

His Infernal Majesty – the Devil

May God open the eyes of our understanding as we consider the truth of His Word. Today I want to talk to you about one of the most extraordinary beings in the whole universe. He has a great influence over this world and over the lives of people in general. He is known by many names but the most familiar is “the devil.” The Scripture speaks of him as both a real and a personal being of evil.

However, many people do not think he really exists. To them the devil is just a bit of religious fiction or at the most a way of describing the sum total of everything evil. Possibly one reason for this attitude is the way the devil is often depicted by cartoonists.

I don't believe in a devil who has a long tail protruding from his weird red suit, who carries a pitchfork and has horns protruding from his head. This is not the devil pictured in the Bible. There the devil, or Satan, is seen as a personality of utter evil. He is as evil as God is good, as hateful as God is loving, and as selfish as God is unselfish. If you are not a Christian he is your undisputed master and if you are a Christian he is your implacable foe.

Listen to the Scripture as it describes this archenemy of God and of your soul:

1 John 3:8 (NAB)

“The one who practices sin is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose: that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

John 8:44 (ESV)

⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Paul tells us: *“For even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2Cor. 11:14), and he refers to him as “the god of this world who has blinded the minds of the unbelieving” (2 Cor. 4:4).*

Peter exhorts believers: *“⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith...”* 1 Pet. 5:8-9a

James tells us, *"7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*
James 4:7

There are a great many people who do not believe in the devil. However, their ideas of the devil are very immature and usually unbiblical. Frankly, many of us who know the devil is a reality do not believe in the devil of popular conception. But the devil does exist. He is a real being and exerts a tremendous amount of influence and pressure in this world.

Two of the errors which people adopt concerning the devil are 1) **to deny his existence** and to simply not take him seriously, or 2) **to take the devil all too seriously**. The devil is delighted by atheists and liberal theologians and equally delighted by the attitudes of witches who believe in him and even in some Christians whose minds are preoccupied with his infernal majesty and his hordes of demons.

As Christians we are to take the devil seriously. He is living and powerful. The supreme objects of his hatred are the Lord Jesus Christ and Christ's people in this world. But at the same time, we must not magnify his power as if he were God or in fear worship him by praying to him. To address him in prayer while we are praying to God is to put him on an equal plane with God. Far be from us to blaspheme God by elevating Satan in this way. The devil likes to be the object of attention because he is utterly selfish. But as Christians, Jesus must be the focus of our attention.

Let's consider some things that the Bible says about the devil. Satan is called by a number of descriptive titles: he is called the Liar, the Murderer, the Accuser, the Dragon, the Serpent, and the Ruler of this world. Satan is the father of sin and unbelief. He has been around since the earth was created and he has plagued humanity since Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden of Eden.

The Bible seems to trace evil to a fall of Lucifer, an archangel, when in pride and self-deception he exalted himself against God (consider Isaiah 14:12-15). This led to the birth of sin, and his rebellion brought his banishment from heaven. God created hell for the devil and his angels. "... God did not spare angels when they sinned but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment. 2 Peter 2:4, Jesus in one of the parables of judgment: Then the king will say to those on his left, *'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.* Matthew 25:41

Satan became the god of this world when Adam disobeyed God and thus surrendered to the claims of the devil. Sin and death consequently spread to all humanity. In fact, until God's Holy Spirit opens a person's spiritual understanding, men and women remain spiritually blind and enslaved to Satan and their own evil nature. 2 Corinthians 4:4 *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

Unconverted men and women are in darkness and in the power of Satan. Paul recounts his commission as *to open their eyes that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those being sanctified by faith in Jesus Christ.* Acts 26:18

When a person is regenerated by the Holy Spirit and thus is converted, God takes him out of the kingdom of darkness and transfers him to the kingdom of light, the kingdom of God's Son. Colossians 1:13 *Although the devil is no longer our master, he remains a powerful enemy whom we are to resist steadfast in the faith. Even believers can become entangled in the traps of the devil by falling into behaviors contrary to the faith and by believing and teaching false doctrine. Thus, Paul exhorts us to pray they may come to their senses and escape the Devil's trap, having been captured by him to do his will.* 2 Timothy 2:26

There are **four ways** in which the devil seeks to damage the Christian. He can do this directly or through his multitudes of agents which include the world system and our sinful nature and demons. They will **tempt**, they will **accuse**, they will **deceive**, and they will **devour**.

First, you will be **tempted** – continuously and at times ferociously. The Lord Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, yet remained sinless. Temptation need not dismay you. It is the common experience of the disciples, as it was of the Savior. Neither should we use temptation as an excuse for sin. God allows us to be tempted by Satan and the Evil One's use of our own desires, to make us strong and mature through overcoming the devil.

But the devil also delights to **accuse** the Christian before God. He does this day and night, pointing out our weaknesses and our sins. He causes us to feel his accusations and induces guilt feelings - often they are false guilt feelings, but these paralyze our effectiveness. The devil seeks to destroy our fellowship with God. We must remember that the death of Christ Jesus has handled our sin problem before God and as we confess our sin this fellowship is maintained and the blood of Jesus goes on cleansing our consciences. Refuse to allow the devil's accusations to impede your fellowship with God.

The writer of the Book of the Revelation tells us how the saints overcame Satan the Accuser – they overcame by the blood of the Lamb.

As the hymn says:

“Well may the Accuser roar of ills I have done;
I know them all and thousands more;
Jehovah knoweth none.”

Come boldly to God in prayer – because Jesus paid your sin debt.

A third activity of the devil is **deception**. He deceives through the use of half-truths which are whole lies. He especially likes to engage in religious deception. We must overcome him by the word of our testimony. Truth is always the antidote for a lie. True doctrine of the Word of God is a necessary tool for overcoming the devil and turning back his efforts at subtle deception. The word of our testimony is the Word of God as it has been proven true in our experience. *They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the **word of their testimony**; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.* Revelation 12:11

The devil also seeks to **devour**. As a Christian he cannot touch your spirit/soul, but he can kill or maim your body (cf. Job 2:7: “So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.”

Also Acts 10:38 - “*how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.*”)

Also, he can come against our minds. When the devil counterattacks us believers engaged in spiritual warfare, we must resist him and fight against him with the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. See Matthew 4 where Jesus overcame Satan by the proper use and quotation of the Scripture. It is written he would say.

Rest assured that although Satan roars and threatens, he is powerless to hurt you until your task for Christ is completed. Then even God will turn the devil’s seeming victory in our death into his defeat. *When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:*

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

⁵⁵ *“O death, where is your victory?*

O death, where is your sting?”

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:54-57

The devil wants to bring Christians into defeat, disobedience, and sin. Paul urges Christians not to be ignorant of his devices. The Bible provides a very accurate portrait of his tactics.

Just to mention them: the devil engages in surprise attacks of temptation when we have our guard down and have become careless and overconfident. We must be ready to be attacked at all times in any way. He also lays siege against the Christian's will in order to wear him down and erode his standards and drag him into discouragement and defeat.

The devil is a master at disguise and subtle attacks. He can make vice look like virtue and error like truth! We must learn to test our thoughts, opinions, and desires with the teaching of the Word of God.

The devil is headed for hell. The Son of God overcame him and has rendered him a total defeat. But there are two stages to the devil's overthrow. One is past: at the cross Jesus triumphed over the Enemy. But the day of execution is still future. Until the day of Christ's return Satan is like a roaring lion on a chain. 1 Peter 5:8 Peter gave a firm warning about this lion: "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But some day God will finally cast him into the eternal lake of fire. (Revelation 20:10)

But what about now? How do we overcome the devil in our Christian experience?

Here are some of the tools God has given us to appropriate. First, there is **prayer**. Jesus taught his disciples to pray for the Father to deliver them from the evil one. Prayer is the key that unlocks a storehouse of spiritual power. Through prayer we have access to One who can do battle with the evil supernatural powers and make his victory manifest in us. John Bunyan said, "Pray often, for prayer is a shield for the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge for Satan."

Second, we must remember to put on the full armor of God which includes **the shield of faith**. Faith is a growing trust in Christ Jesus to deal with anything that happens to us. Satan has already been defeated by Jesus and he knows it. Faith is when the Christian knows it too!

Third, the believer aides in the appropriation of Christ's victory over Satan by **spiritual watchfulness**. We should not underestimate the influence of evil. It is a contagious disease.

We must expect to encounter it and be ready. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Involved in this is the knowledge of our weakest points and carefulness in regard to them.

Fourth, we must submit our wills and minds to God and **resist the devil**. Your resistance is the symbol of reliance on the mighty power of God's Son to defeat the Enemy. As you resist, the Scripture is proven true in your experience which states, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

In the process of resisting Satan it may be useful to speak to him: "Be gone, Satan. In the name of Jesus Christ, go away. Depart! For it is written, ".....," and quote an appropriate Bible verse.

Lastly, **use the truth**. Encounter the devil's lies with God's truth. The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit and by it we go on an offensive attack against the Enemy and put him to flight. Amen.

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