

The Circuit Rider

Published By

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Volume 3, Number 4

October

Fall 2008

THE DEVIL

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”. (Eph. 6:11)

Some thirty-three times in the New Testament, the title of “devil” is attributed to the prince of evil spirits whose official proper name is known to us as “Satan” (Job. 1:6-9). When reference is made to him in the Old Testament, he’s more commonly called an “evil spirit” (I Sam. 16:14-16) rather than “devil”. Both in the Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek, the name “Satan” means adversary, one who withstands, or one who opposes another. The Greek word “devil” means accuser or slanderer and rightly describes the work of “Satan” (Rev. 12:9-10). The “devil” is not only the archenemy of God and man, but he is our chief opponent and grand “adversary” (I Pet. 5:8).

Regardless of how lightly the majority of people view this leader of evil forces, Scripture teaches that there is a personal “devil” and he is never anything less than our “enemy” (Matt. 13:39). He does not wear a red suit, have a long tail, nor carry a pitchfork. Despite such a modern day concept, he is not something to laugh at or of which to poke fun. Whenever people consider him to be a joke or myth, then the “devil” has done his job well. He is not a figment of the imagination, but a real personal being. From my own experience as a Christian and as a pastor in Christian ministry, I’m keenly aware of his continual opposition. The closer believers grow to God, the more difficult the “devil” tries to make life for us.

Throughout Scripture, “Satan” (I Chron. 21:1) is described as the greatest “enemy” of both God and man. For too long, the “devil” has been the subject of ridicule instead of fear. To deny the power of “Satan” (Zech. 3:1) is to underestimate the authority of Scripture and fail to realize the spiritual warfare against the Church of Jesus Christ. For a Christian to ignore the “devil” is to do so at his peril. Like it or not,

every believer is a soldier in the Lord's army and is at war with the "devil". It's been said that the Christian life is not a playground, but a battleground and the first rule of success in war is to know your enemy. So many times, the "devil" tries to get believers confused as to who the real "enemy is and gets us to turn on one another. But, in so doing, he merely wins another contest in the battle to the shame of an ignorant unbelieving people.

THE PERSON OF SATAN

Our knowledge of how "Satan" came into existence is limited, but we do have a little glimpse of what is believed to be his background in the Bible. It appears that he was the chief "anointed cherub" known as "Lucifer" (Isa. 14:12-14, Ezek. 28:12-19). In trying to usurp the authority of God, he fell from his created angelic state of perfection and became the first sinner. In his fall, it's believed that he probably led a "third" (Rev. 12:4) of the angelic beings with him in his revolt against God. These "angels" (II Pet. 2:4) have become known to us as the demonic forces that do the devil's bidding. Demons are evil, unclean, vicious spirits who seek to possess the bodies of men (Matt. 10:1, Mk. 5:1-13). Because of his supernatural power in leading the human race into sin, the devil is called "the prince of this world" (Jh. 14:30). In giving evidence of "Satan" being a distinct and unique personality, the Bible uses a masculine personal pronoun in reference to him. It was "Satan" himself that appealed to Christ following His baptism, tempting Him, but to no avail (Mat. 4:1-11). Jesus Christ is the only Person Who has ever resisted the devil without ever succumbing to any temptation.

One cannot believe the Bible and deny that it teaches the existence of a personal devil. His personality is described in the very title by which he is best known. Take the "d" off the word "devil" and the work for which he is famous is spelled EVIL. He is called in Scripture, "the wicked one" (Matt. 13:19) and "the enemy" (Matt 13:39). Although, "Satan ... is transformed into an angel of light" (II Cor. 11:14), in reality there "is no truth in him" (Jh. 8:44). All he can do is deceive and "lie" just as he did to Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:16-17, 3:4-5). "Satan filled" the "heart" of "Ananias" to "lie to the Holy Ghost" which cost this man his life (Acts 5:3-5). The "devil" is not only a "liar", but he is the "father" of a "lie" and a "murderer from the beginning" (Jh. 8:44). He may cause you to believe that he has your best interest at heart, but all that he is really interested in is your downfall and destruction.

THE PLACE AND POWER OF SATAN

The devil is such a powerful angel that only God has power greater. We can learn from "Michael the archangel" that when attacked by "the devil", we can only turn him over to the "the Lord" (Jude 8-9). There is no denying that "Satan" is "a strong man armed" because Christ Himself said it of him (Lk. 11:21). "Satan" is powerful, but he holds no power independently of God. In allowing "Satan" as much power as he has, God is using him to execute divine judgment on a rebellious world. "Satan" cannot exert any power beyond the limits that God permits (Job 1:12, 2:6). God keeps the devil on a chain, so to speak, and at times it may seem to us like a mighty long chain.

“Satan” is not only the object of this world’s worship, but also the moving spirit of all godless activity (II Cor. 4:4). All that he does is hostile to the “kingdom” work of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:13). Because of his viciousness, “the power of death” is attributed to him (Heb. 2:14). This does not mean that he is sovereign over death, but it does mean that because of the way he has seduced mankind into sin, mankind must suffer the curse of death (Gen. 3:19).

THE CHARACTER AND NATURE OF SATAN

By the names and titles ascribed to the devil, we can tell something about his character and nature. Peter called him “your adversary” (I Pet. 5:8) and by using the word “adversary” it pictures the devil as one who takes his stand against the things of God. He is like a “roaring lion ... seeking whom he may devour”. He is also pictured in Scripture as a “serpent” (Gen. 3:1) and a “dragon” (Rev. 20:2) because of his sneaky but fierce cruelty. From the story of Christ’s temptation (Matt. 4:3), we learn that the devil is the “tempter” of us all and is continually and constantly soliciting men to sin. No one can be compared to his cunning craftiness and malignant ways. He’s noted for attacking men in their weakest moments and when they are most vulnerable. He’s an expert at deception, trickery, and performing “signs and lying wonders” (II Thess. 2:9-11).

The only attitude that a believer ought to have toward the devil is one of resistance (I Pet.5:8-9). Satanic resistance can only be possible by submitting to the power of God (Jam. 4:7). “Satan” is powerful, more powerful than we are, but his power is limited by the Sovereign God of creation. Remember, when “Satan” tried “Job”, he had to have God’s permission to do so (Job 1:12, 2:6). The demons even had to ask permission to enter “into the heard of swine” when cast from the “two possessed with devils” (Matt. 8:28-33). Don’t ever forget as a believer that Satan’s power and dominion over us was broken at the cross and “victory” was won “through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 15:55-57). Even though “Satan” was judged in the cross and defeated in the tomb, he is still permitted to carry on his work of conflict during the present time.

CLOSING

The devil is our “enemy”, but he is our conquered “enemy” (I John 3:8). Satan’s final destiny, along with all “his angels” (Matt. 25:41) will be the “lake of fire” where he will be tormented “for ever and ever” (Rev. 20:10). The devil knows already where he will spend eternity and he’s at work to carry his own with him. “Satan” is a decisively beaten foe and he knows that his days of persuading men to do evil are numbered (Rom. 16:20). Any person who is not “saved” (Rom. 10:9) is a spiritual prisoner of “Satan” and the devil has him where he wants him. However, if a person is “saved”, then “Satan” views him as an escaped prisoner and goes to war against him trying to destroy his testimony. His attacks are vicious and malicious with the intent of enslaving man under the yoke of sinful bondage.

“Satan” will use any tool at his disposal whether it is family, friends, church people, and thousands of other ways of beguiling us to do wrong (Mk. 8:32-33).

Whatever “Satan” does, we can rest assured that it is destructive and intended to attack the righteous plan and purpose of God. By fostering pride, disbelief, confusion, and disobedience, the devil can get us unbalanced and one-sided. We must learn to be on guard against the “wiles of the devil” because if he doesn’t come at us from one direction, then he will break through at some other. The only way a Christian can overcome the devil is by putting on the “whole armour of God” and trust the Lord for “victory” over him. As we take inventory of the “whole armour of God” as recorded in Ephesians, chapter 6 and verses 11 through 18, we discover that the “shield of faith” is a vital part of the believer’s “armour”. Paying close attention to the Christian’s “armour”, we cannot help but notice that there is no protection for the back. The reason is simply that God never intended for a believer to turn his back toward the devil, but always face him in holy faith, obeying God regardless of the circumstances, and trust the Lord for victory over our enemy.

A MINISTRY UPDATE

Much has transpired since our last newsletter. To begin with, I retired from my active pastorate as of July 30th of this year. And then, on August 17th, God opened the door of opportunity for us to begin broadcasting over WTRU at AM 830 every Sunday afternoon at 1:00 PM. We consider ourselves greatly blessed to be able to air our programming over such an excellent quality station. WTRU is 50,000 watts and reaches a large listening audience in the Triad. For those who do not live in the area but would like to listen to us as it is aired every Sunday, you may do so by going on the Internet at www.wtru.com and click on “listen”. Let me remind you that the same Bible Studies that are aired on the radio can also be heard on the “audio” page of our web site at www.covenantofgraceministries.com. At the present time, I’m about to finish the Book of James, which will hopefully be ready by the first of next year.

I continue to hear from people around the world. There was one person in particular that touched my heart. His request was for seven copies of God’s Word in large print. The request came shortly before leaving my pastorate. I simply shared the request and a number of individuals as well as the ET Club at the church wanted to take on the project. They purchased all the Bibles and paid a portion of mailing the package to Nigeria. The cost of mailing is very expensive and even higher than the cost of the Bibles. I am now in the process of gathering Bible Study material for the pastor there and plan to mail him some study helps that he may better learn the Word of God and teach his congregation. They have asked that I come and minister to them in Nigeria, but expenses make that impossible at the present. We consider this contact an opportunity to broaden our ministry and try to be faithful in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Thanks to all who have financially contributed to this ministry and for your prayers on our behalf. May the Lord bless you all richly!

Because of His Sovereign GraceBWM