his two older brothers also serve as ministers and elders. He has been married to the former Terri Wilks for twenty-three years with five children: Zoe, Tony Jr., Theodore, Lorraine and Laila.

I'm so delighted to have this opportunity to participate in this great work for the Lord. The Southaven congregation has stood out as a beacon of light in the community for many years. I pray that the Lord continue to bless this good congregation of His people.

Pride The Darling Sin Of The Devil

Pride is the go-to sin for the devil. Pride has been the root cause of many of the atrocities in this world. Because of man's lust for power and greed and his disrespect for human life, the devil just sits back and enjoys.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the

world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

We live in an arrogant who's who society. It's not what you know, it's who you know. The dog-eat-dog mentality is the American way of business, and it's our lifestyle.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you (1 Peter 5:6-10).

If we become drunk with pride, God's teaching goes out the window.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto

the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Gen 3;1-6).

Pride is the fuel for the fire of hell. We could probably prove that all of the occupants of the place prepared for the devil and his angels will be prideful. We have a competitive nature coupled with pride which will, no doubt, lead you to a disastrous outcome in your life. Most of our mistakes and shortcomings that are sinful undoubtedly, begin with a healthy dose of pride as the key ingredient. Not only does it take away your good judgment, it will also cost you dearly.

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man (Mark 7:21-23).

Pride, arrogance, and haughtiness are swollen estimates of one's own power. We cannot be saved in a prideful state because pride has a tendency to make us believe we can do everything on our own without God. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Better it is to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Prov.16:18-19). Try to imagine how many people lost

their souls because of their pride and ambition. “And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore, shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them” (Hosea 5:5).

Sinful Routine

I was a huge basketball fan in my younger years. My favorite team was the Los Angeles Lakers. My least favorite team was the Boston Celtics, and my least favorite player was Larry Bird. Larry Bird could consistently score no matter what. His coach could depend on him scoring 25 to 40 points per day. Now in the basketball world that is spectacular. The reason why Larry was my least favorite player is because he was so predictable, and I always wondered why a defender couldn't stop him. No matter what, he would do the same move the same way at the same time every game. I am in no way comparing Larry Bird to the devil, but I understand Satan's strategy. One of the oldest sayings is “if it's not broken, don't fix it.” The devil has a strategy that has worked from the beginning of time. He plays to the human pride, and eventually they will give into it. The “I want to be the best” and “I'm willing to do whatever it takes” are all the dangerous mindsets. The danger of I'm willing to do anything to win. What would you give in exchange for your soul (Mat. 16:26)?

Be A Good Steward

God does not want us to be sorrowful and always afraid. It's okay to have confidence and to love your

children and to be thankful for any success. Christians should always remind others that everything that we have was given to us by the Lord. “O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD” (Psa. 31:23-24). Pride will cause a man to dominate another human being. The lack of pride will allow a human to be dominated. The devil wants us to feel unworthy of love, but we have assurance because God has demonstrated his love for man since the beginning of time.” For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16-17). God’s grace has taught me how to live in this world. (Titus 2:11-12).

The Consequence Of Worldly Pride

These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren (Prov. 6:16-19).

Pride is the oldest sin. This could’ve possibly been Satan’s problem. It goes all the way back to the Garden

of Eden. She saw the fruit – lust of the eye, and it was good to eat – lust of the flesh, and she heard the lie that she would not die – pride of life. Satan has not changed his tactics because they work. The only one they didn't work on was Jesus. Jesus relied on the Scriptures, we must do the same thing.

You Can Not Hide Pride

Most people who are prideful think they can disguise it. A prideful people often times see only the letter “I,” but cannot see with the real eye. An example is when Jesus told the account of the land of a certain rich man (Luke 12;18 and following). The “I” mentality will doom us every time because it is so far away from the will of God. Pride is often a condition that cannot be seen by the person who possesses it, but pride can always be seen by God. It is both a hidden sin and a transparent sin. Pride is the opposite of humility and will keep people from salvation if they let it govern their lives. The Greek noun for pride means “vainglory” and haughty. The verb is “lifted up with pride” as in “high-minded.”

And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another (1 Cor. 4:6).

Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits (Rom. 12:16).

Blinding Pride

Pride is a form of blindness. When you only concentrate on yourself you can never see the problems of others. Pride can make you look past the needs of your fellow man like he doesn't even exist. Pride can make you develop the "I'm better than you" mentality. Christians should have love and compassion one for another. We should be willing to put others first and help when we can. We should be a shoulder for people to cry on and have the strength to lift the downtrodden. I think about how good God has been to me. When we thank God for everything we have, we will not develop a blinding pride and forget others.

Conclusion

- I. Pride is the pitfall of humans
- II. Pride is a trick of the devil which has caused great suffering
- III. Pride is responsible for the breakdown of families and the deterioration of congregations.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:
Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (Eccl. 12:13-14).

Works Cited

The Holy Bible, King James Version. Print
Jones, R.K. *Notes on Pride.* Middleton, TN. 2018

The Devil In DC: How Satan Works In The Government

Jon Mitchell



Jon is married to Beth and they are blessed with two little girls, Katie and Ashlynn. He has been preaching the gospel for 18 years in congregations in Illinois and South Carolina, and currently preaches for the Calhoun congregation in Calhoun, Georgia. He has a B.A. in history from Harding University, and has taught Bible courses at the North Carolina School of Biblical Studies and Central Carolina School of Preaching. He is the editor of the Carolina Messenger publication, and has been involved in mission work in Ukraine.

Much gratitude is given to the shepherds and saints of the Southaven congregation and the director of the *Power* Lectures, Don Blackwell, for the work they do for the kingdom through this annual lectureship, Gospel Broadcasting Network, and the other works in which the Southaven congregation are involved. I am also thankful for the opportunity and privilege to contribute to the topic of the Devil which is this year's very relevant theme. The apostle Paul was "not ignorant of (Satan's) devices" (2 Cor. 2:11), and Christians of today must also be very aware of the Devil's existence and the methods he uses to tempt us to fall away from the living God. May the Lord help what is shown from His holy Scriptures in these lessons on Satan to accomplish that end!

The Biblical Role Of Government

A study of how Satan works in the government would not be complete without first noticing what God's Word says about government. One must first be familiar with truth to recognize deception and duplicity (Mat. 4:5-7), and God's Word is truth (John 17:17). Therefore, faithful disciples of Christ must always have within our minds the scriptural truths and principles concerning God's wishes for the governments and politics of men if we hope to see and stand against the ways Satan will use them to lure us from God. Before we see how Satan uses governments to accomplish his agenda, let us study in detail what the Bible says about the proper role of government and address some questions commonly asked about that role.

Government as God's Avenger

Our Lord through His inspired apostle commanded the saints in Rome to bless their persecutors and repay no one evil for evil; they were commanded to live peaceably with all as much as depended on them and not avenge themselves when wrong was done to them (Rom. 12:14, 17-21). Recognizing that we live in a sin-filled world, it is likely that Christians at times will suffer wrongdoing at the hands of others despite doing everything they can to live peaceably with them and treat them benevolently. When persecution and hardship enters our lives because of the mistreatment of others, we can easily focus on the bad things that happen to us as Job did (Job 3, 7, 9-10, 14, 16-17, 19, 21, 23-24, 29-31). As a result, Satan can easily tempt us to seek

personal vengeance against the ones who harm us rather than waiting on the vengeance of the Lord upon the evildoer when He returns in glory (2 The. 1:7-9).

It is likely for this reason that God inspired Paul to then mention the role of governmental authorities as His instrument to execute wrath upon the evildoer (Rom. 13:1-7). Christians harmed at the hands of evildoers who were given the promise, “‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay’ says the Lord” (Rom. 12:19) can therefore look to the governmental authorities of their countries as “God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil” (Rom. 13:4). It is for this reason that the government “does not bear the sword in vain” against the evildoer (Rom. 13:4). Let us take a moment to consider the ramifications of this biblical principle and some questions commonly asked about them.

Corporal and Capital Punishment and the Taking of Life

The question of whether governmental corporal punishment (such as flogging, caning, or putting someone in the stocks) and capital punishment (the death penalty by various means of execution such as lethal injection, hanging, or firing squad) is morally and biblically right exists in the minds of many, and understandably so. As we examine this question from the biblical perspective that governmental authorities “do not bear the sword in vain,” let us remember that swords are weapons. Weapons are used to hurt people and take their lives. By saying governmental authorities do not bear these weapons “in vain” within the context of being an avenger of God to execute wrath upon

those who practice evil (Rom. 13:4), God shows that governmental authorities have the right to hurt and take the lives of those who are wicked without it being held against them as sin, since sin is ultimately the most vain and meaningless act in which one can involve themselves (Rom. 6:23; Rev. 21:8). Thus, we must not consider corporal or capital punishment to be inherently sinful. The likelihood of one's life being forfeit or one experiencing significant pain at the hands of the government as a direct result of doing wrong can be a powerful motivator to do right (Rom. 13:3-4).

We see this when we notice that God did not allow anyone to take the life of the first murderer, Cain (Gen. 4:8-15). This may have been a factor in the increasing wickedness of Cain's descendants (Gen. 4:16-24), culminating in the universal evil of mankind which brought on the global flood (Gen. 6:5-7). Perhaps the Lord allowed this and recorded it in Scripture to show us the value of capital punishment (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11), especially when one considers that ever since the completion of the flood God has either directly commanded capital punishment or allowed it to take place.

After the flood, the Lord gave to Noah and his descendants a directive which was directly the opposite of what he had said to Cain (Gen. 9:4-6). This directive for capital punishment for the crime of willful murder was carried over into the Mosaic law, and it was the punishment for various other sins as well (Exo. 21:12-17, 20-25, 28-32; Lev. 24:10-23; Num. 35:15-34). It is likely for this reason Jesus restrained Peter from using violence to prevent His arrest by saying, "Put your sword

in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matt. 26:52; cf. Luke 22:49-51). Jesus wanted His prophecy, “Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none,” to be fulfilled (John 18:8-9). Peter’s use of the sword to attempt to kill Malchus and the others arresting Jesus put him in danger of both committing the sin of murder and being killed himself within the parameters of Mosaic law; thus, Jesus restrained him (John 18:10-11).

With the establishment of the new covenant after Jesus’ death and resurrection, we come back to Paul’s letter to Rome and see that under Christ’s law governmental authorities are allowed by God to use capital punishment as a deterrent and punishment for crimes committed by wicked people (Rom. 13:4). While under arrest himself and making his defense, Paul acknowledged to the Roman governor Festus the inherent legitimacy of capital punishment by stating, “If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death” (Acts 25:11a). This shows us that while God outlaws murder, He does not outlaw the taking of the lives of evildoers by governmental authorities as punishment for their crimes and thus differentiates between murder and capital punishment.

Under the Law of Moses, corporal punishment in the form of flogging with no more than forty blows was the prescribed punishment for the convicted guilty party in a dispute between individuals (Deut. 25:1-3). During New Testament times, Pilate scourged Jesus in a vain effort to punish Him in a way short of death and thus appease the Jewish leaders (John 19:1-5; cf. Luke 23:13-16, 21-24). The apostles were also beaten by the

Jewish high council in a meaningless effort to silence their preaching of Christ (Acts 5:40-42). For the same reason Paul received the Deuteronomy punishment five times, in addition to being beaten with rods three times (2 Cor. 11:24-25). One of those three times was when he and Silas were unjustly arrested in Philippi, beaten with rods, and then placed in the stocks in jail; this event led to the conversion of their jailer (Acts 16:22-34). Upon his arrest in Jerusalem, Paul would have been flogged by the Roman soldiers as a method of interrogation had he not chosen then to exercise his rights as a Roman citizen (Acts 22:23-29).

Granted, governmental rulers can misuse their right to exercise corporal and capital punishment, and some do (cf. Mark 6:14-29; Acts 12:1-3; 1 Sam. 19:11-17; 1 Kings 19:1-2; 1 Kings 21:1-16). Reports exist today of those who have been treated brutally without just cause by tyrannical governments, those whose lives have been taken by the government via the death penalty who were later proven to be innocent, as well as those whom various governments executed not because of a proven conviction of wrongdoing but simply because they were enemies of a tyrannical state. Yet these misuses of power do not change the fact that God authorized in His Word governmental authorities to exercise corporal and capital punishment as ways to avenge wrongs done by evildoers (Rom. 13:4).

God's allowance of the government to "not bear the sword in vain" would also apply to policemen and soldiers using their weapons to defend themselves or civilians under their care against evildoers who attack them, even to the point of taking the life of

their assailant. Paul recognized this when, upon being informed by his nephew of an assassination plot against him by more than forty Jews and the Jewish high council, asked a centurion to take his nephew to the commander of the Roman garrison and inform him of the plot, resulting in the commander calling for “two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen” to guard Paul’s life as they brought him to Felix the governor (Acts 23:12-33). An educated and wise man, Paul knew that informing the Roman commander of the plot against his life would result in an armed bodyguard. He knew that if he was then attacked, this armed bodyguard of soldiers would use lethal force to protect him. This apostle, who was trying to convert his captors to Christ (Phil. 1:12-13; Acts 24:24-26; Acts 25:13-26:29; Acts 28:16, 30-31) and had as a high priority to do nothing that would hinder the gospel or place a stumbling block on another’s path to heaven (Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 8:9-13; 1 Cor. 9:19-27; 1 Cor. 11:1), nonetheless called upon his governmental captors to possibly take the lives of evildoers trying to murder him. This shows that he recognized that the divine authority given to governments to “not bear the sword in vain” applied in situations calling upon governmental authorities to use lethal force to defend themselves and civilians under their care.

War

This brings us to the often-controversial question of whether governments have a divine right to wage war. The numerous and various atrocities committed by

man during every war in history must be acknowledged. Indeed, the Devil accomplishes much through the horrors of any and all kinds of war. It is because of the existence of these innumerable carnages that many within the church cannot conscientiously support or participate in any war, no matter the reason for it. All of us must respect and work hard to not offend each other's consciences and the scruples held by all of us because of our consciences (Rom. 14:1-23). Yet each of us must also "work out our own salvation" (Phil. 2:12), which includes coming to know and acknowledge all truth, which is defined by Scripture as the totality of what God's Word says on any given subject (Psa. 119:160a; John 17:17).

History shows us that wars are fought at times for selfish reasons, including a desire to conquer and take from other countries and peoples. The second World War was started by Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany and the other Axis powers of Italy and Japan for those reasons. Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded Kuwait for those same reasons. A case could be made that the war between the United States and Mexico and the wars between the U.S. and the various Native American tribes throughout the 1800's took place because of the U.S.'s interests in "manifest destiny," i.e., the goal of claiming all the North American continent from coast to coast as belonging to America. Many other examples could be cited.

Yet history also reveals that wars are sometimes fought for the more noble reasons of defense and liberty. The United States entered the second World War after Japan attacked the American fleet at Pearl Harbor and

Hitler declared war upon America days later. The U.S.'s goals in that war started with defense of their own country and people and eventually grew to include freeing Europe from Nazi tyranny. The Civil War began after the Confederate government fired upon the U.S. forces at Fort Sumter and was initially looked upon by the Lincoln administration as an attempt to quell the unlawful rebellion of the Southern states and ended up being a fight not only for the restoration of the Union but also for the termination of the unjust practice of slavery. Other examples could likewise be given.

Tyranny and thievery, whether done on an individual or national level, go against numerous biblical commands and principles. Wars fought for those reasons would thus be unjust and sinful from a biblical perspective. Indeed, this is a major way in which Satan uses the governments of man to further his agenda of sorrow, sin, and evil upon this world. Yet a case could also be made that governments using lethal force in the venue of warfare out of a desire to defend themselves or right wrongs would fall under the parameter of "not bearing the sword in vain" as God's servants and His instrument to avenge the ones upon whom wrong has been done by the evildoer (Rom. 13:3-4; Rom. 12:19). During the time of the patriarchs, cities were built (the first of which likely being the city built by Cain – Gen. 4:17) and governments were likely created to govern those cities. The first kingdom or empire mentioned in the Bible was after the flood; "Nimrod the mighty hunter" was said to rule over it and it started in the land of Shinar at Babel, went on to become Assyria and came

to include Nineveh and other cities (Gen. 10:8-14). Yet there were also many familial tribes outside the realm of cities, kingdoms, and empires which existed during those times. Abram was one of those familial tribes. Formerly a citizen of Ur of the Chaldeans, he left his country at the Lord's direction and spent the rest of his life living "in the land of promise as in a foreign country" (Heb. 11:9). When nations and kingdoms fighting each other in a war of conquest conquered Sodom, the home of his nephew Lot, and kidnapped him and his goods, Abram upon being informed of Lot's capture "armed three hundred and eighteen trained servants" and "went in pursuit," ending in him and his forces attacking the forces who had kidnapped Lot and rescuing him (Gen. 14:1-16). His involvement in war because he wanted to rescue his family is not condemned in any way in Scripture. On the contrary, the priest of God Most High named Melchizedek blessed Abram and God for delivering Abram's enemies into his hand (Gen. 14:18-20).

During the Mosaic economy, we read of several wars in which God's nation Israel were involved. Amalek attacked Israel on one occasion and the Lord miraculously intervened to give Israel the victory without any condemnation of their choosing to fight to defend themselves (Exo. 17:8-13). Years later the Lord would direct Israel under the leadership of king Saul to completely destroy Amalek as punishment for attacking Israel in the wilderness (1 Sam. 15:1-3). When Israel was attacked by the Canaanite king of Arad, the Lord helped them conquer the Canaanites and their cities (Num. 21:1-3). The Lord also directed and helped Israel to

conquer the Amorites when the Amorites attacked them, not only out of defense but also to punish the Amorites for their iniquities (Num. 21:21-30; cf. Gen. 15:16-21; 1 Kings 21:26; Amos 2:9). He gave the land of Canaan into their hand, not only because He had promised the land to them earlier during the time of their patriarchal ancestors (Exo. 13:5), but again to punish the inhabitants of the land for their sins (Deut. 9:1-5).

More examples from the time of the law and the prophets of God directing His people to engage in warfare could be given, and they all are worthy of note when it comes to the question of whether governments engaging in war is inherently sinful because the Lord is never the source of sin. What He does and directs others to do is always right and just (Psa. 19:8; Psa. 33:4; Psa. 7:9), and He tempts no one to do evil (James 1:13). What He directed Israel to do in these matters was recorded in Old Testament Scripture as an example to us who live in the Christian era and to instruct us (1 Cor. 10:11; Rom. 15:4). A case could be made from these Old Testament examples that God would not consider a country to be engaged in sinful conduct if they were involved in a war out of an effort to defend themselves or to punish the wicked. Indeed, as we have seen God has used war between nations to punish the wicked, including war engaged by a nation out of a desire to defend themselves. Since God does not change (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8), it is reasonable to conclude that He uses wars fought for just reasons to accomplish the same goals today.

It is interesting to note how the Scriptures teach

that God also uses war which is done by unrighteous nations for sinful purposes to accomplish these goals, thus providing another example of how God is in such complete control that He can even use Satan's own devices to accomplish His own ends! The Lord promised Israel that He would punish them in the same ways He was using them to punish the idolatrous nations they were driving out of Canaan should they fall away from Him (Deut. 8:19-20). Old Testament history repeatedly shows this warning to come to fruition. During the time of the judges when Israel repeatedly fell away from God into idolatrous, sinful living, God sent other nations to wage war against them and conquer them; when they returned to God, he sent them deliverers such as Gideon and Deborah who led them into battle to free them from the foreign oppressors He had previously used to punish them. When the idolatrous, apostatized northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria and the southern kingdom of Judah was increasingly following in their footsteps, the prophet Habakkuk was informed by the Lord that He would use the ungodly nation of Babylon and their sinful desire to conquer other nations to punish Judah by conquering her (Hab. 1:5-2:1), a horrific calamity which the prophet Daniel later acknowledged was God's fulfillment of His oath against Israel should they fall away from Him (Dan. 9:4-16). He then promised Habakkuk that Babylon herself would then be punished for their own iniquities (Hab. 2:5-20). This prompted Habakkuk to remember how God had brought punishment to the wicked and salvation to His faithful people through these means in times past (Hab. 3:1-15).

He would use the same methods for these same purposes again a few centuries later.

As the age of the law and the prophets was ending during the time of Christ and His kingdom was beginning to be ushered in, He and His forerunner and cousin, John the Baptizer, repeatedly alluded prophetically to the coming destruction of the Jewish temple and economy by the Romans which would take place before that generation ended in A.D. 70. John indicted the Pharisees and Sadducees standing before him by alluding to the coming destruction at the hands of the Romans a few decades hence (Mat. 3:7, 10; Luke 3:7, 9). Jesus would follow suit throughout His ministry (Luke 13:1-9; Mat. 21:33-46; 22:1-7; 23:29-39; 24:1-34; Luke 23:27-31). Thus, as God had once used the warring armies of wicked Babylon to punish Judah for her sins, He would use the war waged against Judea by wicked Rome to punish the Jews for rejecting their Messiah. When we again remember that our Lord does not change (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8), we could reasonably conclude that God uses wars conducted for unrighteous purposes to accomplish similar goals today as well.

As we begin to conclude our study of the question of whether God inherently condemns governments for going to war, one should also take note of the time in which John the Baptizer found himself preaching to a crowd of people which included some soldiers (Luke 3:1-14). The crowds had been asking the prophet, "What then shall we do?" The soldiers joined in, "And we, what shall we do?" It must be noted that John did not tell them to abandon their profession of soldiering

even though he had a clear opportunity to do so if being a soldier was inherently sinful due to their required use of violence in war. Rather, he told them only to “not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages” (Luke 3:14).

After the new covenant began in earnest upon the death and resurrection of our Lord, it is worthy of note that there is no scriptural record of converted soldiers such as Cornelius the centurion and the Philippian jailer being issued apostolic commands to abandon their professions as part of their newfound allegiance to Christ (Acts 10-11; 16). Rather, we come back to the Romans passage in which Christians are informed that governmental authorities, of which soldiers engaged in warfare are a part, “do not bear the sword in vain” in the context of being described as “God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil” (Rom. 13:4).

Therefore, while it must be said that the warfare commanded of God for Christians is specified as being spiritual rather than worldly in that it is focused on our evangelistic efforts to win souls for Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-20; cf. Isa. 2:2-4), there is also no indication in Scripture that God would be displeased with a Christian whose worldly profession was a policeman or soldier and thus would be required to use violent means, including that of war, to punish evildoers. This is because of His edict that governmental authorities are His servants, His way to avenge the wrongs done upon the good by the evil, and to that end they “do not bear the sword in vain” (Rom. 13:4). While some wars are waged for satanic reasons such as

tyrannical conquest, oppression, and theft of lands and freedoms, other wars are waged for the righteous reasons of defense, the enforcement of the rule of law, and to bring about liberty from tyrannical rule. God ultimately uses both kinds of wars to accomplish His own ends, which the Bible reveals are often to punish evil nations and peoples for their iniquities. The convictions of those whose consciences would refuse to permit them to engage in any kind of warfare must be respected, but the scriptural examples and principles cited above must also be taken into consideration when studying the admittedly complex moral question of warfare, the Christian's involvement in it, and whether God condemns as sin the choices of the governments which choose to engage in it.

Incarceration and Restitution

The sword and other weapons of violence can also be used by governmental authorities to take away the freedom of their people through forced imprisonment or taking of finances or property as restitution for wrongdoing (Rom. 13:4). Just as corporal and capital punishment are powerful motivators to do what is right, so is the government's use of the sword to take one's money or incarcerate and thus take away one's liberty and make one basically their slave a great persuader to always do what is right and lawful.

There are examples throughout the Bible of governmental authorities incarcerating people both justly and unjustly (Gen. 39:7-20; 42; Judg. 16; 1 Kings 22:26-27; 2 Kings 17:1-4; Mat. 18:21-35; Acts 12:21-

28). The Law of Moses required a thief caught stealing animals to repay “five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep” as “full restitution”; if he had nothing to pay he would be sold for his theft (Exo. 22:1-3). If the animals he stole were found alive in his possession, he would “restore double” (Exo. 22:4). A man allowing his animal to graze in another’s field or vineyard would “make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard” (Exo. 22:5). An arsonist who burned reaped grain or the field itself “shall surely make restitution” (Exo. 22:6). Further examination of the Torah reveals similar laws concerning various types of fines and restitutions placed upon the wrongdoer. Solomon would later write, “People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving. Yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold; he may have to give up all the substance of his house” (Prov. 6:30-31).

Because of these scriptural examples (2 Tim. 3:16-17), it is reasonable to conclude that a proper usage of the governmental sword used to punish the evildoer would include incarceration or restitution in the form of fines or similar penalties.

The Character and Priorities God Desires in Rulers

A discussion about the biblical role of government cannot be complete without examining what Scripture reveals about the type of character and priorities God desires leaders in government to have. Americans have lately become selectively cynical and apathetic about the character of their leaders, with many being selectively

outraged over the moral, criminal, and ethical failings of their least-liked politician of the opposite party while overlooking or even defending the same or similar failings of their favorite politician in their own party. This selective outrage over the conduct and words of our leaders has trickled down from the pundits and politicians and has infected much of the populace and electorate, including many Christians. Focus will be given later in this manuscript as to how Satan uses such inconsistency to further his agenda in other ways, but for now let us note that the unrighteous character and conduct of some of our leaders over the past generation or two have contributed over time to the political polarization and division of our country and society. That is not a good thing for the United States of America. How much better would our country be if we decided to put into place leaders who met God's standards!

God said through Solomon's pen, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). This is illustrated in that the few bright spots in Judah's history in which she did not commit herself to idolatry were when she was ruled by righteous kings such as Josiah and Hezekiah. Since Solomon's precept is thus true, the ones who lead nations should be righteous themselves because any nation, or any organization, will go only where their leaders go. While ideally good and just leaders would refer to only those who are New Testament Christians, it must be remembered that the Bible also gives a degree of righteousness and justness to non-Christians who fear God and act justly, as was

the case with Cornelius (Acts 10:1-2). History shows that our nation has had decent, God-fearing, good men as leaders who at the same time were not Christians as defined by the New Testament. God willing, we will have them again one day.

For that to happen, we must allow the Word of God to guide us concerning the choices we make in the future for our leaders. For example, Scripture reveals that our leaders must be truthful. Such men were recommended by Jethro to Moses to help him lead Israel (Exo. 18:21). God also said through Solomon, “It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, for a throne is established by righteousness” (Prov. 16:12), showing that it is the Almighty’s desire for righteous men to sit on the throne. As David wrote under inspiration, “The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me: ‘He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God’” (2 Sam. 23:3).

He also wishes for rulers to not listen to falsehood, but instead are to be honest men and women (Prov. 29:12). Our Lord wishes for leaders who hate greed and would never rule simply for money alone (Prov. 28:16; Prov. 29:4). I’m reminded of Felix, who clearly recognized Paul’s innocence concerning the false charges brought against him by the Jews and yet kept him in chains because he was hoping for a bribe and desired to placate the Jews (Acts 24:26-27). Many nations, including America, have a problem on both sides of the aisle with this. Many politicians vote the way they’re told by whomever contributes the most money. We need people in power who don’t care about special interest

groups, men and women of integrity who will vote for what is moral and right no matter how much money they're offered to do otherwise.

We are often told during each election cycle about how the economy matters most of all, yet God told us something quite different (Prov. 16:8). Solomon brought Israel so much wealth and prosperity, the most she would ever have in her history (1 Kings 10:14-29). Yet he turned to idolatry and thus did evil in God's sight (1 Kings 11:1-6). He led Israel into ungodliness (1 Kings 11:7), so is it any coincidence that her economy got worse and worse over the years until it finally split apart (1 Kings 12:1-20)? Let's also not forget that because of Solomon's ungodliness, the Lord "voted him out of office" (1 Kings 11:9-14). So which was more important to God? The fact that Solomon made Israel richer...or the fact that Solomon was immoral?

Scripture also teaches that we need leaders who surround themselves with wise counselors (Prov. 25:5; Prov. 29:2; cf. 1 Kings 12:6-15). God also desires for rulers of nations to be tough on crime (Prov. 20:8, 26), as well as leaders who do not oppress the poor and refuse to enable the lazy (Prov. 28:15; Prov. 29:14; Prov. 31:9; cf. 2 The. 3:10). These are all factors we must consider when choosing our leaders at the ballot box.

Additionally, Scripture shows that God wishes for the leaders of the governments He put into place to respect human life and His plan for marriage. We must look for leaders who respect human life because God is the One who gives it (Psa. 139:13-16). Luke was inspired to use the same Greek word to describe

a baby both in and out of the womb (Luke 1:44; Luke 2:12). Paul was inspired to show that babies are innocent (Rom. 9:11-13; cf. Ezek. 18:1-20). Solomon was inspired to inform us that God hates hands which shed innocent blood (Prov. 6:16-17). Therefore killing a baby inside the womb is just as much an atrocity as killing an innocent child outside of the womb. When innocent children in the womb are killed through the atrocity of abortion, the message sent to God is this: “You’ve made something that doesn’t matter to me, that I can discard whenever I want.” When His pattern for marriage is ignored or mocked, the message He receives is: “You created something that I believe is foolish and irrelevant. I believe my way is better.” It was politically incorrect to condemn homosexuality and same-sex marriage even before *Obergefell v. Hodges*, and even more so now that same-sex marriage is legal and the current efforts towards societal legitimization is transgenderism. America’s early presidents and congressmen would have all unhesitatingly condemned these immoralities as sinful if asked, whereas today any politician from either party would be crucified if they gave their support to what Scripture says (Lev. 18:22; Mat. 19:4; Rom. 1:26-28; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). Yet the Bible remains the same. We must do our best to recognize and honor God’s wishes on not only these issues, but on the rest of what Scripture says He desires in the character and priorities of our leaders.

As shown previously, fallible governments run by unrighteous men can and do abuse the power given to them by God to punish people. Indeed, most governments throughout history have oppressed in

varying degrees and ways. Solomon had much to say about the injustices and imperfections of human governments, and all of us, regardless of the government under which we live, can recognize throughout history as well as within today some of the follies committed by rulers which he describes. How often we hope for righteous judgment from our governments, only to see wickedness and iniquity instead (Eccl. 3:16). How often we witness the tears of those oppressed by those in power (Eccl. 4:1). We know well about the perversion of justice and the backroom deals made between politicians, lobbyists, businesses, dictators, and others in positions of power (Eccl. 5:8-9). We have all seen presidents, kings, senators, and governors err and act foolishly, with some of them ruling to their own detriment, only to be forgotten in the years after their deaths; we have likewise seen some rulers persist in wickedness and injustice because their judgment did not come immediately (Eccl. 8:1-14). We have likewise seen the undeserving in power while the true statesmen are kept away from their rightful place in the throne (Eccl. 10:5-7). Throughout history nations have been put to shame and impoverished because their leaders are childish and lazy partiers (Eccl. 10:16-20). No wonder the psalmist was inspired to warn us, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes" (Psa. 118:9; Psa. 146:3)! Indeed, the fact that so many, including many within the kingdom of God, fail to heed such warnings time and again is one way Satan uses the governments of men to further his goals.

However, the fact that such abuses take place in

varying degrees and ways by various governments of men does not take away from their divinely inherent right to “not bear the sword in vain” in a variety of ways to punish the wrongdoer. The resulting order and peace in societies resulting from the governments’ rightful actions against lawbreakers and evildoers (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1-2) with the power of the sword which they wield is the primary purpose behind their God-given role to avenge wrongdoing. Solomon recognized this, which is why he and his father wrote of the importance of good men in the role of ruler (Prov. 16:12; 2 Sam. 23:3) and why he urged his readers to submit to governmental authorities, respect their power, and honor them rather than curse them (Eccl. 8:2-9; Eccl. 10:20). This brings us to the topic of the responsibilities God expects of Christians when it comes to their relationship with their government.

The Christian’s Responsibilities To Government

I am a citizen of the United States of America, a democratic republic which provides many freedoms to her citizens which many other nations and peoples do not enjoy. Despite the rhetoric given by the political media both right and left throughout our history, most Americans have never known what true governmental tyranny is like. The government may make laws from time to time which we do not like, take certain actions which we do not support, and have in positions of power people whom we do not prefer or respect; nonetheless, we still enjoy freedom the likes of which is unsurpassed in world history. We are a nation accustomed to freedom and liberty, the ability to do and say whatever

we wish whenever we wish. So, our first inclination in response to being told that as Christians we have certain responsibilities to our local, state, and federal government is to balk and resist, to “kick against the goads,” as it were (Acts 9:5). Yet those responsibilities towards our government are still given to us by God, and we ignore them to our eternal peril (Heb. 5:9). Indeed, we must recognize that our unwillingness to abide by God’s edicts concerning our relationship to our government is one of Satan’s ways to get us to fall into sin.

Submission and Honor

When strictly commanded by the Jewish authorities not to teach the name of Jesus, Peter and the other apostles responded, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:27-29). This teaches us that God’s laws revealed in the Scriptures surpass the laws of the governments of men.

Yet when the laws of governments do not require one to disobey God’s laws, and it must be recognized that many of the laws in many nations and societies in fact make no such demand, then one is required to obey those laws (Rom. 13:1-2; Titus 3:1a). Does this mean that I am resisting the ordinance of God when I break the speed limit law? I hate to admit it due to my continual guilt over this very issue, but yes. Does this mean that I have to pay taxes...even if I know that those taxes fund something of which I strongly disapprove? Yes (Rom. 13:6-7a). Does this mean that I am not allowed to protest the atrocities of abortion or homosexual marriage by bombing an abortion clinic or assaulting a same-sex

couple? That should go without saying. Does this mean that I can't steal for any reason, must tell the truth in court no matter what, and be basically a law-abiding, honorable, decent citizen in good standing? Yes.

Peter wrote something similar. After having informed Christians that they “are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9), the apostle wrote, “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:11-12). How are Christians to heed his inspired exhortations in these verses? Peter tells us one way in the very next verses (1 Peter 2:13-17; cf. Titus 3:1-9).

We might not realize it, but one of the brightest ways which we can let our light shine and lead others to Christ is to submit to governmental authorities and honor them. Remember, each of them were appointed by God (Rom. 13:1; cf. Dan. 2:37-38; Dan. 4:17, 25, 32; Dan. 5:21). This gives us something sobering to contemplate, brethren. While the voters elected your least favorite politician to be president, governor, senator, etc., it was ultimately God who allowed it to happen, who was providentially working behind the scenes to make it so! We like to think of this when the candidate we favor wins, but we must recognize that it is still true of the candidate we wholeheartedly wish had lost.

This is important because we tend to show honor and respect only to those in office whom we like, yet that is not what the Word commands. At the time Peter and Paul wrote 1 Peter 2:17 and Romans 13:7, they were referring to immoral rulers such as Nero, the man historical tradition says eventually killed them both, the tyrant who some say burned Rome, blamed it on Christians, and set their living bodies on fire to light his garden at night! Yet God still inspired them to command saints to honor such men, despots who were far more immoral and depraved and who promoted policies and were involved in atrocities far worse than anything any of our governmental leaders of today have done in either party.

Why honor them? It is because Christians are to be different from the rest of the world (1 Peter 2:9). Our conduct among this sinful world must always be honorable (1 Peter 2:12). The rest of the world has always taken a special delight in insulting and badgering our leaders whom we dislike, especially here in our American culture where politics is like a blood sport and it is considered almost entertainment to critique and criticize each presidential and congressional punching bag in D.C. Our sinful society thinks nothing about breaking laws, at least the ones we consider to be inconsequential, if it will benefit us. Our worldly culture thinks nothing to say about whatever governmental leader we despise, "He ought to be taken behind the barn and shot." In my years as a preacher I've heard several of my brothers in Christ say exactly that about various political leaders.

Yet God says, "Don't do that. Obey them instead."

Honor them instead. They deserve honor simply because of the office into which I put them if for no other reason, so give them honor. Be different from the rest of the world.” When we decide to do just that, guess what happens? People notice. Those who are lost in sin and don’t even know it notice. It might cause them to give you respect, grudging or otherwise. It might just get them to wonder why you are the way you are. They might just ask you why you’re so different and why you speak respectably of President or Senator No-Good even though you clearly disagree with their policies or character.

If that happens, guess what you’ve allowed God to place in front of you? The open door for evangelism for which Paul prayed (Col. 4:3; cf. 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12). Walk through that door and tell your inquirer that your relationship with Jesus changed your life and made you who you are, and then say, “And He can do the same for you too. Let’s open a Bible and let me show you how!” When that happens, you are giving them every opportunity “glorify God in the day of visitation”...why? Because of “your good works which they observe” (1 Peter 2:12). They may just obey the gospel and receive salvation by the grace of God...and you would have played a very important role in that!

Yet if we decide to join with the rest of the crowd and throw vulgar epithets at our least favorite politicians or talk openly about how we wish something bad would happen to them or their families, what will the lost souls around see? They will see someone whom they know goes to church, reads their Bible, someone whom

they have observed pray over their meals at lunch break and professes to be a follower of Christ...acting no differently than someone who is not.

Now they have one more reason to believe Christians are generally hypocritical holier-than-thou's. Now they have one more reason to give no interest or attention to the cause, religion, and church of Christ. Without repentance, God will one day directly ask you and me to explain why we contributed to that eternal tragedy. Do you want that to happen? I really don't.

Prayer

Paul directed Timothy to teach the Christians at Ephesus to pray for their rulers so that they could lead peaceful lives (1 Tim. 2:1-2). Heeding this simple command from the heart can show a lot about what is within our heart (cf. Mark 7:20-22). Again, consider that when Paul penned this the kings and others in authority at the time were immoral pagans who demanded their subjects to worship them as gods and were involved in such grossly debauched sexual depravities that some of our more immoral presidents like Presidents Kennedy and Harding would likely blanch. "All who are in authority" would also include the Jewish leaders who were militantly active in the severe persecution of the very people to whom Timothy would be giving this directive. Yet God insisted that Christians pray for them anyway.

We should therefore not be surprised that He expects the same from us today (cf. Heb. 13:8). If our prayers of praise to God are to dodge the trap of vain worship, then our hearts must be fully involved (Mat.

15:7-9). We must mean what we pray. That's part of what living and praying "in all godliness and reverence" is all about. So, when we do just that and sincerely and regularly pray with all our heart that God bless and help our leaders, including the leaders for whom we have no liking or personal respect, then we will naturally find ourselves giving them more honor and respect on a day-to-day basis than we had done before. It will be easier to find ourselves submitting to their rule than before.

Furthermore, we can trust that God will answer our prayers and providentially work through either them or leaders who follow them sooner or later to grant us the ability to lead quiet and peaceable lives, which is exactly the result for which we prayed!

How Satan Uses Governments To Further His Agenda

We've just seen some ways in which the Devil uses governments to get closer to his goals. Evil rulers can also put into place laws which subvert the doctrine of God in various ways. Today laws which allow the unnatural and immoral atrocities of abortion and homosexual marriage are on the books in America and other countries. Steps are slowly being taken by certain state governments to prohibit those who believe in God from living out their godly faith and convictions in their businesses, and it remains yet to be seen at the time of this writing whether the federal government will allow such persecution against Bible believers to stand. Having in mind both the example of how Felix failed Paul and Solomon's indictments of governmental failings when

it comes to justice, as well as his maxim of nothing new being under the sun, I have my doubts (cf. Psa. 118:9; Psa. 146:3). Yet if it is God's will, perhaps good may still come in this area.

During biblical times the Jewish governing authorities demanded that Christians abandon their faith in Christ and refuse to speak the good news about Him. Pagan authorities also persecuted Christians. Some did so out of desiring political favor like Felix with the Jews who persecuted Paul (Acts 24:27) or because they wished the followers of Christ to worship them as gods instead, as was the problem facing the seven churches of Asia at the time of Revelation's writing under Domitian's reign (Rev. 2:14-16, 20-25; Rev. 13:1-18; cf. Dan. 7:1-8, 17-27).

Idolatry and Governmental Leaders

If I had to pick the chief way Satan uses government to further his agenda, it would have to be idolatry in all its various forms. Idolatry was his greatest weapon against the Jews in Old Testament times, leading ultimately to their downfall as a nation into captivity. After seventy years of exile at the hands of Babylon and Medo-Persia, they returned to their homeland and never engaged nationally in pagan idolatry again. Sadly, that does not mean that God's people never engaged in any form of idolatry again.

Have you ever wondered why God inspired Paul to refer to covetousness as idolatry (Col. 3:5)? After all, covetousness is basically greed, materialism, the inordinate desire for obtaining and acquiring more and

more wealth and possessions. The fact that the rich young ruler loved his wealth more than Christ shows us the connection between covetousness and idolatry (Mat. 19:16-23). He had put his wealth in the place of God. His riches were more important. Many rich people are like that, which is why Paul called covetousness idolatry.

The pagan idolaters made up gods to take the place of the true God (cf. Exo. 32:1-4). Their imagined god replaced the true God in all areas of importance in their minds and hearts. People who are covetous do the same thing with their wealth. Their materialism causes them to place their money and possessions on a higher plateau than God in their hearts and minds. It is possible to do that with anything. Anything can become an idol if we put it on a higher plane than God. That includes changing the truth about God and His ways and message to fit our own desires (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

We must not think that recent history and our modern times are immune to the plague of idolatry brought to great fruition among nations and cultures by their leaders in power. According to the Shinto religion during the time of the second World War, the Japanese emperor Hirohito was considered by some to be a god (Watts). Yet what is far more insidious among our culture than these more traditional forms of idolatry are the ways we unwittingly idolize our preferred rulers and politicians in modern times. We may not worship them in an overtly religious, ritualistic fashion as we do the God of the Bible, but they and the policies they promote which we favor can very easily supersede the will of our God in our

minds, hearts, and priorities just as the covetousness of the rich young ruler misplaced his Lord's will within his own mind and heart.

I ask us with humility to consider the following with open, honest hearts (Luke 8:15):

Do we give our favorite governmental leaders or the politicians which we despise or politics in general more attention and thus a higher priority than we do with matters concerning our Christianity (Mat. 6:33)? I have done so in the past, and I've seen others do so as well. Do we unwittingly overlook Christ's promise that God is the One who provides all our needs should we seek His kingdom and righteousness first (Mat. 6:25-34) in favor of placing all our hopes on the promises of our preferred ruler (Psa. 146:3), even to the point of excusing away or even defending our favorite politician's gross misdeeds out of fear that if we don't "the other, worse candidate will win" and then all hope is lost? Do we easily claim and believe, with no scriptural support whatsoever, that the goals and priorities of "our guy" in office are also God's goals and priorities? How is that any different from Israel making a golden calf and claiming that it was the god who brought them out of Egypt?

A few days before this writing, I saw a headline online which reads: "*Make America Great Again*" is Now a CCLI Licensed Christian Worship Song" (Aigner). Published on July 2, 2017, the article contains the lyrics of this song:

Make America great again
Make America great again
Lift the torch of freedom all across the land
Step into the future joining hand in hand
And make America great again
Yes make America great again.

Americans from ev'ry corner of this blessed land
Come together with one voice
Help us take a stand
Following the vision to make her proud and grand
And make America great again
Make America great again

Like the mighty eagle that is rising on the wind
Soaring t'ward our destiny
Hearts and voices blend
With a mighty melody oh let the song begin
And make America great again
Make America great again

Each and every state
Make America great again
Make America great again

Aigner describes this as a “worship song” put out by a First Baptist church in Dallas for “any church who wishes to sing it.” Yet who or what is being worshiped? God is not mentioned in the song at all, nor does the song even imply that He would be the One who would “make America great again.” Rather, the singers themselves – “Americans from ev'ry corner of this blessed

land,” along with “each and every state” – are the ones being told to perform the actions to “make America great again.” The fact brought out in the Bible, that it is God Who has “determined (all nations’) pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings” with the goal that “they should seek the Lord” (Acts 17:26-27; cf. Job 12:23), is not even hinted at in the “worship song.”

“Make America Great Again.” As we all know, this is our president’s campaign slogan and the theme behind his inaugural address and administration. Inherently, there is nothing wrong with such a slogan or goal, yet there is something wrong when a church deigns the slogan as a “worship song” with no mention or even hint of the God who brought America into existence in the first place having a hand in “making (her) great again.” It is evidence of a growing problem within the religious culture of our country, the problem of idolizing our nation’s leaders. It is one way Satan works to keep us unwittingly from loving God with all our being (Mat. 22:37). If we do that, even without meaning to, he wins and we lose.

I understand this far more than I wish. During the presidential election of 2016, I posted on Facebook far more subject matter about the election than I did concerning the cause of Christ. I read far more articles critiquing the candidates than I did chapters of the Bible. Most of my conversations in which I zealously participated had little to do with the gospel and everything to do with the election. Looking back on it, I realize that I likely changed no one’s mind about for whom they were planning to vote and likely alienated

many friends and potential friends, including some whom I know now needed the gospel to be taught to them and others within the church who needed to be edified. My influence as a Christian, evangelist, preacher, minister, and teacher was damaged, and at a very crucial time too...when I was just beginning a new work with a new church.

I was not the only Christian who made this mistake. Friends, many of us are not letting our light shine as we should because of our misplaced priorities concerning politics (1 Peter 2:11-12, 17; Rom. 13:7), and this is because we're unwittingly being led by Satan to practice a form of idolatry. Over the past decade, I've seen some brothers and sisters in Christ speak very rudely to each other, even profanely and with vulgar words and even vulgar pictures in some cases, all to promote their favorite politician or policy (cf. Eph. 4:29; Eph. 5:3-4). I've seen brethren excuse away or even defend criminality, heinous policies like abortion or homosexual marriage, and immoral behavior all because they liked particular governmental leaders or policies, even to the point of twisting scriptural commands, principles and even the biographies of biblical characters to find justification in what they were doing. What do those in our lives who are not Christians think about us as Christians when they observe this?

To answer, I just now did a Google search on the following words: "Christians politics hypocrisy." What I found was not encouraging at all. I encourage the reader to do his own online search and see for himself. Admittedly, my first knee-jerk reaction to

reading these scathing critiques were to dismiss their authors as hopeless militant leftists who are probably atheists or agnostics and would not give a fair hearing to Christianity regardless. Perhaps that's true, but we'll never know. Besides, the political affiliation of these critics and the possibility that they might be atheistic or agnostic is not the point. The point is that each of them, as well as every other person out there who is or may be disenchanted with Christianity because of our failings in these areas, has a soul for which Jesus died (1 Tim. 2:5-6). A soul which Jesus wishes us to reach as best we can (Mark 16:15). A soul in front of which we are not to place any stumbling block or obstacle on its way to heaven (Matt. 18:6-14). Paul said that he and his fellow evangelists "**endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ**" (1 Cor. 9:12). He said that in the context of exhorting Christians to remember that **even what is lawful may not be helpful or edify** and that none of us should "seek his own, but **each the other's well-being**" (1 Cor. 10:23-24). He then commanded Christians to sacrifice even that of which they had liberty to partake if it would be spoken evil of and hinder glory being given to God (1 Cor. 10:25-31). He urged us, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, **or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense**, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, **not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved**. Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 10:31-11:1).

That is our mission, Christians. Saving souls.

Doing whatever it takes to not hinder the gospel being delivered to them. Doing everything within our power to help them have an open mind while receiving that gospel. That is supposed to be the most important thing. When all is said and done, it **will** be the most important thing, the only thing that matters. Right before telling us to keep our conduct honorable among the lost to help them glorify God and to submit to and honor the king, Peter told us exactly why we are Christians. It's not to go to heaven or be forgiven of our sins or be saved. Those are the wonderful spiritual blessings which are the benefits of our citizenship in the kingdom. Yet the **purpose** behind our being "His own special people" is this: "that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

That's our mission, our purpose for being "a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3), and "no one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:4). Yet I'm afraid many of us have accidentally allowed ourselves to participate in the form of idolatry which is placing more importance and attention upon the political affairs of this world than we have on our mission to bring souls to Christ.

Am I taking David Lipscomb's position that Christians should completely abstain from politics and voting? No, not at all. What I'm respectfully urging all of us to consider is that we may have fallen out of proper alignment and balance. We may have become so caught up in the political affairs of this life that we have taken our focus from Christ and what He wishes for us. We

may have allowed the political causes for which we care so much, justifiably or otherwise, to take a higher priority than the saving of souls, which includes doing whatever is required of us to avoid turning them off to Christianity.

God has not decreed that we vote for or support any politician. That's a freedom we have, yet He does expect us to not allow the freedoms we have to interfere with His cause in any way (1 Peter 2:15-17; Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 8-10; Gal. 5:13). If a particular president or governor or congressman is personally immoral but you like their policies, it is possible to support their policies in a way that doesn't give people the impression that you support their personal character. Perhaps taking the time to repeatedly clarify such would help, or deciding to simply keep your support for his policies between you and God (cf. Rom. 14:22). Despite our inclinations, we are not required to share every political opinion we have about every political event or topic. I learned the hard way that doing so does not contribute in any way towards the greater cause of bringing souls to Christ, but rather hinders it. Jesus wants us to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves" in our attempts to win souls for Him (Mat. 10:16). Let us look with greater wisdom upon the effects our focus on politics has on the cause of Christ and resolve to do nothing, as much as depends on us, to cause anyone to find the religion of Christianity hypocritical or repellant in any way.

Conclusion

Let us also re-examine this weapon of Satan which is the inordinate attention and allegiance given to our

governmental politicians and their promises which at best strays very close to idolatry. We seem to have put our hopes in Washington more and more in recent years. Each election is said to be “the most important in our lifetime” until the next one comes along. Each candidate we like makes us think that they and only they will be able to bring to fruition the hope we have long awaited about the cause most important to us. Yet, upon honest reflection, many of those promises remain unfulfilled in spite of their victorious elections. Abortion remains the law of the land. I received a sober reminder from a legal scholar the other day who stated that even if *Roe v. Wade* is overturned one day, abortion will then become a state matter, meaning that due to the current social and political climate it will remain legalized in a very large portion of the country. It is highly unlikely same-sex marriage will ever be overturned in spite of promises of rulers in the past to keep it from becoming legal. So many of our hopes placed upon our governmental leaders remain dashed, and as this study has shown the Bible is replete with many examples and principles which show the foolishness of placing our hopes upon our rulers (Psa. 118:9).

I challenge us to renew our efforts to place **all** our hopes on Christ, to look at things from a spiritual, eternal perspective (Col. 3:1-2). Let us continue to pray for our rulers, submit to them in all things commanded of us which in no way violates God’s will, and determine to give them the respect and honor God says their position demands and deserves, even if doing so means we force ourselves to disagree with their policies or

personal conduct in ways that lack insults and personal attacks. Let us strive to always examine ourselves to make sure our support and allegiance to them and their policies is never in any way higher than our loyalty and devotion to the cause of Christ (2 Cor. 13:5).

Fellow Americans, God has still blessed us with the privilege of living in the greatest country which He ever brought into existence as far as I am concerned. We should thank Him every day for the freedoms and blessings we enjoy which come from living in this country (James 1:17). Our country is good but not perfect. America is flawed in many ways, and may grow to become more flawed. If even our worst fears of losing our freedom of religion are one day fully realized in spite of all of the support and hope we placed in leaders who promised to never let it happen, let us never forget that God is still with us. Let us remember that all who desire to live godly in Christ will be persecuted in some form or another (2 Tim. 3:12), and God can use that persecution to make us spiritually stronger (Heb. 12:3-13). Any hardships brought to us by governmental persecution that could come one day are nothing more than a “light affliction, which is but for a moment...working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look to the things that are seen, but at the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17-18). We must never forget that.

Let us realize that if we are going to truly “make America great again,” it doesn’t – will never – begin with the people we send to Washington. No, it begins

with us, Christians. It begins with you and me winning souls for Christ, being involved in that spiritual warfare Paul talked about, fighting the fight of evangelism in order to “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:3-5). It begins with us winning more and more souls with the gospels, which in turn will bring about more and more souls with godly values and priorities voting at the polls, which will result in godlier leaders promoting godlier values in government. If we don’t do our part, things will only continue to spiral downhill as they have done in many ways for decades.

Above all, let us never forget that the goal is not in fact to improve our country, as valuable a goal as that is. No, the true goal – the most important goal when all is said and done – is to help souls get to heaven. This world is not our home. It’s not the home of the lost either. Our home is waiting for us, that eternal, imperishable inheritance in heaven. Jesus wants it to be their eternal home too.

Let’s help them get there.

Works Cited

- Aigner, Jonathan. “‘Make America Great Again’ Is Now a CCLI Licensed Christian Worship Song.” *Ponder Anew*, Patheos, 5 July 2017, www.patheos.com/blogs/ponderanew/2017/07/02/make-america-great-now-ccli-licensed-christian-worship-song/.
- The Holy Bible. New King James Version*. Thomas Nelson, Inc. 1982. Print.
- Watts, Jonathan. “Japan’s Revisionists Turn Emperor into a God Once More.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 21 Aug. 2002, www.theguardian.com/world/2002/aug/21/japan.jonathanwatts.

The Devil And Debt

Westley Hazel



Westley Hazel is married to Shelley. They have two children, Evie and Deacon. He has a Bachelor and Master of Divinity degree from Freed Hardeman and Doctorate in Biblical Spirituality. He has done local work in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Georgia. Currently, he is the Minister for the Forrest Park church of Christ in Valdosta GA.

Money and possessions are a very personal and intimate subject for most people. Jesus said it like this, “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mat. 6:21). Those words come during His classic Sermon on the Mount where Jesus is making the point that the Christian life is all about the heart. If you want to know about the condition of the heart, look at what a man is doing with his money. That is probably why Jesus says more about money than he does any other subject. Most people struggle with turning to the Bible for financial direction because they like to think about money as something separate from their spiritual life. The Bible is religious; money is secular. Jesus says just the opposite is true. What we do with our money is a direct indication of the true position of our heart.

In Luke 19:9 Jesus makes a bold proclamation about Zacchaeus’ salvation saying, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he is also a son of

Abraham.” The only thing the text reveals has changed in Zacchaeus’ life is his commitment to “give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold” (Luke 19:8). In Matthew 19:16 the rich young ruler comes asking, “what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” When Jesus gets to His final answer, He tells the man, “go, sell what you have and give to the poor” (Mat. 19:21). Man is tempted to think that our money and possessions have nothing to do with our salvation. Jesus says the two are tied inseparably together. “Just as Jesus gauged Zacchaeus’s true spiritual condition by his willingness to part with his money, so he gauged the rich young ruler’s true spiritual condition by his unwillingness to part with his money” (Alcorn 5). This same point is made repeatedly in Luke 3. When John described to those coming to be baptized how to bear the fruit of repentance he said, “He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do like wise” (Luke 3:11). He instructed the tax collectors, “collect no more than what is appointed for you” (Luke 3:13). To the soldiers he told them to “be content with their wages” (Luke 3:14). In each instance John connects the use and management of our physical possessions with our spiritual reality. When those physical possessions become out of balance it throws our spiritual walk out of balance. Satan knows that and uses those blessings of prosperity to draw man farther away from the Lord. Jesus acknowledged this danger in Matthew 19:23-24 saying, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom

of Heaven. And again, I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

One of those financial tools Satan uses against man is referred to as debt. Money is different from many other limited resources. Most limited resources have a way of regulating themselves. When you run out of time, you can't get any more. When you run out of energy, it is gone. When you run out of money, you can just borrow more to repay later. This is how debt is created. When these bills cannot be paid it creates a relationship of servitude no Christian should find acceptable. Proverbs 22:7 reminds the reader, “the borrower is servant to the lender. Debt creates a new master or obligation that begins to interfere with the ultimate master and more important obligations. As debt increases; stress increases. This is why money issues are one of the leading causes of marital stress and even divorce. Many times, I will tell couples that if they want to improve their marriage they should sell their car. The biggest fight I ever had with my wife was over a can of corn that cost a few cents. The argument was not really about the can of corn. It was just the outpouring of financial stress. Most want to give sacrificially to honor God but they don't do it because they are over committed to other bills. Suddenly the new car I could not afford, but thanked God for providing, has been turned into a tool of Satan to create tension in my marriage and keep me from honoring God.

The wisdom of Proverbs warns over and over of the perils of debt. “A man devoid of understanding shakes

hands in a pledge, and becomes surety for his friend” (Prov. 17:18). These words also provide warning against the dangers of co-signing other people’s debts. Similar warnings are given in Proverbs 22:26-27 and 27:13. Proverbs 6:1-5 encourages those in debt to pursue getting out of debt as quickly as a gazelle runs from a hunter.

Our problem with debt comes from a seemingly insatiable desire to have more. While we usually know intellectually it is not true, human beings tend to believe if we only had more money, possessions, etc. we would be happy. We tend to think that our standard of living determines the quality of our life. If we only had a little more, then we would be happy. If I could drive that car, I could be happy. If my kids had the latest gaming system, they would be happy. If I just had a little more, everything would be fine. Most of us have experienced firsthand advancement from a monetary perspective, only to find ourselves wanting more and more. Ecclesiastes 5:10 observes, “He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance with increase. This also is vanity.” It is this belief a little more will satisfy us that drives people into debt. It drives us to borrow money that we cannot afford to pay back.

Standing behind this insatiable desire for more stuff is a lack of dependence on God. The Bible reassures us that if we are seeking first His Kingdom God will provide for our needs (Mat. 6:33). When we do not have money for something we desire, it might be because we do not need it. When we pursue debt as an option to obtain those things, it can be an indication

that we are not trusting God and being content with the things He has given us. This contentment is very difficult to embrace. Paul wrote in Philippians 4:12-13, “I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things, I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Instead of assuming God has not provided, it might be helpful to conclude God does not think we need everything we think we need so desperately. To allow those desires to exist a little longer is a wonderful way to learn contentment with God’s provision.

There are many resources designed to help people get out of debt. At the front of the list is probably Dave Ramsey’s *The Total Money Makeover*. At the core of any plan is learning to sacrifice things you have previously enjoyed. Maybe you need to sell a car or change your lifestyle. Instead of taking a vacation this year or eating out 4 nights a week, you could volunteer your time off and eat at home. Beyond sacrifice is also the importance of increasing the resources coming in through hard work (Prov.10:4, 21:25) and making choices today that will have a positive impact in your life in the future. The hard work might take the form of a new job or just working longer hours. The investment might take the form of acquiring additional schooling, training, or experience. The tools that are acquired today will help tomorrow. Of course, none of this is done simply to get out of debt. The value of getting out of debt is so that we might not be slave to the lender, but rather to the Lord.

Paul exhorts his readers in Romans 13:8, “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.” While I do not think this is a strict prohibition of ever being in debt, it does establish an important principle that debts tend to distract man from greater relationships and realities that only come through loving one another. Our debt is not only a financial issue, but shows a spiritual reality. Too often man has enslaved himself through debt, inviting stress, compromise, and misplaced priorities into his life. May we have the courage to be different from the world so Satan will not be able to hold this debilitating tool over our heads and endanger our souls. Jesus says in Matthew 6:24, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon.”

Works Cited

- Alcorn, Randy. *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Publishers, 2003. Print.
- Ramsey, Dave. *The Total Money Makeover*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003. Print.

The Devil And Judas

John Grubb



John M. Grubb has been preaching since 1970. All but twelve of those years have been in mission work. He spent ten years as a missionary in Taiwan. He is fluent in Mandarin Chinese and can read and write Chinese. He is now in his 36th year of working among the Chinese people around the world. He prepares and translates materials into Chinese that are used around the world. He has produced more than 185 video lessons in Chinese and dozens of video lessons in English at World Video Bible School in Maxwell, TX. He has also helped in producing radio lessons for broadcast in China. Chinese materials are found on his website: www.grubbchinese.org. There are many of his Chinese videos available for viewing on YouTube as well. Since 1985, he has made 64 mission trips and has traveled to 22 nations of the world. He also travels in the U.S. to report on his work as well as to conduct gospel meetings and to participate in lectureships, mission forums, and workshops. His work is under the oversight of the Chestnut Mountain Church of Christ in Chestnut Mountain, Georgia, USA.

What is the first thing most people think about when Judas Iscariot's name is mentioned? He betrayed Christ! (John 13:18). This was in fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the Messiah (Psa. 41:9; Acts 1:16,20). The name Judas is a very common name in the Bible, so God's Word uses "Iscariot" to distinguish him from the other people named Judas in the Bible. Jesus had a brother named Judas (Mat. 13:55); one of the other apostles was also named Judas

(Luke 6:16); Judas Barsabas was one of the Christians who went with Paul and Barnabas to the Jerusalem conference and was also a prophet (Acts 15:22-23,32); Gamaliel mentions a “Judas of Galilee” (Acts 5:37); and others.

Judas was the only apostle chosen who was not from Galilee. He was from a Judean city named Kerioth. All of the other apostles were from Galilee (Acts 2:7). The first reference to him is found when Jesus selects His apostles. He was one of the original twelve apostles chosen to follow the Lord (Mat. 10:2-4). That means he had been a follower of Jesus since His baptism (Acts 1:15-22).

And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take. Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, **Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that**

same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection (Acts 1:15-22).

When Matthias was selected to replace Judas, it was made clear the disciple had to follow Jesus from His baptism until His resurrection (Acts 1:22). Peter also mentions the fulfillment of David's prophecy concerning Judas. The last reference to him is found at the end of this section of Acts chapter one where Peter says, "...from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place" (Acts 1:25). Paul does mention the Lord's betrayal in discussing the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23).

Notice some of the descriptions of Judas Iscariot. He is called a traitor (Mat. 10:4; Luke 6:16). He is also called a betrayer (Mat. 17:22; Mat. 26:16; John 6:64,70-71). He is described as a thief (John 12:6). Even though the Lord knew that Judas was going to betray Him does not mean He forced him to do so. God does not force people to sin (Isa. 10:5-7).

O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few (Isa. 10:5-7).

John 13:27 Says Satan Entered Into Judas In What Sense Did He Do This?

There was no miraculous or direct influence of the devil that caused Judas to betray the Lord. Satan entered into Judas through Judas' own thoughts, not some form of demon possession. The context of this question is found in John 13:18-30. Jesus told the apostles that he would be betrayed. They had no idea who would do that. They thought Jesus said what he said to Judas because it had something to do with buying something for the feast or for assisting the poor.

Throughout history, God has used wicked people to accomplish His will. But God has never forced anyone to do anything. That is the concept of freewill. However, because of the character of the wicked individual, God used them to bring about His will.

Pharoah

Remember, God's providence never forces people to go against their own nature. He never violates people's free will (Exo. 9:16,34). God used Pharaoh to help show him and Egypt that He is the One and Only True God. Pharaoh hardened his heart towards God. God used that to show that He was more powerful.

Cyrus

That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid (Isa. 44:28).

Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut (Isa. 45:1).

About two hundred years before Cyrus was born, Isaiah prophesied that he would allow the temple to be rebuilt. God used him to do that. Note what God says about him in Isaiah 45:5-6:

I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else (Isa. 45:5-6).

2 Chronicles chapter 36:22-23 also mentions Cyrus.

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up (2 Chr. 36:22-23).

Herod and Pilate

And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they

heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done (Acts 4:23-28).

In this passage, both Herod and Pilate are mentioned along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel. They were doing what God had planned, but He did not make them do what they did. He just used them to bring about His will.

Judas

The same is true in regard to Judas Iscariot. He fulfilled the prophecy of betrayal (Psa. 41:9; John 13:27). God did not force him to do this, but used him to bring about His will. In God's plan, He opens the door, but He does not force us to go through for good or bad.

How Did Satan Ultimately Bring Down One of the Lord's Chosen Apostles?

The devil used the same method to influence Judas that he uses to influence all of us (1 John 2:15-17;

James 1:13-16).

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren (James 1:13-16).

God created mankind with the freedom to choose. People sin because they choose to do so. God does not force people to sin. After God created Adam and Eve, He put them in the Garden of Eden, providing for their needs. He also gave them commands they were to follow (Gen. 2:15-17).

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Gen. 2:15-17).

It was because of the sin of Adam and Eve that sin entered into the world (Gen. 3:1-6; Rom. 5:12).

The devil used the same kind of temptation with Christ (Mat. 4:1-11). His temptation was the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” In each case, our Lord resisted the temptation with “it is written” (James 4:7; Psa. 119:11).

Judas was “drawn away of his own lust.” He was a covetous thief, which tells us something of his character (John 12:1-6; Mat. 26:14-16; Mat. 27:3-5).

Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein (John 12:1-6).

Was Judas really interested in the poor? Inspiration tells us no, but it was because he was the treasurer and he was a thief.

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him (Mat. 26:14-16).

It may have been that his faith was so weak, he no longer believed the words of Jesus, so he decided to get what he could from the Jews. It also may be that he did not think Jesus would be killed. When Jesus was arrested, he did not repent or turn back to God, but he regretted his actions (2 Cor. 7:8-10).

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself (Mat. 27:3-5).

What Lessons Can Christians Learn From This?

Leaders/Heroes Can and Will Fall

Judas was a leader. He was one of the twelve apostles. He spent over three years with the Lord listening to the lessons He delivered, seeing with his own eyes the miracles that Jesus performed, and viewing the perfect example set by our Savior (Mat. chapters 5-7; John 11; 1 Peter 2:21-22). Just because someone is a leader or a hero, does not mean they cannot fall. Paul said, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

Judas was not the only leader/hero who fell. We could mention the example of Solomon (1 Kings 11:1-8; Neh. 13:26-27). Demas is also an example of a leader

who left the faith (Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:10). Ananias and Sapphira are some of the earliest members of the Lord's church, but they lied to God (Acts 5:3-4).

We can also think of brethren in modern times that have been tempted by the devil and have fallen away.

The Importance of Obeying from the Heart

Here is someone who was constantly with the Lord every day. He was exposed to the best possible teaching and example that has ever existed. But apparently, Judas did not really believe it. The Bible emphasizes the importance of obeying God with our whole heart (Rom. 6:16-18; Acts 8:37).

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:16-18).

And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 8:37).

It is possible for a person to read the Bible every day, attend all of the services of the church, and spend much of the time with brethren. However, if we do not make the commitment that is necessary to have the right attitude and actions, then we too can fall away (Luke 14:25-33; Mat. 16:24-26).

Be Encouraged in Spite of Betrayers

There will be members of the church who appear to be faithful but can end up “stabbing you in the back.” How many preachers and elders have had members who appear to support them and help them, then turn against them? There are others who appear to be faithful but are actually playing the hypocrite (Mat. 13:22; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Mat. 6:24). We need to remember our Lord has set the example for us (1 Peter 2:21-24). Also, in Bible history, God has delivered those who are faithful to Him, e.g. David and Absalom; Daniel and his three friends; the apostles.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:7-10).

Conclusion

We have been looking at the circumstances surrounding Judas' betrayal of Christ. Jesus said of him, “The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is

betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born” (Mark 14:21).

We have discussed what method the devil used to enter into Judas. We have also looked at how he could bring down an apostle of Christ and cause him to betray the Christ. We have presented practical lessons we can learn from the life of Judas. He is not the kind of example we want to follow. Instead, we want to follow examples like Paul, Barnabas, and Christ (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Peter 2:21-22).

The devil is our enemy, our adversary. May the Lord bless us as we strive to resist his temptations and live for Christ (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9; Gal. 2:20).

The Defeat Of The Devil

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.



Robert R. Taylor, Jr., was born in Bradford, Tennessee, in 1931. He was baptized in 1944. On September, 15, 1952, he married Irene, and for the next sixty four years, they walked hand in hand, before she passed on to her reward. Robert began preaching in 1949. He was educated at Freed-Hardeman, David Lipscomb and George Peabody for Teachers. Has done local work in TN and MS for fifty-six years. Has been at Ripley, Tennessee, for forty-one years. He has preached in about 500 gospel meetings and over 700 lectureships throughout the nation. Robert has presented over 6,500 sermons on radio and TV. For 28 years he has helped with a prison ministry and baptized inmates. He serves as an instructor for the Online Academy of Biblical Studies for 15 years. He has two children and four grandchildren. He has authored thirty-five books and twenty-five tracts. For seventeen and one-half years he wrote material for Gospel Advocate Quarterlies and the Annual companion. Between 1969 and 1977 he served as a staff writer under B. C. Goodpasture, editor of the *Gospel Advocate*. On January 1, 2011, he retired from local work but continues to be an active member at Ripley. He is now spending time in gospel meetings, lectureships, and an immense amount of time in writing.

It has been a rich privilege through the years to be invited to speak at all past *Power* Lectureships, beginning with the initial one which dealt with Providence, conducted here at Southaven under the direction of the late and lamented Thomas Warren and Garland Elkins – two of our very best preachers. Genuine thanks are extended to Don, Robert, the elders, and all precious members

of this good and great congregation for this current invitation. Each Lectureship has produced a Lectureship Volume. I treasure all of them and often refer to them for help in my study of the Bible. I count my books as my special friends and close advisors. They are meaty and relevant. They are never outdated. Some books are too long from Introduction to Conclusion but not any of the Power books.

Victory And Defeat

There is a vast difference between Christ and His people and Satan and his children. And he does have children as per John 8:44. “Victory In Jesus” is frequently sung among churches of Christ. Who, in his right **mind**, would want to compose a song and entitle it, “Victory In Satan”? Victory does not fit him; defeat does.

Paul wrote in marvel and majesty, “Death is swallowed up in victory... But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:54, 57). Though Paul did not mention the actual word victory in the closing verses of Romans 8 and 11, victory is embedded eloquently in each syllable of these Pauline sentiments (Rom. 8:35-39; Rom. 11:33-36).

At Calvary and in His resurrection, Jesus won the victory over Satan and all his allies. Satanic defeat was written at Calvary and at the opened tomb. In totality, the conquering Christ won victory over all forces of His foes.

Who should desire to be on Satan's defeated side when he could be traveling with the Victorious Christ and marching in unison with saints of the Most High God on the road to that eternal City of God? In this beautiful beyond, crowns await and rewards ready to be claimed by the redeemed. Yet, amazingly, the masses of humanity are traveling at breakneck speed with Gehenna as final destination. It is soundly defeating every mile they follow him. People who die in relationship to him and his evil cause will not occupy the right hand come Judgement day.

A Never Ending Conflict Between God And Satan

It began when Satan and his willing servants chose to reject God and follow devilish thoughts, devilish word and devilish actions.

The battle of good versus evil was fought in Eden. Eve, later Adam, listening to the satanic lie, "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). Both chose wrong over right. Sin entered the world and has been here ever since.

It was fought in Noah's era with the masses of men living in an ungodly and unrighteous framework. They perished in the waters of that universal flood.

It was fought in Lot's day when sinful Sodom and godless Gomorrah chose Satan's club for their membership in mischief and malice.

Only Lot and two of his daughters escaped from this fiery destruction that descended upon the four cities of the Jordan plain.

It was fought again when the Egyptians and their Pharaoh chose Satan over Jehovah. Had they not learned anything from Governor Joseph who earlier had served the Land of the Nile for probably 80 or more years? They could have learned much about God from Moses and Aaron at the beginning of the plagues, but they were too obstinate to listen and learn.

It was fought again when the third generation from Joshua forsook their Heavenly Benefactor for the lifeless gods and goddesses of their Palestinian neighbors. How quickly humanity forgets the Giver of every good gift, every perfect gift (James 1:17).

It was fought again when the sinful sons of Eli, Hophni, and Phinehas chose sacrilege and flagrant fornication with hordes of abandoned women, even in the tabernacle area, over Jehovah and Mosaic mandates.

It was fought again when Absalom turned on his own father and sought to steal the Kingdom from David and even sought to slay David. Just previous to this battle being fought, the illustrious David was consorting with a bathing beauty – Bathsheba. David was not the type of father Absalom needed when he and Bathsheba were breaking the seventh commandment of the Decalogue.

It was fought again when wise Solomon became foolish Solomon in going after the idols his harem brought into his kingdom and court.

It was fought again when some Southern Kings and all of the monarchs of the Northern Kingdom forsook Jehovah God for ways of worldliness – lust of the flesh,

lust of the eyes and the pride or vainglory of life (Cf. 1 John 2:15-17).

It was fought again when only Elijah and the 7,000 had not bowed the knee to Baal. The implication is that the rest of that nation had bowed to Baal's knee. The guilty ones were breaking the opening verses of Exodus 20, one of the chapters stating the Decalogue.

It was fought again when Satan won the hearts of the Israelites who heard great prophets and faithful Seers and yet loved the ways of the world rather than serve Jehovah. Jeremiah 6:16-17 is a prime example where obstinate Jews informed the weeping prophet that they were not going to tread the old paths or hear the trumpet of truth. They wanted nothing to do with Jehovah or His laws.

It was fought again in the New Testament era when the Herods rejected Christ and later His church. Christianity was not the cup of tea they wanted to drink.

It was fought again when Christ faced the hostile Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians who hated Him with a passion. In their fury of hatred and malice they succeeded in sending Him to Calvary with Romans as executioners.

It was fought again when Paul and other gallant warriors of Calvary confronted enemies of Calvary (See Phil. 3:18-19). Both Jews and non-Jews were their constant foes.

It was fought again when Rome and its Emperors declared war on Christianity. Nero and Domitian were militant in their contempt and utter disdain for the Christian religion.

Evil and good are currently in deadly conflict. Evil has taken over when a couple on a date gives in to passion and commits fornication. Sex is only right between marital mates. Evil has taken over when people curse, steal, lie, murder and commit every crime in the book of evil deeds. Thoughts, words and deeds can all be evil.

Evil and good are in deadly conflict when parents seek to keep their accountable children from obeying the gospel of God's Son. I have baptized a number of people who had to go contrary to family to become obedient to the demands of the gospel. I baptized a young man a number of years ago. As he and I were in the dressing room preparing for his immersion, he told me that he did not know what he would face when he went home and told his Dad what he had just done. It took courage to do as he had done. On another occasion, I was preparing to baptize a young man on a weekday afternoon when his father forcefully took him home forbidding that he do such. His father was deeply prejudiced toward the church his son had learned to love, respect, and desired to become a member of the same. Later, I took him to a neighboring congregation and baptized him without his father's knowledge. Had he known he would have stopped it again. I greatly admired the courage he had just exhibited.

On a Saturday afternoon, back in the 1950's I was visited by a lady and her daughters. Her folks were members of the church but she had never obeyed the gospel. She stated to me, "My daughters and I want to be baptized tomorrow. We must keep it from my Catholic

husband and their Catholic father. He would stop such if he knew.” The following day they all responded when the invitation was extended. I baptized three or four very courageous people. Those who would hinder another from gospel obedience are agents of Satan; they are doing his work. These could be duplicated by veterans of gospel preaching. Evil has won the day when evil men and women obstruct the Lord’s church and its work of redemption. This is not the way to defeat the devil.

When evil triumphs, Satan has won and truth had been defeated. Such is a sure vote to make the world worse and heaven more distant. It is a major hindrance for winning souls for the Lord and His holy cause.

Satan travels the sure road of evil and he is aided by the masses of men and women, by accountable boys and girls.

Some Appropriate Scriptures Against Satan And His Cause

In the closing chapters of the four gospel records we read of Christ’s death, burial, resurrection and ascension. Satan must have rejoiced greatly when diehard Jews cried out to Governor Pilate, “Let him be crucified” (Mat. 27:22; Mark 15:13; Luke 23:21). Glee must have filled his unholy heart and that of his cronies when Christ breathed His final breath on that old rugged cross and His body was placed in a borrowed tomb later to be sealed to thwart the anticipated resurrection. (Mat. 27:63-66). However, it was temporal joy on Satan’s part, for three days later He arose triumphing over the

sealed tomb. His death and resurrection placed Satan and his cohorts on the road of defeat with the ultimate destination of Eternal Gehenna.

In 1 John 3:8 we read:

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.

Several years ago I wrote a short commentary on 1, 2, 3 John. My comments on 1 John 3:8 were:

The habitual sinner that makes sin the real ruler of his life, a life of ungodliness, is of the devil. He is like the devil and is considered his son, his offspring. The devil has been a sinner from the beginning, i. e., from the first act of sin that turned him into the devil. He has been its habitual father and chief patron ever since with no noticeable interruption. For this very purpose God's Son came that He might destroy the devil's works. His works would include his plans, purposes and intentions to destroy man. Included in the works of the devil which Christ came to destroy is not only sin and its guilt but all things with it. Physical death will be destroyed at the second coming as reflected in First Corinthians 15:26, 51-56. At the Lord's coming and with the resurrection of all the devil's works will be destroyed in their total finality. Because such is definitely to occur our allegiance needs to be on the Lord's side, not Satan's.

Closely akin to what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15, there is a magnificent message ascribed to Timothy, his son in the gospel, how Jesus by His appearing has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light

by the gospel (2 Tim. 1:10). How eloquently enunciated this regal statement is. It is truly one of the many gems of gold in 2 Timothy. With ardent assurance Paul, in the great resurrection chapter of 1 Corinthians 15, says that the last enemy to be destroyed is death (Verse 36). In yonder's bright, blessed and beautiful world "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain for the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:4)."

By far the hardest thing I have ever had to do was the passing of my beautiful wife Irene in January of 2017. Many who read these lines can relate. If those who have gone on were faithful till death, our loss has been their gain. Heaven glows more brightly with the thought of seeing them again if we are faithful ourselves.

The defeat of the devil is on the inspired Luke's mind when he wrote,

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying Lord, even the devils (demons – ASV) are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven (Luke 10:17-18).

This is not the end of Satan, as the scholarly Don Blackwell wrote in notes he sent all the speakers, but "is a reduction of Satan's power." Every conversion to Christ is a further reduction of his power. He has one less servant to do his infamous bidding. Incidentally, this is one of many biblical affirmations of the reality of Satan and demons as some have denied.

John 12:31 adds another sword point by stating, "Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the

prince of this world be cast out.” His has been a usurped position as prince of this world but he has played it to the uttermost and continues as that roaring lion walking about seeking to destroy God’s work on earth (1 Peter 5:8). In Ephesians 2:2 Paul styles him the prince of the power of the air.

When Paul describes so thoroughly the Christian’s armor in Ephesians 6:10-18, he knew so well that Christians are in a battle most serious. It is a deadly conflict with souls at stake. He described our fierce foes,

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood,
but against principalities, against the rulers
of the darkness of this world, against spiritual
wickedness in high places (Eph. 6:12).

In a twin epistle to Ephesians, Colossians, Paul looked back at Calvary and the Christ, who died thereon and wrote,

And having spoiled principalities and powers,
he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over
them in it (Col. 2:15).

Relative to these two verses I commented in my book “*Studies In Ephesians And Colossians*,”

Our conflict is not just against flesh and blood (human sources such as false teachers) but is a spiritual conflict with diabolical antagonists. We fight the devil with his principalities, rulers of darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places. Recall that he is “the prince of the power of the air” In Ephesians 2:2. Christ called him “the prince of this world” in John 16:11. He reaches and influences people by the doctrines of devils (demons – ASV) as stated in 1 Timothy 4:1. His

imps in the spiritual world aid him beyond our human comprehension. But God and His people and the Lamb and His army is stronger than all these spiritual enemies combined. In fact there is no comparison.

In Colossians 2:8 Paul wrote, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ...”

My comments were,

Beware and take heed are flashing red lights indicating danger ahead. False teachers, maybe one man in the lead, were out to make booty of their of their very souls. This is the spoil they craved. The plan of proselyting was through “philosophy and vain deceit.” Philosophy was “love of wisdom” but false teachers did not bring true philosophy or heavenly wisdom; they brought in fatal philosophy. Their stock-in-trade was “vain deceit.” The Gnostics majored in such falsehood. Docetic Gnostics denied Jesus came in the flesh. They took the position that all matter, including flesh, is evil and therefore Jesus could not have come with an evil body. But their premise was ill-founded. But he came in the flesh. John proves this conclusively in 1 John and 2 John. He called people anti-Christ who denied Christ came in the flesh. This error about sinful flesh led to two extremes. One was asceticism which kept from enjoying what was permitted. The other is hedonism. If the body was evil, then what it does will not touch or affect the human spirit at all. Hence, give in to all fleshly indulgences such as fornication, adultery, etc. Paul refutes both in Colossians 2 and 3.

Satan and sin are deceivers of the deepest dye. Sin promises what it never delivers to its patrons. It will take us farther than we intended to go. It will keep us longer than we intended to stay.

Don Blackwell, in notes he sent to speakers, had this to say, “Jesus came into the world to destroy the works of the devil but it did not all happen instantaneously.” Brother Blackwell continues,

In different ways and in various stages Satan was bound by the birth, life, teaching, works, death, resurrection, ascension and reign of Christ. At the end of time the Lord will finally and completely bruise the serpent’s head.

Satan knew, and knew well, that Jesus was to be the worst enemy he would ever face. Recall that at the time of His birth, Satan sought to slay Bethlehem’s Babe. Just subsequent to His immersion in Jordan at John’s hands, Satan met the Saviour as the Tempter. Matthew 4 and Luke 4 supply the details of this “Battle of the Ages.” Satan challenged Him to turn stones into bread. This would have been no more difficult than later as He took a small quantity of food and fed thousands. Jesus, as Maker of all, had made those very stones Satan was using. Jesus refuted him by resorting to Deuteronomy with the words, Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word proceeding out of God’s mouth.

Then he sought Him to hurl Himself from the temple pinnacle, even quoting an Old Testament passage promising Him angelic protection. Again, He quoted from Deuteronomy to the effect that God is not be tempted.

In third place, according to Matthew 4, Satan sought to obtain worship from Jesus with the promise that all the world would be His. Then a third time, Jesus went to the Mosaic book of Deuteronomy stating that only God is to be worshipped and served.

Jesus did not employ miracles to defeat the devil. Had He done so, this would not be an example to us for none of us has miraculous power. He met Satan and defeated him by using the all-powerful Word of the Living God. This we can do, if we are willing. In James 4 and 1 Peter 5 these two inspired scribes say he can be resisted and he will flee or resist him in the faith (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9).

The Rest Of The Story

Satan is a loser. Who wants to be a loser when souls are at stake? He is defeated. Who wants to be led by a defeatist? He is a deceiver. Who wants to have a deceiver for a tutor? He is traveling down a dead end street with eternal Gehenna as final destination. Who wants to go to that realm prepared for the devil and his angels (Mat. 25:41)?

Travel with him throughout life and burn with him in hell! This is what the masses of people are doing.

Works Cited

All quotations are from the KJV unless otherwise noted.
Taylor, Robert R. Jr., "*Studies In 1st, 2nd and 3rd John.*"
Lambert Book House, Inc. Shreveport, 1985,
p. 30

ROBERT R. TAYLOR, JR.

Taylor, Robert R. Jr., "*Studies In Ephesians And Colossians*", Taylor Publications, Ripley, TN.,
Printed by Sain Publications, Pulaski, TN., 2010,
pp. 180-181.

Classes For Women:
A Study Of
Daughters Of The Devil

Daughters Of The Devil: Jezebel

Blair Jefferies



Blair was born and raised in Memphis, TN. She is married to Robert Jefferies, one of the ministers at the Southaven Church of Christ. They have been married for 15 years, and together, they have 3 children, Aylin (9), Hilton (6), and Weston (4). She has a BA degree in elementary education from Tennessee Tech University, and taught 5th grade for several years before staying at home with her children. At Southaven, she is heavily involved in the education program, girls training classes, as well as, co-directing the monthly lady's devotionals.

Prologue

I am deeply honored to be asked to write and speak for the 2018 *Power* Lectureship held by the Southaven church of Christ. This year's topics were highly intriguing and while I have been nervous about this opportunity, it has been a welcomed challenge. My prayer is that this study helps you as much as it has helped me, and that as women we will use our power of influence for the glory of God, not the devil.

Introduction

Jezebel. The name carries with it a meaning of great wickedness. Out of curiosity, I looked online at numerous baby name meaning websites to see what they had to say about the name Jezebel. There were 3 main answers: 1) not found or rarely used, 2) impure, and 3) shameless. *Urban Dictionary* says this about the name Jezebel:

A female who is seeking attention from and possibly plotting to use someone who is wealthy or otherwise desirable in order to gain status in society. She is often beautiful and knows it, she uses her looks to her advantage to lure in her next victim. She will do anything and will use anyone to get what she wants. She is interested in the people she's interested in purely as a status symbol and will toss them away and move on when they no longer satisfy what she wants.

Do you know someone like that? I sincerely hope not, but truth be told, someone probably did pop into your mind. If you google her name, the images show beautiful women, sometimes scantily dressed, or biblical renditions of Queen Jezebel's death. But perhaps the most interesting images were that of a woman with snake-like or other worldly devilish artistic features. Isn't that the theme of this year's ladies' lessons, daughters of the devil? Perhaps the worst insult that could ever be given to a Christian woman would be to be called Jezebel. Throughout this lesson we are going to take a look at three different women and how they had the power to dramatically affect all those around them. We will learn about the devastating consequences of Queen Jezebel found in the Old Testament, a woman that Jesus refers to as Jezebel in the New Testament, and a modern-day wife and mother.

A Modern-Day Case Study

A lady, let's call her Jessie, approached a preacher asking for advice about her marriage. After almost 30 years, her husband had told her he felt like they needed a divorce. There was not another woman, he was just

tired of sharing a space with her. He felt as if their love had disappeared; as their children had grown in the latter years, they were just going through the motions of husband and wife. Now, since the kids had all moved out, the two of them could move on with their lives and become truly happy again. Jessie did not want this. She wanted them to seek help, but the husband wasn't on board. She asked the preacher, is there anything I can do? How can I save my marriage, if he won't seek help with me? The preacher asked her a series of questions:

When was the last time you smiled at him? When was the last time you greeted him with a kiss? Held his hand? When was the last time you sat right next to him? Leaned into him on the couch for a cuddle? When was the last time you caressed his back? Told him you loved him? Needed him? Wanted him?

Jessie let out a deep breath and sullenly answered with "I don't know." So, the preacher gave the following advice: for the next month I want you to do everything you can to make him happy. Smile at him, greet him with a kiss, tell him you love him, cook his favorite meal. Make it your job to make him smile every day. Think back to when you were first married and draw on those memories. It may not make an immediate difference but continue to do this every day and take note of any changes in you and him individually and in your relationship. Remember don't give up. At this point, Jessie might have been thinking, "that is a lot to ask of me or perhaps, I do not have that kind of power, I can't make a difference in our marriage." We will check back in with this couple towards the end of this chapter.

An Old Testament Case Study

We are first introduced to Queen Jezebel in the book of 1 Kings. King Ahab has just become the King of Israel.

And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Neat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him (1 Kings 16:30-31).

Isn't it interesting that King Ahab was known as a wicked king but in verse 31, before we are introduced to his wife, God's word says, "it was a light thing for him to walk in the sins." It is saying his wickedness before marriage was nothing compared to after he married Jezebel. She made his evilness appear to be nothing at all. Jezebel out shines her husband in the most wicked ways imaginable.

She was a murderer. Jezebel seemed to make it her life's mission to erase Jehovah God from Israel. We read in 1 Kings 18:4 that she, not Ahab, had ordered the murders of the Lord's prophets. When the prophet Elijah, with God on his side, mightily defeats the many prophets of Baal in a show down witnessed by King Ahab himself, it is Queen Jezebel who threatens the life of Elijah and sends him fleeing for his own life. If you keep reading about her, you will see that she is responsible for the death of others as well.

She was sarcastic and controlling. Later, in 1 Kings 21, we read of the King sulking in his room because he didn't get his way. He wanted another man's vineyard

as his own, but that man would not give his land to the king. King Ahab was pouting so much that he was even refusing to eat (1 Kings 21:4). Jezebel replied, presumably in a very sarcastic tone, aren't you the KING of Israel? She then tells him, in so many words, to get over it! Are we guilty of this? I venture to say that we have all responded in this sort of manner at some point in our lives. When my children are crying or pouting over something I feel is trivial or uncalled for, my first reaction is to say, "Dry it up!" and it is not in a kind tone. While I have never said that to my husband, this is what I envision Jezebel doing to Ahab. The correct response would have been more along the lines of sitting down on the bed next to him, putting a loving arm around him, and encouraging him to find a different vineyard. Isn't that how we distract children from time to time? Sweet child, it is not yours to play with, here take this awesome action figure instead. But not Jezebel, she degrades him with her words and tone. "She didn't offer advice or seek it – she simply took control" (Higgs 181).

She was a schemer and a liar. It is no doubt that Jezebel was a smart woman; by all accounts she seemed to be a quick thinker too. In no time at all she came up with and executed a plan to get her husband the vineyard. Notice 1 Kings 21:8-10:

So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and the nobles that were in his city, selling with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: and set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou

didst blaspheme God and the king. And then
carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.

Jezebel, it seems, didn't think twice about pretending to be the king. Perhaps she was used to doing things like this. She signed his name to her plan and used his seal to make it an official document; we would call this forgery and it is against the law today just like it was then. According to 1 Kings 21:11-13 her scheme worked perfectly. All the men came, they honored Naboth, the two lying witnesses made their false accusations against Naboth, and he was carried outside and stoned to death. It is interesting to note that in the next verse, it seems that multiple people actually knew about this wicked plan and went along with it. "Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead" (1 Kings 21:14). Notice they did not go to Ahab, they knew who was really in charge of the kingdom. One writer said, "they knew who wore the loincloth in that household, and they acted more out of fear, perhaps, than respect" (Higgs 182).

She showed no remorse. In 1 Kings 21:27 we read that Ahab repents of his evil doings and earns a few more years of living. The Lord's prophet, Elijah, had just announced their impending deaths and it humbles Ahab. However, we never read of Jezebel repenting. Even when her husband is killed in battle and she sees the prophecy come true, she does not repent. When she realized her own death was coming just as the prophet had declared, she still did not repent.

She was prideful and vain. "And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and turned her head, and looked out the window"

(2 Kings 9:30). She no doubt had a very high opinion about herself, even when death was coming for her, she took the time to look her queenly best. She looked out her window straight down to the man who had come to kill her and spoke to him defiantly calling him Zimri. This was an insult as “Zimri was a traitor who only lived a week after overthrowing his master” (Higgs 184). Can you imagine looking death in the eye and insulting him? Perhaps she felt safe way up in her chamber. But Jehu, looks up to that window and sees the Queen’s eunuchs standing near her and asks a simple question. “Who is on my side?” (2 Kings 9:32). Think about any bosses you have had in your lifetime. None have been as wicked as Queen Jezebel; one can only dream, nightmarishly that is, the way those eunuchs had been treated over the years. The Bible tells us that when Jehu says “throw her down” in 2 Kings 9:33; they did. It doesn’t say they thought about it or discussed it, they just presumably shoved her out that window to her death. “And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses; and he trodden her under foot” (2 Kings 9:33).

What can I learn from this horrid queen? For starters, God keeps His promises. Elijah told Ahab that “the dogs would eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel” in 1 Kings 21:23. Then in 2 Kings 9:35-37 we read:

And they went to bury her; but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands. Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, This is the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall

dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel: and the carcass of
Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field
in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not
say, This is Jezebel.

It didn't matter how long she had been successful by
being wicked, God was coming for her just as He is
coming for the wicked today.

Secondly, family is important. Jezebel came from
a wicked family and chose to continue on that path.
Her daughter, Athaliah, was known as a "grotesquely
vile queen" (Colley 371) and, among other things,
attempted to massacre all of her own grandchildren (2
Chr. 21-24). I'm reminded of a poem that hung in my
high school basketball team's locker room.

"Little Eyes Upon You" by Edgar Guest

There are little eyes upon you
and they're watching night and day.
There are little ears that quickly take in
every word you say.
There are little hands all eager
to do anything you do;
And a little girl who's dreaming
of the day she'll be like you.

You're the little angel's idol,
you're the wisest of the wise.
In her little mind about you
no suspicions ever rise.
She believes in you devoutly,
holds all you say and do;
She will say and do, in your way
when she's grown up just like you.

There's a wide-eyed little girl
 who believes you're always right;
and her eyes are always opened,
 and she watches day and night.
You are setting an example
 every day in all you do;
For the little girl who's waiting
 to grow up to be like you.

Whether you are a mother, grandmother, teacher, aunt, or friend, if you are around children you are influencing them either for the good or for the bad. If you were to continue studying about the extended family of Ahab and Jezebel, you would find that they are all ultimately violently destroyed for their wickedness.

Thirdly, we really should treat others how we want to be treated. Throughout this study on Queen Jezebel we have seen how ugly she treated other people: the Lord's prophets, her husband, her eunuchs, her people. Think about how different her life might have been had she not tried to kill off God's prophets, had she treated her husband with love and respect, or had she been a kind queen? It is Aesop that said, "No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted." Oh, what might have been?

A New Testament Case Study

Thyatira was a city known for trading and manufacturing. This place was famous for two things, large trade guilds (similar to a workers' union) and purple dyed garments. Remember in Acts 16, meeting Lydia who was a seller of purple from Thyatira? In Revelation, there is a letter written to the church in Thyatira. Jesus acknowledges many great things about

this congregation, but they had a serious problem that needed to be addressed. Let's take a look at Christ's letter to the church in Thyatira.

And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou suffers that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcommeth, and kept my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. (Rev. 2:18-29)

There are a couple of points to think about when reading this letter. Notice, in the beginning, Jesus describes his eyes as “a flame of fire” (Rev 2:18) To me, this paints a picture of an angry gaze that bores straight through to your soul. It is as if Jesus is saying, I know you have done all these great things, but I know what you are hiding, I know what you have done; you cannot hide this awful thing from me. I picture a mother who has just had all she can handle and is doing everything she can not to explode on her children.

What was this terrible thing the church had done?

What made our Savior so irate that His eyes are filled with fire? They have allowed a false teacher to strive there. Jesus refers to her as “that woman Jezebel” (Rev. 2:20). It is interesting to note that a woman, not a man, was the one leading these people astray. Most likely, this woman was not actually named Jezebel, but Jesus refers to her as such to place emphasis on the fact that what she has been allowed to do is as bad as her namesake in the Old Testament. Charles Swindoll points out that “no Jewish parents would shame their daughter and their family” with the name Jezebel (Swindoll 40). But who was this woman and why did she have the power to lead so many astray in Thyatira? One commentator suggests “she might have been the wife of one of the congregation’s leaders, at the very least, she was very influential and could potentially cause trouble if confronted” (Roper 46). Or, perhaps she was allowed to continue with her false teaching because no one wanted to be the one to make her or her followers feel bad. Doesn’t that happen today? Some do not want to

Speak out against different sins like living in an unscriptural marriage, homosexuality, or immodesty because they don't want to hurt others' feelings. Some preachers don't even preach against sin because it might cause trouble or cause others to become upset. However, God's word tells us to:

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry (2 Tim. 4:2-5).

There were members at Thyatira, just like many in the world today, who had found themselves a teacher that would teach what they wanted to hear instead of the truth.

What was she teaching? It was tricky for a Christian to find and keep work in Thyatira without being a member of these massive trade guilds. If you were a member of the guild you were required to attend their meetings and their idol worship. "Guild meetings generally involved eating food sacrificed to idols, and they sometimes involved sexual immorality" (Roper 142). Christians could not participate in these two sinful acts, but if they did not they wouldn't be able to support their families. While most of us can not relate to this type of dilemma to simply provide for our families, I can see some similar struggles. Some Christians today choose to work on Sundays and skip worship services just so they might be paid more money. Think about our

recreational choices. How many Christians choose not to worship God because they want to see their favorite sports team play or because they are on vacation or their child has a championship game? I wonder if Jesus is looking at them with a “flame of fire” (Rev 2:18) in His eyes? This woman called Jezebel was using her power, or her influence, over the people here to teach them that they could in fact be a Christian and a part of the trade guild. The Bible tells us that she claimed to be a prophetess, she was probably telling the people that God had told her it was okay to do these things. She was telling the people what they wanted to hear, and she was obviously very successful. Jesus makes a point to describe the consequence, painful death, for her and the Christians who followed her unless they repent. Don't some Christians still try to keep one foot in the world and one in the Church?

No man can serve two masters: for he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24).

What can I learn from this woman referred to as Jezebel? Let's begin with the knowledge that the Lord does not like false teachers or those who follow after them. Remember Jesus and His fire filled eyes? This letter is also a good reminder that no amount of good can cover up the bad if we do not repent of sin. Whatever our sin is, we must stop doing it or face the eternal consequences. The Father is patient and gives us time to repent, but that time will run out (Rev. 2:21-23).

A Modern-Day Case Study Continued

Remember our first case study? We left the wife, Jessie, being challenged to bring a smile to her husband's face. After the first week she reported back to the preacher, that there had been no change. Maybe it really was too late for them. She was so discouraged! She had put forth all this effort for seemingly nothing and was ready to throw in the towel and just give her husband what he wanted, a divorce. But the preacher reminded her, that after years of relationship injury, it would take time to heal. Don't give up, keep going. It is like Paul writing to the Philippians,

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13-14).

Focus on what could be. In this case, her prize is a happy marriage. So, Jessie kept working hard, and the next week reported things were getting better. She was seeing some specs of light in their dark tunnel. The third week, the husband had started mimicking some of her behavior and doing nice things for her. At the end of the month, he admitted he no longer wanted a divorce, the couple had rekindled their love for one another. At the time of this writing, I can happily report that they are still together and enjoying their empty-nest hood as a married couple of almost 35 years! Jessie had the power to change their lives, rekindle their love, and to keep them together.

Application

In looking at these three case studies, we can clearly see that women are truly powerful people. The two Jezebels we read about in God's word show us how a woman can use her power of influence for her own gain and to bring about evil, while our look into Jessie, a modern-day wife, shows how we can use our power of influence for good. To whom did you find yourself relating? The Jezebel of the Old Testament, the Jezebel in the New Testament, Jessie, our modern-day wife, or perhaps, you could relate to all three in some way or another.

As a way of application, I would like to get a little personal with you. I was raised to be an extremely independent person, and I readily admit I struggle accepting help. Some years ago, my husband and I attended the Great Smoky Mountain Marriage Retreat. One of the first things the speaker had us do was take a personality quiz. After the quiz, you were categorized as one of the following animals: lion, beaver, otter, or golden retriever. I was overwhelmingly the lion. Well, guess what? Had Queen Jezebel or the woman Jesus refers to as Jezebel had taken this type of quiz, they would have been lions too. You see the lion personality is one that is domineering, strong-willed, aggressive, overly competitive, always the leader. The speaker at the marriage retreat said something along these lines, "ladies, if you are a lion, you must tame that inner beast!" I like to think of it this way: Sure, sometimes that lion needs to roar, but a Godly woman will not let that lion reign. God's role for a woman is not to be the lion of the family (like Queen Jezebel) or the church (like

the woman called Jezebel in the New Testament). “Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as it is fit in the Lord” (Col. 3:18). For the sake of space, I’m just going to list some other verses that you could also read: 1 Peter 3:1-6, Titus 2:3-5, 1 Timothy 2:9-12, Ephesians 5:22-24, 1 Corinthians 14: 34, 1 Corinthians 11:3, and Proverbs 31. If you are like me, taming this lion is an ongoing job, but it has got easier over time. Keep working at it. Don’t be deceitful like Queen Jezebel or negatively manipulative like the woman called Jezebel in Thyatira. As ladies of God’s word, we should never seek to deceive others and we should only manipulate others to do good works. “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:” (Heb. 10:24). Study the scriptures, pray, surround yourselves with other Godly women, focus your influential power on doing something for someone else.

Conclusion

Ladies I pray that none of us have or will ever be called a Jezebel. That we are not known for using our deceitfulness and powers of manipulation to cause harm to the Church. Instead, we are known for using our influence for encouragement and the building up of the Church, that we only manipulate others into doing good for the Lord, not for ourselves. Perhaps you need to change the way you are using your power of influence. As indicated in the next two anonymous quotes, it is not too late. Remember, “No matter how long you have travelled in the wrong direction, you ALWAYS have the CHOICE to turn around.” Someone once said, “Remember the 3 C’s in life: Choice, Chance,

and Change. YOU must make the CHOICE, to take the CHANCE, if you want anything in life to CHANGE.” As women, we possess a different type of power than the men around us, but we are still a force with which to be reckoned. May each of us strive to use our power of influence for His glory.

Works Cited

- Holy Bible*. Authorized King James Version. Barbour Publishing, 2003.
- Colley, Cindy. *Like Mother Like Daughter. Gleanings From the Holy Bible: Kings Through Esther*. 2005 Fort Worth Lectures. Bedford, TX: Sain Publications, 2005. Print.
- Guest, Edgar. *There Are Little Eyes Upon You*. Poem Hunter: 2014. <https://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/edgar-albert-guest/his-example/> . Accessed on March 1, 2018.
- Higgs, Liz Curtis. *Bad Girls of the Bible And What We Can Learn From Them*. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterborne Press, 1999. Print.
- Roper, David L. *Truth for Today Commentary Revelation 1-11*. Searcy, AR: Resource Publications, 2002. Print.
- Swindoll, Charles R. *Letters to Churches Timeless Lesson for the Body of Christ*. Anaheim, CA: Insight for Living, 1998. Print.
- Urban Dictionary*. <https://www.urbandictionary.com>. 1999. Accessed on March 1, 2018.

Daughters Of The Devil: Athaliah

Courtney Ruiz



Courtney Dearman Ruiz grew up as a preacher/missionary's daughter and has been a preacher's wife for over 25 years. She graduated from the University of Memphis with a Communication Studies degree. Her husband, Kevin Ruiz, preaches for the Eastside church of Christ in Maryville, Tennessee. Courtney and Kevin have three daughters and one son and are in the homestretch of their homeschooling journey, with their youngest son currently in high school. Courtney is also an active patient/participant in multiple sclerosis clinical research. Courtney has taught Bible classes for all ages and has a special place in her heart for the cradle roll and preschool Bible classes, which is why she thoroughly enjoys her work as an online English instructor to young Chinese children through the 51Talk company based in mainland China. Blessed to live in the foothills of the Smoky Mountains, she and her family enjoy mountain sight-seeing whenever possible.

In 1917, Welsh artist, Margaret Lindsay Williams, created an oil painting vastly different from her portraits of Queen Alexandria, the Prince of Wales, and President Warren G. Harding. With this creation, Williams depicts a woman in an off-the-shoulder gown, vainly fanning herself. At first glance, one might assume this work glorifies feminine beauty, but a closer look reveals that the woman portrayed in Williams' work is wearing a "crown" composed of a bat skull. While holding an elegant fan in one hand, she holds a human skull in the other. Furthermore, as the female subject

glances coyly over her shoulder, she snubs a crucifix held out to her from the shadows. Williams entitled this artwork, “*The Devil’s Daughter*,” making her statement on the changes in morality occurring in early 20th century society, particularly among women who were leaving behind traditional roles and conventional values (Grapefruit Moon Gallery). Long before Williams even conjured this image, however, God Himself painted a vivid and didactic portrait of a “daughter of the devil” through the Biblical account of Athaliah. Much like Satan, this wicked queen made a freewill choice to do evil, misled her followers, murdered her family, and ultimately, met her fate.

Background And Arrival Of Athaliah In Judah

The daughter of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel and the granddaughter of King Omri of Israel, Athaliah grew up in an evil, idolatrous family. She likely accompanied her mother, Jezebel, at her royal table with “the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah” (1 Kings 18:19, NKJV). First Kings 21:25 describes Athaliah’s infamous parents: “But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord, *because Jezebel his wife stirred him up*. And he behaved very abominably in following idols.” Athaliah’s parents had been joined in marriage as part of her father’s unrighteous alliance with the idol-worshipping Sidonian king (1 Kings 16), and

this subsequent alliance only served to further the wickedness of Israel.

Tragically, such detrimental alliances also stained the southern kingdom of Judah. King Jehoshaphat of Judah, the son of righteous King Asa, would make alliances with wicked Israel (1 Kings 22:44), paving the way for his son Jehoram to take Athaliah as his wife. The evil of Jezebel would now directly impact the southern kingdom of Judah through the pernicious influence of Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.

Recording the beginning of Jehoram's reign, 2 Chronicles 21:6 characterizes Athaliah's influence upon Jehoram: "And he [Jehoram], walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for he had the daughter of Ahab as a wife; and he did evil in the sight of the Lord." One can note the obvious similarity of this verse, describing the influence of Athaliah upon Jehoram, to 1 Kings 21:25, describing the influence of Jezebel upon Ahab. Second Chronicles 21 records that Jehoram's reign began wickedly with his massacre of "all his brothers with the sword, and also others of the princes of Israel." One can only wonder if Athaliah's counsel played a role in her husband's murderous rampage, Jehoram himself having been raised under the guidance of a righteous father, King Jehoshaphat. Imperial murders would certainly not have been unfamiliar to Princess Athaliah, whose mother, Jezebel, had "massacred the prophets of the Lord" in Israel (1 Kings 18:4).

Free To Choose

From the garden of Eden to today, accountable human beings have universally faced a grave choice—to do right or to do wrong. Long ago, Joshua clearly presented a choice to God’s people, admonishing them, “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15). The New Testament lays this same choice before those in the Christian age, soberly reminding, “So then each of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:12). Christ Himself expressed His loving desire that all would choose to do good and follow Him: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing” (Mat. 23:37). The Biblical portraits of Athaliah, Jehosheba, and of the devil himself provide clear teaching on this decision facing all who are accountable to God.

Athaliah and Jehosheba: Same Family, Different Choices

Despite her depraved upbringing, Athaliah, like all human beings made in the image of God, possessed the choice to walk in her parents’ evil ways or to follow righteousness. The contrasting life of one of Athaliah’s own relatives highlights the reality of this freedom of choice. An examination of Athaliah’s family brings to light a shining contrast to the wicked Queen Athaliah

through the brief but powerful account of Jehosheba (“Jehosheba,” 2 Chr. 22:11). The daughter of King Joram, Jehosheba was a royal princess of the house of Judah. The Bible does not record the mother of Jehosheba; but, as daughter of the king, Jehosheba certainly would have been closely associated with Queen Athaliah who, at the very least, was Jehosheba’s stepmother. As a young person, Jehosheba may have witnessed the executions of her own uncles and, possibly, even the murders of her own brothers, as her father selfishly executed “all his brothers with the sword, and also others of the princes of Israel” (2 Chr. 21:4). Jehosheba, however, chose to lead a different life, far from the extravagances of the royal palace. Leaving the beauty and privilege of the royal palace, Jehosheba, unlike her infamous relatives who formed unrighteous marital alliances, chose to marry Jehoiada, the High Priest of God, and to serve her Heavenly Father alongside her faithful husband. Much like Moses, Jehosheba chose “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin” (Heb.11:25). Leviticus 21:13-14 records God’s law for the priests that they marry only undefiled virgins. Thus, Jehosheba had clearly kept herself pure, even though surrounded by idol worship, which often included immoral sexual pagan rituals (Hosea 4:12-13).

Following the death of her father, King Jehoram, Jehosheba showed herself also to be a woman of tremendous courage. The Bible records that Jehoram suffered a horrible intestinal disease as punishment from God for his evil (2 Chr. 21:18). The disease caused a

slow and painful death for this wicked king. Not only this, but “the Lord stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines and the Arabians who were near the Ethiopians. And they came up into Judah and invaded it, and carried away all the possessions that were found in the king’s house, and also his sons and his wives, so that there was not a son left to him except Jehoahaz [Ahaziah], the youngest of his sons” (2 Chr. 21:16-17). Ahaziah, son of Jehoram and Athaliah, then became king of Judah; and, failing to learn from his father’s demise, he listened to his wicked mother’s counsel: “Ahaziah was forty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Athaliah the granddaughter of Omri. He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother advised him to do wickedly” (2 Chr. 22:2-3).

Meanwhile, God was using Jehu to bring judgment on the house of Ahab in the northern kingdom of Israel, where King Joram, Athaliah’s brother, reigned. At this point, God also provided Jehu with the opportunity to render His judgment upon Ahaziah, who had gone to visit his uncle during his recovery from recent battle wounds. Thus, on this occasion, God provided Jehu with the opportunity to slay both kings. Ahaziah faced the judgment of God for his evil ways prompted by Athaliah’s wicked counsel. Despite this blatant judgment of God upon her family, Athaliah persisted in her evil pursuit of power following her son’s death and “destroyed all the royal heirs of the house of Judah” (2 Kings 11:1). Athaliah was willing to murder her own grandchildren to maintain her prestige and to reign

over the land. However, at precisely this pivotal point in history, entered the courageous and quick-thinking Jehosheba. In the face of Athaliah's murderous rampage of her own grandchildren, Jehosheba rescued her baby nephew, Joash. Along with her husband, the high priest, Jehoiada, she hid both the baby and his nurse in the house of the Lord for the six years of Athaliah's illegitimate reign (2 Kings 11:2-3). Knowing Athaliah to be a woman willing to kill her own grandchildren to preserve her position, Jehosheba and Jehoiada had to be keenly aware of the danger of their plan, but both willingly chose to be used by God to accomplish His purpose.

The inspired prophet Ezekiel writes of the person who chooses to follow evil, "He shall surely die; His blood shall be upon him" (Eze. 18:13). However, he goes on to note that the children of a wicked man are judged independently, based solely on their own choices:

"If, however, he begets a son Who sees all the sins which his father has done, And considers but does not do likewise; Who has not eaten on the mountains, Nor lifted his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, Nor defiled his neighbor's wife; Has not oppressed anyone, Nor withheld a pledge, Nor robbed by violence, But has given his bread to the hungry And covered the naked with clothing; Who has withdrawn his hand from the poor And not received usury or increase, But has executed My judgments And walked in My statutes—He shall not die for the iniquity of his father; He shall surely live! (Eze. 18:14-17).

In stark contrast to her unrighteous father and wicked Queen Athaliah, the royal Princess Jehosheba lived a courageous, sacrificial life and wisely chose to leave behind the ways of her earthly father to become a faithful servant and daughter of the true King. Perhaps, Jehosheba was influenced by her righteous grandfather, Jehoshaphat, who may have seen the deleterious effects of his alliance with Israel – an alliance that paved the way for Baal worship to enter the southern Kingdom. The Biblical record does not provide this detail; but, to this day, Jehosheba’s example continues to bear witness to the very real truth that, despite the circumstances into which one is born, each soul has the opportunity to choose his or her own path and to determine, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15).

Satan Made A Freewill Choice

Athaliah chose to serve self and evil and, in this sense, showed herself to be a “daughter of the devil”; for, Satan, too, freely chose to serve self instead of the Creator. While the Bible does not record in detail the origin and early history of Satan, God’s Word clearly reveals that Satan does not possess the Almighty nature of deity (Job 1:12; Job 2:6). As non-deity, Satan would have been a part of “all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers” (Col.1:16). Because the Bible records that “God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Gen.1:31), the necessary inference is that Satan was created good but then chose to do evil.

God's Word indicates that even some angels chose to rebel against God and describes Satan as having "sinned from the beginning" (1 John 3:8). 1 John 3:4 instructs that sin is the violation of God's law, and the Scriptures reveal that some created beings/angels chose to violate the heavenly law given to them by God: "God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved until judgment" (2 Peter 2:4). "And angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). Despite being in the very presence of God, Satan freely chose to turn his back on God to serve evil.

These accounts of the freewill decisions of Athaliah and the devil, contrasted with that of righteous Jehosheba, will forever alert all accountable souls to wisely use their God-given freedom to choose eternal spiritual life over fleeting earthly pleasures.

Follow The Leader?

In speaking of the Pharisees, Christ told his disciples, "Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch" (Mat.15:14). This divine warning calls to mind the spiritual life-and-death consequences of following the wrong leader. Not only this, but the Scriptures also alert the faithful to be vigilant, lest they themselves lead others astray. Christ sternly cautioned against the misleading of others, exhorting, "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it

would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes” (Mat.18:6-7). Athaliah led others to both physical and spiritual destruction, much like her figurative “father,” Satan himself.

Athaliah Misled Her Followers

The stark contrast between Jehosheba and Athaliah serves as a reminder of the tremendous influence women can have on the lives of others, particularly within their families. Athaliah taught her children idolatry, as seen in 2 Chronicles 24:7, which records that “the sons of “that wicked woman” actually broke into the holy temple of God, stole the “dedicated things of the house of the Lord,” and offered them to the Baals. Athaliah’s corrupting influence upon her children illustrates to mothers the tremendous sway a mother wields over the lives of her children. In Paul’s words to Timothy, the New Testament forever records the contrasting, beautiful legacy a godly mother can leave for her child: “I thank God...when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also” (2 Tim. 1:5).

2 Chronicles 21:6 and 2 Chronicles 22:2,3 clearly show that Athaliah’s evil influence extended to both her husband and her son in their kingly positions. Apparently, both men put misplaced trust in her wicked counsel. One only can speculate as to the exact reason

these men would have willingly caved to the pressures of this sinister woman; but, given human nature, one can easily imagine that Athaliah craftily “advised” both these rulers by feigning concern for each man’s welfare and prosperity. The full record of Athaliah’s deeds following the death of Ahaziah reveal that she was, in reality, utterly consumed by selfish ambition – so much so, she was even willing to kill Ahaziah’s sons, her own grandchildren, to maintain the power she craved.

The Devil Misleads His Followers

With her ruinous “counsel,” Athaliah, showed herself to be “a daughter of the devil,” for, he, too, wears the facade of “light” only to mislead his followers for his own selfish purposes. In 2 Corinthians 11:14, Paul warns, “For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.” This “angel of light,” however, then proceeds to “blind” the minds of the lost, “lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ...should shine on them” (2 Cor. 4:4). God’s Word reveals that, because Satan has his snares and wiles (1 Tim.3:7; Eph. 6:11), Christians must guard against the malicious intent of Satan, not being “ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11).

In addition to this self-protection, Christians must reach out with the gospel of salvation to the millions of lost souls misled by the Devil, in order to, as Christ said, “open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:18). The horrendous downfalls of those who heeded

Athaliah's misguidance caution all faithful followers of God to be "sober and vigilant," lest they be misled by an even greater adversary who seeks to mislead all of God's faithful (1 Peter 5:8).

Fatal Actions

While crimes may be categorized differently under various governments, murder is universally viewed as inherently evil. In fact, legal scholars, long ago, coined a phrase to describe such inarguably wrong offenses—"malum in se." A "mala in se" crime is defined as "an offense that is evil or wrong from its own nature irrespective of statute" ("Mala in se"). Despite the clarity with which even those in the world view the evil of murder, Athaliah lived among God's own chosen people and, yet, chose to resort to such crime. Satan, too, having been in the very presence of God, continually seeks the death of all those who will fall into his snares.

Athaliah Murdered Her Family

In a desperate bid to maintain her power, Athaliah was willing to resort to the murder of her own grandchildren. Jehosheba knew that not even a precious one-year-old would be safe from the cruel grip of his own bloodthirsty grandmother. Second Timothy 3:3 characterizes sinful human beings in these "last days" of the Christian age, warning of those who would be "lovers of themselves" and "unloving." Though women today rightly may be repulsed by the thought of a selfish grandmother who would murder her own

grandchildren, how many “modern” women have come to accept that the killing of one’s unborn child through abortion is somehow acceptable because it promotes the interests and welfare of the mother? The Biblical portrait of Athaliah will forever remind women of God of the poisonous effects of selfishness and evil.

Satan Is A Murderer

In her massacre, Athaliah, once again, mirrored the characteristics of Satan, whose ultimate goal is to lead as many as he can to spiritual death. Ironically, Satan may have been using Athaliah, through her attempt to destroy all of her son’s heirs, as one of his own “devices” (2 Cor. 2:9-11). Despite the evil reign of Jehoram, Athaliah’s husband, 2 Chronicles 21:7 records, “Yet the Lord would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that He had made with David, and since He had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever.” 2 Samuel 7:12-13 records this same covenant made by God with King David: “When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” This promise, of course, would be fulfilled through Jesus Christ, who would come through the lineage of David. Gabriel repeated this divine promise in speaking to the virgin Mary, saying, “And, behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David” (Luke 1:31-32).

Athaliah, however, sought to kill all of the remaining heirs of Ahaziah; and, had she been successful, she would have thwarted God's plan to send the Savior through the lineage of David. The outcome of Athaliah's murderous plan matched perfectly with Satan's perpetual goal of blocking God's provision of a means of reconciliation to lost humanity. Since his deception of Eve in the garden of Eden, Satan, like Athaliah, has selfishly sought to kill. Brother Wayne Jackson accurately describes the devil's objective:

The devil's self-appointed mission, very simply stated, is to destroy the human race in hell. It is little wonder he has been denominated by inspiration as the "Destroyer" (Rev.9:11). He attempted the ruin of humanity by the temptation of Christ (Mat.4:1-11) [Only the sinless Son of God could atone for the sins of humanity], and the seduction of His holy apostles (Luke 22:31). Though that plan failed (with the exception of Judas—John 17:12), he now, nevertheless, "as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Despite the lethal intents of both Athaliah and Satan, God's covenant of old stood "firm" (Psa. 89:28) through Jehosheba's rescue of the infant Joash. This comes as no surprise, given the supreme power of Almighty God over Satan, the ruler only of this world. As the inspired writer John affirms, "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). The Biblical portrait of Athaliah reminds all faithful followers of God that, like this wicked queen,

Satan has his own lethal mission targeting all souls for spiritual death.

Fate Awaits

While those seeking earthly power and acclaim focus on the accumulation of this world's goods and may even destroy those who threaten their power, Christ admonishes His followers, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Mat. 6:19-20). While some choosing to serve Satan may face the punishment of God in this present life, as seen in the fate of Athaliah, all who choose evil will ultimately face eternal judgment. Christ pointed to this coming day in which every soul will give account: "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28-29). Ironically and sadly, those who serve Satan in this life will be tormented along with him for eternity.

Athaliah Met Her Fate

Though Athaliah reigned for six years, 2 Chronicles 23 and 2 Kings 11 record that God brought her unjust rule to an abrupt end. After anointing the seven-year-old King Joash who had been successfully hidden for years, Jehoiada executed Athaliah and initiated a renewed commitment of the people to faithful service to their God:

And Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the army, and said to them, "Take her outside under guard, and slay with the sword whoever follows her." For the priest had said, "Do not let her be killed in the house of the LORD." So they seized her; and she went by way of the horses' entrance into the king's house, and there she was killed. Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD, the king, and the people, that they should be the LORD'S people, and also between the king and the people (2 Kings 11:15-17).

The Devil Will Meet His Fate

Despite Athaliah's enjoyment of her temporary "success," she met with death, and one can scripturally conclude that this "daughter of the devil" is now experiencing torment while awaiting her final judgment. Likewise, while the Devil currently enjoys a degree of "success" in his authority over the kingdoms of this world "delivered" to him (Luke 4:6), his "reign," too, will crumble. As prophesied in Genesis 3:15, Christ, in offering Himself as the sinless sacrifice for mankind, has "bruised" the "head" of Satan. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:8). Christ Himself spoke of the "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels," and John records his inspired vision of Satan's judgment: "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever" (Rev. 20:10). One day, the devil will be, as was Athaliah, rendered powerless, only to face

everlasting punishment.

Knowledge of the ultimate fate of the devil and his follower, Athaliah, galvanizes faithful Christians not only to keep themselves ever pure and prepared for judgment but also to lead lost souls to the truth. As Paul admonishes, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:10-11).

Conclusion

Artist Lindsay Williams’ oil painting “The Devil’s Daughter” reportedly hung for years in a London studio. The online art gallery currently listing this painting for sale offers a rather unusual detail about this specific painting noting, “There is reportedly a companion painting still hanging there – where the woman, repentant, is shown returning from the darkness, embracing the crucifix” (*Grapefruit Moon Gallery*). Sadly, because Athaliah’s entire life remained fully devoted to evil, God’s Word does not record a second “portrait” of a penitent Athaliah. Making a freewill choice to serve the devil, this wicked queen misled her followers, murdered her family, and, ultimately, met her fate. Athaliah temporarily enjoyed prestige and pleasure, both as a northern kingdom princess and also during her adult years of indirect and direct control over the southern kingdom of Judah. Had she rightly chosen to serve as a daughter of the true King, however, she would have reigned eternally in heaven. Athaliah will

share the eternal abode of the one she chose to serve; and this wicked queen will, one day, hear these words from the King of kings, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” Similarly, Satan made a freewill choice to turn from God, misleads his followers even to this day, and seeks to “murder” his followers by causing their spiritual deaths. On the day of judgment, he, like Athaliah, will meet his fate and face eternal torment.

Described as “an importantly large decorative dark masterwork from an artist of the utmost historical significance,” Williams’ oil painting, “The Devil’s Daughter,” has been offered for sale for as much as \$25,000 (Grapefruit Moon Gallery). However, God’s inspired “portrait” of Athaliah is worth far more, providing priceless warnings of Satan’s malicious influence and invaluable reassurance of God’s omnipotence and tremendous love for mankind.

Works Cited

- The Bible. Print. *New King James Version*.
- “The Devil’s Daughter.” *Grapefruit Moon Gallery: Original Art from the Grand Age of American Illustration*. Grapefruit Moon Gallery, 20 Dec. 2008. Web. 20 Mar. 2018.
- Jackson, Wayne. “Satan: Everything You’ve Always Wanted to Know But Were Afraid to Ask.” *ChristianCourier.com*. 20 Mar 2018.
- “Malum in se.” *MerriamWebster.com*. Merriam-Webster, 2018. Web. 20 Mar. 2018.

Daughters Of The Devil: Delilah Judges 16

Janis Dearman



Janis is the wife of Jim Dearman, producer/host of the television and radio program, Good News Today, overseen by the elders of the Dunlap, Tennessee, church. Janis is office manager for the broadcasting work. Janis graduated from the University of Tennessee with a B. A. in Speech and Theater. She did graduate work in early childhood education at the University of Alabama Birmingham and has had training in art, graphic design, and desktop publishing. Janis has spoken at several ladies' days, lectureships, and retreats and has taught Bible classes for ladies, teen girls, and children. She and Jim have worked with congregations in Alabama, Texas, and Tennessee, and with the church at Klang, Malaysia, where Janis introduced the concept of "Cradle Roll." Janis has enjoyed writing as a hobby since childhood. She has published a couple of poems and has received two writers' conference awards. Also, she has produced a booklet, *"Alone ... But Not Lonely,"* as an aid for those dealing with loss and loneliness. Jim and Janis are the parents of two daughters and a son and have six grandchildren and a new granddaughter-in-law.

In the first verses of Genesis 3, we see the devil's lies, the woman's lusts, the man's lack of leadership, and their loss of Eden – the perfect, peaceful garden God had provided for them.

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;

but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die." Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate (Gen. 3:1-6, NKJV).

From the beginning, woman has had the potential to affect man's thinking and actions in a profound way. In the case of God's perfect woman, Eve, whose carnal nature succumbed to the lies and wiles of the devil, she led God's perfect man into sin, physical death, and separation from their Father. She brought punishment upon herself and upon all women for all time to come. God said,

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee (Gen. 3:16).

But Adam was not an innocent bystander, though, apparently, he was standing by her! She took of the fruit and ate. "She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate" (Gen. 3:6). He allowed himself to be led by his wife. God said:

Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of

it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return (Gen. 3:17-19).

Paul, by inspiration, confirmed for all time the after-the-fall roles of man and woman, when he wrote: “The serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness” (2 Cor. 11:3); therefore, “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression” (1 Tim. 2:11-14).

We are told Adam was not deceived – he didn’t fall for the devil’s lie; rather, in a moment of spiritual weakness, he relinquished the authority and headship God had given him over the subordinate creature – his “help meet,” his suitable companion, his helper, his partner in procreative and domestic activities. The ramifications of their actions would touch every human being to set foot on earth from that moment forward – affecting the course of life, the end by death, and the disposition of man’s immortal soul.

Background: The Weakness of a Strong Man

In Judges 13-16, we are told of the life of Samson, one of God’s judges during a dark time in the history of His people, Israel, when “everyone did what was right

in his own eyes,” because there was no king (Judg. 17:6; 21:5). Time and time again, they forgot God and turned to the idols of the pagan peoples they had failed to drive out of the promised land. God allowed oppression by various nations to bring them to their senses; they would suffer and then cry to Him for deliverance; and He, in His love and mercy, would raise up a judge to relieve them. But, they were forgetful, their gratitude to God was short-lived, and they strayed, returning repeatedly to the evil ways of those among whom they lived. The sad cycle of sin, oppression, penitence, and deliverance proved the spiritual fickleness of God’s people, but also, the justice and judgment, love and mercy of their heavenly Father.

Samson, before his conception, was appointed by God to be raised up as a judge. As recorded in Judges 13:3-5, the Angel of the Lord appeared to the wife of Manoah and said:

“Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” (Judg. 13:3-5, NKJV).

In the record of Samson, whose physical strength is legendary, we see that God is able to use imperfect human beings to accomplish His purposes – in this case, to “begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.”

Samson was a strong man with a weak character. A lustful man, seemingly, a “spoiled child,” he was demanding, wanting what he wanted when he wanted it—and he wanted Philistine women. Samson “told his father and mother, saying, ‘I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.’” When his parents questioned his taking a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines, Samson demanded, “Get her for me, for she pleases me well” (Judg. 14:2-3). Motivated by lust of the eye and flesh, he was heedless of his parents’ concern and mindless of God’s prohibition against His people’s making marriages with the pagans (Deut. 7:3; Josh. 23:12-13). The Proverbs writer expresses the seeming concern of Samson’s parents, when he writes:

My son, pay attention to my wisdom; Lend your ear to my understanding, That you may preserve discretion, And your lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, And her mouth is smoother than oil; But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, Her steps lay hold of hell ... For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, And be embraced in the arms of a seductress? (Prov. 5:1-3,20, NKJV).

Marriage to the Philistine woman resulted in her deceit, his disappointment, and, ultimately, her demise. He again turned to Philistine women, this time to a harlot of Gaza, again proving his lustful, carnal nature. That nature also evidenced itself in his lack of spiritual commitment to the Nazirite vow that was bound upon

him by God at birth: he ate honey from the carcass of the lion, contrary to the vow to avoid the dead (Num. 6:6); and he may well have imbibed wine at his wedding feast with the thirty young men, recorded in Judges 14.

Samson was a vengeful man. In vengeance, he slayed Philistines. Even in bringing death upon himself and the congregation of Philistines at the celebration to Dagon, Samson “called to the Lord, saying, ‘O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!’” (Judg. 16:28). Though used by God as a judge over His people, Samson seems, even in his final words, to have been motivated more by self-interest than proving himself a spiritually-minded servant of God.

However, God, who “searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts” (1 Chr. 28:9), saw Samson worthy of inspired commendation. His name appears among the faithful recorded in Hebrews 11:

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises ... out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens (Heb. 11:32-34, NKJV).

It is with this background of feminine influence over man, and man’s potential for spiritual weakness regardless of physical strength, we consider Delilah – the physical delight and spiritual downfall of God’s

appointed judge, Samson. Likely, she and her Philistine cohorts knew Samson as an impatient man, easily enticed, who might succumb to nagging and pestering, especially by a beautiful woman, perhaps a prostitute, within a context of feminine charm and sexual favors. We will consider Delilah's motivation for perfidy – that is, “a deliberate breach of faith; calculated violation of trust; treachery” (www.thefreedictionary.com); Delilah's method of perpetration; and Delilah's moral for posterity.

Delilah: Her Motivation for Perfidy

What motivated Delilah to do what she did? She took advantage of Samson's love for her (Jud. 16:4) and conspired with the lords of the Philistines, who “came up to her and said to her, ‘Entice him, and find out where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver’” (Judg. 16:5). Delilah, apparently, was heartless, selfish, and materialistic. There is no indication of compassion for Samson, whom the Philistines were going to “afflict”; but the clear indication is she was “bought” by the large profit to be made by her treachery. Perhaps, with nationalistic spirit, she loved her country and hated the enemy that was bringing judgment upon her people. If so, this might be a frail justification for the deceit and abuse of one who loved her, the “woman in the Valley of Sorek.”

Also, one might speculate she was motivated to a degree by her own vengeance upon Israel, as

represented by their strong man, Samson; this “people of God” (Judg. 20:2) had conquered and occupied much of the pagan land of Canaan, in the name of their “living God” (Josh. 3:10). Knowing Israel had a law and a God who, they declared, directed them and set them apart as “special,” she might have been contemptuous of Samson’s apparent disloyalty to his own people and the law to which they were to adhere.

Delilah: Her Method of Perpetration

Delilah’s method of perpetration was to use against Samson his own emotions – his “love” for her. She employed her femininity and sexuality to seduce him and her harping to erode Samson’s patience by her continual pestering.

Then she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength lies.” And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, that he told her all his heart, and said to her, “No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.” (Judg. 16:15-17, NKJV).

Delilah arranged to have the lords of the Philistines come up to her with the promised payment in hand for the secret of Samson’s power. It seems Delilah’s deceit, treachery, greed, and heartlessness reached a climax,

ironically, with her soothing voice lulling him to sleep and, perhaps, her gentle hand stroking the “seven locks” of his head:

Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. And she said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” So he awoke from his sleep, and said, “I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!” But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him (Judg. 16:19-20, NKJV).

Scripture does not tell us if Delilah was aware of Samson’s abuse by the Philistines: “Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison” (Judg. 16:21). We will never know if she felt a compunction of guilt; or, a relishing of the influence and power brought by a great sum of money; or, perhaps, some admiration, even respectability from her people for her “victory” over the powerful Israelite. Perhaps, she was recognized as a heroine of the Philistines at their great celebration to Dagon. If so, was the honor tinged with any heartache at the sight of the blind and mistreated Israelite, who had loved her and whom she had beguiled and betrayed so cruelly? We will never know the subsequent state of her conscience in this life; but, barring her repentance, about which we know nothing, we can assume the state of her consciousness in the life hereafter. With complete awareness and sensation of suffering, she might cry out,

as the rich man, “being in torments in Hades ... ‘I am tormented in this flame.’”

Delilah: Her Moral for Posterity

Scriptures do not record much about Delila—nothing noble or laudable. But, in the brevity of her appearance in the inspired book of Judges, we have demonstration of the verity of God’s Word and the life principles it teaches. The primary moral for posterity – a principle of Scripture reinforced by Samson’s encounter with the treacherous seductress, is: “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits’” (1 Cor. 15:33). One might be reminded of Samson and Delilah, when reading the inspired words of Proverbs 2:10-16: “When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of evil ... from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words.”

God knew Samson – his strengths and his weaknesses; and He used Samson’s weakness for “forbidden fruit,” i.e., Philistine women, to render judgment on Israel’s oppressors. Samson was a strong man, who could have been a great spiritual leader; but he was strong physically and weak spiritually, carnally motivated, rather than directed and determined to be firm in the law of his people, in the law of Moses, and in the Nazirite vow to which his life was appointed. Only on the other side of time will it be clear to the mind of the faithful what it was in Samson’s character that made him worthy to be included in the Hebrews

11 “honor roll of the faithful.”

Delilah, a daughter of the devil, played a key part in Samson’s success as God’s judge. Out of her seduction, deceit, and treachery, into bondage and blindness, Samson became a man of renewed strength. Perhaps, also, with renewed insight rather than sight, he became fearless and determined to bring death and destruction on the enemies of God, even at the expense of his own life.

Then Samson called to the LORD, saying, “O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!” And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. Then Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” And he pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life (Judg. 16:28-30, NKJV).

Another moral for posterity, taught by the account of Delilah, is that expressed by a lovely Christian mother, aged “three score and ten,” who said: “Sometimes it’s not so much a matter of a “bad” man, but of a good man being influenced by a bad woman.” Samson’s life, but not his living, was consecrated to God. Rather than being a “bad” man, he, perhaps, was better than most in the period of the judges. He did have the positive qualities of strength and bravery – a “heroic” figure in the eyes of men; but worldly women capitalized on his devastating weakness for females who should have been

“off-limits” to a faithful Israelite.

A woman can have a tremendous influence on a man – in Delilah’s case, of course, an evil influence. But, throughout history, many great men have been reared by nurturing mothers and supported by wives who are their complements. A poem by William Ross Wallace declares: “For the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world.” And Napoleon Bonaparte is credited by some with originating the expression, “Behind every great man is a great woman.”

The worthy woman of Proverbs 31 is a woman whose “husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life” (vv. 11-12). She is a stable, secure helpmeet and companion for her husband, who “is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land” (v. 23). Because of her integrity of character and attention to the needs of her family and friends, “Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her” (v. 28).

Delilah was not a worthy, virtuous woman, but a daughter of the devil – a lesson in what not to be, if one wants to be God’s woman. The inspired apostle Peter, in 1 Peter 3:1-6, gives the description of the woman who is truly beautiful before God. Delilah’s seductive attraction and beguiling charm were the antithesis of “the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.” To pen the antithesis of Peter’s description – one more fitting of the sinful siren, Delilah, one might write:

Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward – arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel – rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror (1 Peter 3:1-6, NKJV).

May those of us who would be godly women, precious in the sight of God, realize the influence we have on the men in our lives. Rather than seductively attractive – beyond the confines of the marital chamber (Heb.13:4), as the world encourages us to be, may we be spiritually beautiful. May we be fixed on the narrow pathway of light, rather than the worldly avenue of lustful beauty, pride, and self-gratification. May we always consider that which affects the eternal destination of souls, not that which eventually will be rust, dust, and ruin. May we choose our companions carefully, especially, those who may become our life partners before God; and may we encourage and support the growth of their spirituality. We may help the men in our lives be spiritual “strong men,” regardless of their stature. May we call upon God – not “just...once,” as

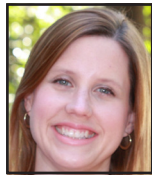
did Samson, but always with Samson's words: "O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray..."

Works Cited

The Holy Bible: New King James Version. WORDsearch 11, software. Georgetown, TX: LifeWay Christian Resources, 2017.

Daughters Of The Devil: Gomer

Shelley Hazel



Shelley is originally from Southeast Missouri, but is a Georgia transplant. She is married to Westley Hazel, who preaches for the Forrest Park congregation in Valdosta, GA. Together, they have two children, Evie (14), and Deacon (12). She is also the “American mom” of a foreign student, Jaewon Kim (18). Shelley also teaches 3 year olds part time at Georgia Christian School.

Shocking! Stories of government officials or celebrities caught with prostitutes, wealthy housewives leading secret lives as high class “call girls,” or police uncovering sex trafficking rings make front page news even in our morally loose society. Salacious memes about “famous prostitutes from history” are “click bait” on social media platforms. When we find a well-known name attached to such a vulgar crime, we are shocked...and we want to know more. We want to know why this person would demean him or herself in this way rather than find a healthy, respectable relationship. We want to know what kind of a person would involve themselves with a harlot!

Hosea must have had similar thoughts when God asked him to marry the harlot, Gomer in Hosea 1:2. Our natural reaction upon reading this is shock. Why would God ask His faithful prophet to marry someone like that?! We identify with Hosea and feel sorry for his situation. He seems to be stuck with a wife who not

only had slept with many men in her past but would continue to do so during their marriage. In fact, many scholars believe that Gomer's daughter and second son were fathered by men other than her husband. Can you imagine if a preacher walked into a congregation today with his ex-prostitute, adulterous wife and their three children each with a different father?! Know of any congregations looking to hire that guy?

In Hosea chapters 1-3, God goes on to tell us something even more shocking: we are Gomer! Examine the analogy that God intended with Hosea's life. Hosea represents God; Gomer represents God's people. Upon reading this, you might think to yourself, "I've never sinned like that. I am not an adulterer or a prostitute. I would never worship idols!" And you may have a point. Gomer's name means "completion" as in complete wickedness or idolatry. It would be unfair to describe our society today as completely wicked or entirely idolatrous. However, as the prophet Isaiah wrote, "all we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. 53:6). The New Testament exhorts us that to believe we have no sin is to deceive ourselves (1 John 1:8). If we are to study the book of Hosea as God intended, we must identify with adulterous, idolatrous Gomer. In truth, like Gomer, we all are prone to wander. We all are tempted to believe Satan's lies. When we sin, we all forsake our Heavenly Father and act more like daughters of the devil than the children of God we are called to be. Yet, praise be to God who sees us as Gomer – lost but loved. Just as Hosea, whose name like Jesus' means "salvation," loved Gomer enough to

search for her and buy her back, God's love seeks to redeem us as sinners back to Him.

Prone to Wander

Poor Gomer. What kind of woman chooses a life of prostitution? We know very little about her. The book of Hosea only gives us a glimpse into her life. Hosea 1:3 tells us her father's name was Diblaim meaning "double portion of raisin cakes" which were viewed as an aphrodisiac. His name implies that he was obsessed with sensuality. While we do not have any details of her upbringing, one can imagine, being raised in a household that highly valued sexual pleasure, Gomer saw and knew of things as a child that did not encourage purity. Whatever it was, something in her life caused her to believe that her value lay in her body rather than in God. She found her identity in many lovers rather than the One who loved her. In doing so, she lost focus and strayed from God.

Sisters, we too are prone to wander. The world around us, if we heed it, teaches that our value as women lies in so many things other than God. Advertisements and media teach that the ideal woman is beautiful, thin and young. She is smart and strong. She exercises religiously and eats "real" foods, nothing processed or full of chemicals. She has goals for her career or home business. Her children are well groomed and involved in multiple extracurricular activities. Of course, she demonstrates all these accomplishments and more to her myriad friends and followers on social media. Society values this girl. We may admire or even pursue many

of these qualities as well. There is nothing wrong with wanting to be thinner or healthier or more goal oriented. However, a problem arises when any of these admirable qualities becomes our focus. We begin to believe that our value lies in how skinny or “crunchy” we are or what level we reach in our company rather than in God.

At times, we need to examine ourselves to see whether we’re focused on God or beginning to wander. Ask yourself these questions:

- What or who makes me feel valued? (Eph. 2:4-9)
- How do I identify myself? By my career, family, hobby, or lifestyle? Or as a child of God? (Gal. 2:20)
- Where do I spend my money, my time, and my energy? (Mat. 6:21)
- Where or to whom do I go for comfort? For acceptance? For approval? (2 Cor. 1:3; Rom. 15:7; Gal. 1:10)
- Do I accept or love myself despite my flaws? (Rom. 7:24-25)
- Do I believe that God accepts me? Loves me? (Rom. 8:34; John 3:16)

Honest introspection can reveal what’s truly at the center of our lives. Gomer’s life focused on her lovers and on what they gave her or how they made her feel about herself. In her own mind, she needed these things, but in reality they pulled her from the one thing she needed most. We too can identify so much with not only the sinful but also the trivial things of this world that we believe we need in our lives more than we need God.

Let us strive to surround ourselves so entirely with Christ that we leave no room for fleshly desires (Rom. 13:14) because we, like Gomer, are prone to wander.

Believe Satan's Lies

When did Hosea stop loving Gomer? When does God quit loving us? As Christians, we recognize that God's love is everlasting (Jer. 13:3); His love never fails (Psa. 136). Yet understanding God's unconditional love and living with faith in it are two very different things. Hosea 2:5 shows us that Gomer struggled to believe in the truth of Hosea's love. Instead, she was convinced that she could only be fulfilled in promiscuous relationships. Upon leaving, she quickly learned that she had rejected the true, generous love of her husband for false infatuations that would never satisfy the longing of her heart (Hos. 2:7-9). It seems as though she was at a low point in her life (Hos. 2:10-13), and, realizing her mistake, she must have longed to return home to Hosea and her children. However, something held her back in that miserable, sinful condition.

Similarly, when we reject the truth of God's love for us (Rom 9:25), believe we can find fulfillment outside of Christ (Col. 2:10), and think we've gone too far to turn back (1 John 3:19-24), we allow Satan's lies to control us. That's what happens when we lose focus on God and find our identity outside of Him. We make ourselves vulnerable to all of Satan's arrows. If we trade God's truth for a lie, we will find ourselves enmeshed in sin and unable to find our way out like Gomer (Rom. 1:25). James teaches that the Word of

God can be a mirror that shows us our faults, but only a fool would walk away ignoring what he finds (James 1:23-25). It is time for Gomer to make a change; it is time for redemption.

Redeeming Love

How sad would it be if Gomer's story ended there? She despised her husband's love; she was unfaithful to him and deserved his rejection. Not many among us would pursue and forgive a spouse who repeatedly spurned us for other lovers, but this is not a story of man's love. This is a story of God's redeeming love. Think back to the beginning of their love story. Our gut reaction to God's command for a holy man of God to marry a lowly prostitute is that she is not good enough for him. She does not deserve his love. Gomer is not worthy. But why does God love us?! What is His love for us based upon? Is it our faithfulness? Our goodness? Our worthiness? In comparison to holiness of Jehovah God, we are entirely undeserving of His notice much less His love and mercy! God's love for us is scandalous. It is even more scandalous than the love of a preacher for a prostitute.

God chose to make Gomer's people, the Israelites, His people despite their being "the least of all peoples" (Deut. 7:8). He saved them because He loved them (Deut. 7:9). Likewise, God chose to save all people who are obedient in Christ "because of His great love with which He loved us" (Eph. 2:4). Why does God love us? Because God is love (1 John 4:7-8). He does not sit on His Heavenly throne, wringing His hands

while deciding whom He will love and whose sins He can overlook. God proved His love when gave us His Son. “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us...” (1 John 4:9-10). We cannot possibly do anything to deserve or reciprocate His love for us. Neither can He do anything to love us less. God’s love for us is the simplest yet most profound subject in the Bible. We must have faith in His love for us, for to deny it is to deny Him. Not one man, woman or Gomer alive in the world can sin beyond God’s redeeming love (Isa. 63:7; Lam. 3:22). If Hosea can love Gomer, seek her out and take her back despite everything she did to him, then anyone who desires forgiveness and is willing to obey must have God’s redeeming love.

Hosea and Gomer’s lives are an unlikely love story. In reading this God-given analogy, we must do so with the understanding that we are Gomer. Just like Gomer, we are prone to wander, believe Satan’s lies and are desperately in need of redeeming love. While we may still wonder why someone would involve himself with a harlot, we should remember that God uses lowly things of this world to teach us great spiritual truths. In this case, God used a prostitute to teach us about His love. Shocking!

Works Cited

- Coffman, James Burton. *Commentary on the Minor Prophets: Hosea, Obadiah, and Micah*, Revised Edition, Vol. 2. Abilene, TX: A.C.U. Press, 1986. Print.
- Holy Bible, *New King James Version*
- Robertson, Travis. “Hosea 1-3: The Command, Problem, Response, and Assurance.” *Majoring in the Minors: A Study*

of the Minor Prophets-Part One. Ed. Neal Pollard. Cleburne, TX: Hopkins, 2013. Kindle edition.

Rothschild, Jennifer. *Invisible: How You Feel is Not Who You Are*. Read by Diana Batarseh, Christian audio, 2015. Audiobook

Guidelines ~ Formatting/ Proofing

*Thank you for helping teach the gospel throughout the world via the printed page.
Your assistance and support will help make this product a better, more useful one.*

*The following are some of the targeted areas of concern and desire to “standardize” the entire volume.
Please use a red ink pen, circle area in question and write out in the margin what you suggest needs to change.*

Read for CONTENT (sentences are complete and make sense) and GRAMMATICAL accuracy

Read for SCRIPTURAL truth (does not teach or imply anything contrary to the Word of God)

Read for eliminating excessive repetition, or make suggestions of what might improve the material

Write “sp” when double spacing after a period leaves a noticeable large space. Spacing before and after an indented quote = 1/2 normal

Periods at end of sentences with a quotation reference should be as follows: the gospel (Rom. 1:16). (No period at end of gospel. Or, as follows: “...sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23).

Font size for the body of the manuscript: 13 Pt
Sub-Heading font size: 16 Pt
Indented quote, smaller: 11 Pt

Tabs should be .375 (not .25 or .5)

Book titles = Italicized

No Roman numerals in Bible books

Initial the mss after you have completed proofing

No quotation marks to be used when indented quote

Books of the Bible NOT to be abbreviated when in sentence
(and no parenthesis)

{T}he may be used when the actual quote is not beginning of sentence

Book abbreviations should be as followed when in parenthesis:

Matthew Mat.

Mark Mark

Luke Luke

John..... John

Acts Acts

Romans Rom.

1 Corinthians..... 1 Cor.

2 Corinthians 2 Cor.

Galatians..... Gal.

Ephesians Eph.

Philippians Phil.

Colossians Col.

1 Thessalonians..... 1 The.

2 Thessalonians..... 2 The.

1 Timothy 1 Tim.

2 Timothy 2 Tim.

Titus Titus

Philemon Phile.

Hebrews Heb.

James..... James

1 Peter 1 Peter

2 Peter 2 Peter

1 John..... 1 John

2 John..... 2 John

3 John..... 3 John

Jude..... Jude

Revelation Rev.

Genesis Gen.

Exodus Exo.

Leviticus Lev.

Numbers Num.

Deuteronomy Deut.

Joshua Josh.

Judges Judg.

Ruth Ruth

1 Samuel 1 Sam.

2 Samuel 2 Sam.

1 Kings..... 1 Kings

2 Kings..... 2 Kings

1 Chronicles..... 1 Chr.

2 Chronicles..... 2 Chr.

Ezra Ezra

Nehemiah Neh.

Esther Est.

Job Job

Psalms..... Psa.

Proverbs Prov.

Ecclesiastes..... Eccl.

Song of Solomon..... Song

Isaiah Isa.

Jeremiah..... Jer.

Lamentations Lam.

Ezekiel Eze.

Daniel Dan.

Hosea Hosea

Joel Joel

Amos..... Amos

Obadiah..... Obad.

Jonah..... Jonah

Micah Micah

Nahum..... Nah.

Habakkuk..... Hab.

Zephaniah Zeph.

Haggai Hag.

Zechariah..... Zech.

Malachi Mal.