



MOUNT MERRION FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
(BELFAST NORTHERN IRELAND).



Pulpit Ministry of Mount Merrion Free Presbyterian Church

Lord's Day Evening 9th March 2008.

Series 'God's Covenant Heritage.'

No.11 "The Adversary of The Covenant"

Scripture Reading 1 Peter Ch 5:8

By. Rev. Paul Thompson.

It is perhaps true that there has been no one truth that has been more ridiculed in recent times than the biblical revelation of the existence of the Devil. The existence of a spiritual adversary of God's people has been philosophised and explained away as being no more than fiction. However, the words of Peter ought to serve as a reminder not only to the world in general, but to Christians in particular that the one whom the bible describes as Satan, the Devil, the Prince of this world is their adversary! We live in a day when many deny the existence of evil and the reality of a devil is ridiculed! I am not promoting an unhealthy, fantastic study of Demonology, however, it is the Christian's duty to consider well what the Word of God does reveal regarding Satan as our foe. He is more than an influence in this world. He is your adversary. In the context of 1Peter Ch5 Satan is seen to be the Adversary of the Covenant people of God, he opposes them, he also opposes the Covenant of Grace. This follows since there was no intended provision made for Satan or his confederates in the covenant of grace, he knows this and therefore he vents his hatred against man who is the object of Sovereign Grace. That very thought ought to provoke a high degree of gratitude for God in you Christian, for there should not have been any provision made for man either. Yet God graciously provided redemption for man! What Grace! The Covenant of Grace was designed to save man but not Satan and his angels. For this reason among others, Satan is the adversary of the Covenant. Believers need not fear Satan's power, Romans Ch8:38-39, "*neither death nor life nor angels [Satan and devils], nor principalities, nor powers [etc] can separate us from the love of God.*" He cannot seize the souls of God's people, though he roars against us we are safe with Christ! However, it remains that we are to recognise that he is a powerful foe, we are to be conscious of his designs and his deceptions! Peter intends by his words to inform us of our enemy, to think through his malicious intent for the Church. As I have stated and restated throughout these studies, we are to think in terms of our relationship, I.e. who and what we are in Christ. If I be in Christ, I am in union with one whom Satan opposes, he is first Christ's adversary but he is mine also because of Christ.

1) The Adversary's Person. "*Your Adversary the devil*"

One of the first matters that needs to be considered is, that the devil is not an influence for evil, but he is a person.

a) He is a Created adversary. Larger Cat Q16.

The Angels of God [including Satan] were created during the six days of creation [See Exodus Ch20:11], "*For in six days the Lord made the heaven and earth the sea and all that in them is...*" Satan therefore was created as a holy being, [Matt Ch25:31], his creation received the approbation of God [Gen Ch1:31], "*And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good.*" An immortal being [Matt Ch22:30], "*They are as the angels of God in heaven [I.e. immortal].*" A mutable being, the Larger Catechism states that the Angels are, "*yet subject to change.*"

b) He is a Fallen adversary. Isaiah Ch14:12 Luke Ch10:18.

This goes without saying as the term '*adversary*' suggests that to be an adversary one must possess a fallen nature.

It should be observed firstly that Satan was not created as one who was evil, the Bible clearly teaches that he held an exalted position in heaven. Yet through pride he was cast forth as a rebel. Though created by God as holy, he became unholy through his own sin. His first occupation was to celebrate and praise the creation of God, yet through pride he roams the earth as a vagabond and fugitive, having no rest! Christ witnessed the fall of Satan from heaven, Christ thereby proves His own deity, I was there, I saw him fall! There are many titles given to Satan. Those mentioned below give some insight into his evil adversarial character.

i) The Dragon, Serpent, Deceiver [Rev Ch12:9]. The word '*adversary*' means '*slanderer*' or '*accuser*' The term is a legal term, that speaks of opposition. Satan is the '*accuser of the brethren.*'

ii) Abaddon Apollyon [Rev Ch9:11]. Both these titles mean '*destroyer.*' [Apollyon '*destroying angel*']. The figure used in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's progress. He is described as having "*the mouth of a lion.*" He accuses Christian of his failures and informs him that he is not to expect wages of his master. "*Thou hast already been unfaithful in thy service to him; and how dost thou think to receive wages of him?*" Christian responds, "*I have obtained pardon of my Prince.*" Apollyon broke out into a grievous rage, saying, "*I am an enemy to this Prince; I hate his person, his laws, and people: I am come out on purpose to withstand thee.*"

*"The Devil was educated in the best divinity school in the universe, the heaven of heavens."
...Jonathan Edwards...*

iii) Diabolos (Devil) [Rev Ch12:9]. [Diabolical - Devilish or extremely evil - deceiver].

iv) Beelzebub (Lord of The Flies) Matt Ch12:24].

c) He is an Active being in his Domain. “Walketh about” [N.T. Greek *peripateo*].

Satan is an active adversary. He is continually opposing the Covenant Heritage of God throughout the earth, he is relentless and unwearied in this work. Turn Job Ch1:7, Ch2:2, “*And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord...from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.*” he is an indefatigable adversary. ‘*The great peripatetic*’ [John Trapp]. He is the prince of the power of the air. It is true to say that in places where Satan exercises his dominion there is an unwholesome air physically present, the stench of sin [The night club, bar]!

d) He is a Powerful Being.

Solomon tells us in Prov 30:30 that the “*Lion is the strongest among beasts.*” John Brown states that this informs us that the fall of Satan did not have an effect upon his physical powers, he remains a Lion of the fallen angelic order, he is “*The Strong man.*” Let us not mock the Devil, he is a powerful foe, we have no reason to be afraid of him, yet children’s choruses have popularised the theory that he is a weak and insipid foe, not so! Satan has over six thousand years of experience in the art of deception! We in turn need to be strong and put on the whole armour of God that we may resist the wiles of the Devil [Eph Ch6:11-13].

2) The Adversary’s Purpose. “Walketh about seeking whom he may devour.”

His purpose is to oppose the Covenant head and the Covenant people. Remember that the covenant title of God’s people are the ‘sheep’ The lion opposes the sheep. Remember there was no redemptive provision intended for him in the Covenant of Grace, he is a damned creature and he knows it! This is seen in Matt Ch8:29, the devils thinking they would be cast down to hell. The devil hates every man, but he is particularly opposed to all those who have been joined to Christ, ‘*who have been led by the Spirit to place themselves under the guidance of the Captain of the Lord’s Host.*’ says John Brown. The purpose of Christ is to “*destroy the works of the Devil*”, that means that every Christian is confederate with Christ in that work! Our lives and witness serve with Christ in the destruction of the Devil! He is the:

i) Adversary of the Gospel. Since Satan opposes the Covenant of Grace, he will confuse its message and produce and present to mankind counterfeit gospels. This is particularly seen in the post-modern movement. Men oppose the Gospel of blood atonement, that Christ died for our sins! That message to the post-modern man is nothing more than ‘*primitive religion.*’ Satan’s gospel teaches salvation by works says A.W. Pink. ‘*It inculcates justification before God on the ground of human merits.*’ So many are heeding that gospel today! Man being depraved in heart he listens to that pseudo gospel!

It is a gospel that appeals strongly to the carnal mind and is popular with the masses, it ignores the solemn facts that man is a fallen creature, alienated from God, dead in trespasses and sins, and that his only hope lies in regeneration. The message that the Covenant proclaims is Redemption through Christ!

ii) Adversary of Holiness. In God’s people the character of Christ is reflected [Eph Ch4:24]. God’s image of Holiness and purity are seen, Satan is seeking to destroy that image of holiness. He will seek to achieve this by tempting the Lord’s people to sin in ways that will besmirch their testimony! He tempted Adam and Eve, in order to ruin the image of God. Pastors and elders in particular need to guard their thoughts and actions that would lead to them being dismissed from office. It is important to note that Satan does not know our hearts, only the Lord can do that, “*I the Lord search the heart*” however, he observes our behaviour and thereby regulates his temptations ‘*by the information he obtains*’ [John Brown]. He suits the snare to the habits of the animal he intends to trap, he knows the bait to use.

iii) Adversary of Mercy. [Seeking whom he may devour].

Satan is a merciless adversary, the word ‘*devour*’ means ‘*swallow*’ he is always preying upon men. The lion is an animal that is a stranger to pity, it takes no thought for the bleating lamb! Unlike the Shepherd who loves His flock, he tenderly nourishes them. Satan is a cruel father! He knows his time is short [Rev Ch12:12] so is ever busy in executing his fiendish purpose, destroying lives!

3) The Christian’s Preparation.

The adversary of God’s people is subtle, Paul and Peter both warn Christians against his wily

“*There is no need for ignorance concerning the devices of the devil, for they are set forth plainly in the word of God and they are also visible all around us.*” {Donald Grey Barnhouse}.

deceptions, as a result there then is a double emphasis required of the believer to prepare themselves against their adversary:

i) Be Sober. [*be watchful*].

The word 'sober' soberness or temperance is a covenant gift of Christ to the Church [Gal Ch5:23], the thought then that occurs is that the Christian ought always to continue in a state of soberness. He is to pursue a spirit filled life, s indicated in Eph Ch5:18, "*Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess but be ye filled, but be filled with the Spirit.*" Resisting the devil is only possible through the Spirit, it cannot be achieved by the flesh, as we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against spiritual wickedness [Eph Ch6:12]. This call to soberness by Peter is a call for men and women to walk in the Spirit. An man intoxicated with the world and carelessness is not fit to do war with the Devil. The drunk man is like a lamb handed into the hand of the Lion! Arm your soul and mind believer [Eph Ch6:11], put on the Covenant Armour of God, the Shield of Faith, sword of the Spirit, breastplate of righteousness, helmet of salvation etc all these are provide for you by the Commander and Chief Christ! Satan will seek to intoxicate the mind if the Christian with the pleasure and riches of this world...It requires a discipline of mind and a discipline of body that avoids the very intoxicating allurements of the world. 1Thess Ch5:6, "*Let us not sleep as do others but let us watch and be sober.*" Order your life, exercise self-control. For Satan can transform himself into an Angel of Light [2Cor 11:14]. That which is seemingly harmless!

Christians can be so taken up with '*things seen*' so that the propagation of the Gospel is forsaken, in his family or with his wife or the community in which he lives, the Christian through intoxication becomes a servant of the world and not a servant of Christ and the Kingdom of heaven! '*Keep the heart with all diligence*' Prov 4:23. If you are a Child of the Covenant, grace in you will be teaching you to live soberly [Tit Ch2:12], don't permit those things that will divert your attention from Christ

ii) Be Vigilant. [*be awake*].

The literal word means to '*stay awake.*' The imagery is taken of the shepherd who dares not fall asleep during the night watch. Spiritual hypersomnia, inattention ought never to be the state of the Christian. The Christian ought to be in a state of watchfulness, taking note of the hazards that will befall him and his family, this enables him to navigate his home and life around the potential pitfalls. Father's we ought to watch our children, take note of their company their dress etc, and if need be draw them aside and give the necessary counsel. The same goes for our wives etc. The Devil is content to watch a father fail in his duties towards his wife and children, knowing that in the years to come he will be able to reap the fruit of an unwatched relationship! Be vigilant! Be not ignorant of the Devil's devices '*thought*' [2Cor 2:11], he is seeking to take advantage of the people of God, "*lest Satan should get an advantage of us.*" The prowling Lion is ought to be kept outside the wall. I recently read a statement from the secular press in regard to the prevention of attacks from Lions in the wild, "*Mountain lion attacks are generally avoidable if we exercise caution and act responsibly in their habitat.*" Christians need to be aware that we are in the habitat of Satan, he is the prince of this world! [John Ch12:31, Ch14:30, Ch16:11]. A drunk man who falls asleep in the domain of a ravenous lion is in a precarious position indeed! Even when we do fall asleep, yet there is one who watched over us, the shepherd of Israel who slumbers or sleeps not. The sleep of the Christian is a covenant gift as well, like the child who goes to bed content and secure knowing that his Father is nearby!

Satan is a defeated foe! The Lion of Judah has fatally wounded the enemy, it has been rightly said, "*Satan is a broken headed adversary.*" Has his power been broken in your life? Or do you remain under his control, subservient to his cruel dictation?

By. Paul Thompson.

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them."

Hebrews 10:16