

STRAIGHTWAY

"AND STRAIGHTWAY THEY FORSOOK THEIR NETS, AND FOLLOWED HIM" (MARK 1:18).

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

The Power of Darkness: Its Subtle Influence upon Christians

Dr. H. T. Spence

We continue in the burden from the last *Straightway* articles dealing with the powers of darkness in the End Time. This issue carefully examines the drawing influences of the Devil upon Christians. May the Lord grant us understanding of how the Devil stealthily influences God's people in drawing them away from the Lord and His Word.

He That Committeth Sin Is of the Devil

No bolder words can be stated to the Christian as a warning than these found in 1 John 3:8:

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

The verb *committeth* here is in the present tense, referring to the *habit of sinning* in the life of a professing Christian. Is this habit exclusively of

himself? From one perspective, yes; for an individual initiates sinning from his own will and choice. However, John also declares that the Devil energizes this habit of sinning in this individual.

We were told earlier in 1 John 2:1,

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not ["sin" is in the aorist tense; we are not to commit one single, premeditated sin]. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

The statement is not *when* a Christian sins, but *if* he sins. A premeditated sin is an exception to the rule of the Christian. However, in 1 John 3:8, John now declares that a "Christian" that is given to premeditated sinning (in the present tense) is of the Devil, "for the Devil sinneth from the beginning."

We are also told that one of the purposes for the Son of God being manifested (or coming to the earth) was that He "might destroy the works of

the Devil." One of the great works of the Devil is "sinning." Yes, Jesus came to deliver us from sinning, and from the power of sin. This will include delivering us from the character of being a sinner (or, one who sins). Sinning is the character of the Devil. He sinned and sins. Before Christ came into our lives, we were given to sin. The purpose of the Son of man coming into the world is that He might destroy these sinning works of the Devil.

John then states in verse 9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." The word *born* here is in the perfect tense, meaning a crisis (aorist tense) New Birth combined with the continuing (present tense) life of that birth. Once again, the word *commit* is also in the present tense. For a Christian to commit sin is an exception to

the rule of his living. The rest of the verse (3:9) is somewhat difficult to declare:

For his seed [either God's seed, one who is born of Him, or the seed being the Word of God] remaineth in him [either the believer being the seed, or the seed being God's Word remaining in the Christian]: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God [perfect tense].

The individual who is born of God will continue to remain in God, or abide in Him, as declared in John 15. And thus, he cannot sin (or, be given to sin) if he is abiding. A Christian must break away from present-tense abiding in Christ in order to sin. I cannot willfully sin and continue to abide in communion with God. This is the great problem today among professing Christians. They believe they can be a Christian and continue to sin. There is no difference between a sinning sinner and a sinning Christian (except maybe one is wet from water baptism).

STRAIGHTWAY

O. Talmadge Spence, Founder

H. T. Spence, Editor
President

Published by the
Christian Purities Fellowship
The Witness Outreach of
Foundations Bible College

P. O. Box 1166
Dunn, NC 28335-1166
800-849-8761

WWW.STRAIGHTWAYONLINE.ORG

Provided free of charge.
Contributions welcomed to assist
with postage and printing.

Resisting the Devil

James 4:7 calls upon us to "Submit yourselves, therefore to God." Then He warns, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." In 1 John 4:4b it should be noted, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." This "greater" one, as we have noted in the previous issue of *Straightway*, is the anointing, the presence of the anointed one, the Holy One, Christ (1

John 2:20), as well as the anointing He has sent, the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:27). With these powers within, I am now commanded to resist the Devil with the promise that he will flee from me. The command is to oppose the Devil or to stand against the Devil.

Now, how is the Christian to stand against the Devil? We realize the Devil is the “great” one, and satanically, he is naturally wiser, although with a dark wisdom. He truly knows more than we do. He knows our weaknesses even greater than we know our weaknesses. Nonetheless, we are called upon to resist him. Yet, how do we resist him?

Matthew 4 presents our beloved Lord being tempted of the Devil. Two important truths come from this event. First, Matthew 4:1 states that Jesus was “led up of the spirit into the wilderness”; Luke 4:1 adds that “Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.” Secondly, Jesus used the Word of God to thwart each part of this threefold temptation He faced. When we come to the third temptation, Matthew 4:8, 9 declares how the Devil progressively got bolder with the Lord. The Devil then presents the proposition, “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” Note our Lord’s response: “Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the LORD thy God, and him only shalt

thou serve” (v. 10). Christ now boldly tells the Devil to leave Him, or “Get thee hence!”

Oh, dear reader, sometimes the temptation from the Devil will be so aggressive that the Christian will almost have to audibly and boldly say, “Leave me, Devil!” The story is told that one evening Martin Luther (the great reformer of the 1500s) thought he saw the Devil come through the door of his study. Luther took the inkwell and threw it at him. We may think, “An inkwell will not get rid of the Devil.” The outward action was only a manifestation of his inward heart’s motive—He resisted the devil!

Continuing in the story of Christ’s temptation, “Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him” (Matt. 4:11). Luke 4:13 adds that the Devil “departed from him for a season.” The promise is “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7b). Yes, this is the promise! The story of Christ’s temptation includes the presence of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God along with the cry, “Get thee hence!”

Luke 22:31 grants us another insight that the Lord Himself reveals: “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon [Gr., “hearing one”], behold, Satan [your adversary] hath desired to have you [has *begged* to have you], that he may sift you as wheat.” There are times the Devil (according to Rev. 12:10) is

at the Throne of God accusing God's saints, begging for their souls as if he is saying to God, "Give me that soul; look at that soul: it has failed. Give me that soul." "Satan hath desired [begged] to have you." Back in Luke 22:31, the Greek pronoun for *you* is in the plural; it was the Devil's desire to have all of the disciples: "that he may sift *you* as wheat." But the Lord declared to Peter, "But I have prayed for *thee*." The beloved King James translators gave us the pronoun *thee* to make clear the Lord was personally referring to Peter that his faith would fail not. Although we certainly read of Peter denying his Lord, the prayer of Christ was "that thy faith fail not." It was not that the prayer of Christ would keep Peter from denying his Lord; it was that ultimately his faith would not fail. So, behind the scenes of Christian living, there are conversations (as witnessed in Job 1 and 2) between Satan and God. These conversations have been, no doubt, frequent between the Devil and God throughout the centuries.

Concerning the powers of Satan, we gain another insight from the apostle Paul when he spoke before Herod Agrippa. The apostle revealed the words of the Lord Jesus given to him at his calling:

But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things

in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me (Acts 26:16–18).

What was to be the content of his preaching? The apostle reveals a five-fold message given to him from the Lord: (1) to open their eyes; (2) to turn them from darkness to light; (3) and from the power of Satan unto God; (4) that they may receive forgiveness of sins; and (5) inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ. Yes, an important part of Paul's preaching was "to turn them from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified." This inheritance among the sanctified was the infilling of the Spirit. But how is this turning from Satan to God to take place? It will be through the preaching of the powerful Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel within the human heart becomes the power to resist the Devil.

Committing a Soul to the Devil

Another insight concerning the dark powers of the Devil is found in 1 Corinthians 5. This chapter unveils a unique sin found within the Corinth

church—fornication. The young man of this church was not a typical fornicator; he was one living immorally with his step-mother, the wife of his father. Paul states, “It is reported commonly that there is fornication [Gr. *porneia*] among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife.” What does Paul command the church at Corinth to do? In verse 4,

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together [the next time you come together], and my spirit [is going to be present with you], with the power [presence] of our Lord Jesus Christ [this is what you must do], To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh . . .

Before continuing in verse 5, what is Paul commanding them to do? Surprisingly, he tells the church to turn this man over to Satan. Yes, Paul is very bold here: “deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of [not of the body, the physical body but the power of] the flesh.” In other words, let him go to the Devil and sin his sin all out, “that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” This would be as the prodigal son going to the far country: let him sin; let him fully sin, get it all out of him, even if it takes him down to nothing. Let him sin to the fullest.

Sometimes Christian parents are

afraid to let a determined, rebellious son or daughter leave their Christian home and go to the world. Some Christian parents may even compromise truth to keep their children from leaving, such as permitting them to get away with things that are not becoming to a Christian home. My dear father, Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, used to say, “I would rather for my children to go to the gutter in deep sin if it takes such a life to finally reveal to them that salvation is by grace alone.” There comes a point where the parents must release them and let them go. If not, what you have at home will be lost, including the Christian spirit that should dominate that home and its environment.

We may be tempted to say, “But if I let them go, what will happen to them?” Only God knows what will happen to them; only God knows how far they will go into sin; only God knows how far the destruction will be in their lives. But here is a passage that the great apostle Paul boldly and authoritatively declared to the Corinthian church: “Deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (5:5). We are to turn him or her over to Satan.

Now, in this statement, we presuppose that God is right there in providential forces accompanying this “turning over” unto Satan. God will

have His hand on the circumstances, just like He had His hand on the prodigal son in the far country. And when will the pig field become the end for the prodigal? How far will such an individual go? How far will he sin? What damage to the mind and body will he experience? Yes, to some children in a Christian home, there may come a day when they want to do what they want to do; they do not desire anyone telling them what to do. They do not want their father telling them how to live and what to do with their money. They dream of going to the far country and living life without God and their parents. There may come a day when they will go all the way to the bottom; yea, they will go to the swine of the world, the scum of the gutters.

The passage in 1 Corinthians 5 is a revelation of this man's lust and fleshly cravings. Paul tells the church, "Give him over; give him over to the Devil for the lusting of the flesh." But, we may ask, "Suppose something happens to him or her?" Something may happen, yet, we must believe that God is still on the throne. The apostle presses for the local church to remove this man from among them, or the "little leaven will leaven the whole lump." Such a man's cravings and talk of immorality will entice others within the church. The principle is evident—a child's talk and rebellion in the home will affect the other children, and the "Christian" identification of that home

will be destroyed. We may ask, "But are we giving him over to the Devil?" Yes, but, again, God has His hand on this matter.

When children become rebellious in the home or within the church, many parents tend to compromise in order to make them feel comfortable in spite of their rebellion against the authority of the home. Dear parent, dear pastor, we cannot compromise the home or the church in order to make it more convenient for such individuals to live the way they want to and to infect the others. We must protect what we have in Christ, even if it means turning the individual over to Satan. Nevertheless, again, we are trusting God to be there when we do turn them over to such an extreme situation. Otherwise, the rest of the family and the church will fall away. Again, a little leaven left to rise among the rest will leaven the whole lump.

Be not deceived: evil communications [bad companions] corrupt good manners [good character]. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame (1 Cor. 15:33, 34).

Another passage, 1 Timothy 1:19, is of equal importance to the passage in 1 Corinthians 5:

Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith [the faith] have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and

Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan [though bold and raw, note the comma], that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Give them over to Satan so that they will learn, "Don't blaspheme your parents. Don't blaspheme God. Don't blaspheme sacred things." Sometimes being "given over to" is the only way to learn. They must be committed to Satan. But, we repeat for emphasis, God has His hand even on Satan and how far Satan is permitted to go in the matter of destruction. He may try to literally destroy them physically, even bringing them nigh unto death.

But, as God told Satan concerning Job, "And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD" (Job 1:12). We then read in Job 2:6, "And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life." If this was stated about a godly man with the protection of the Lord upon the degree Satan can test, how much more over a wayward soul, a rebellious soul, a stubborn soul, and a sinning soul that refuses to stop what he is doing. When this happens with those who will not learn otherwise, we must let them go and turn them over to Satan for the destruction of the fleshly things, the fleshly principle, the fleshly ways, and the fleshly thoughts that have been so consuming their mind.

Yes, let them go.

We may carnally declare, "Suppose they lose something; suppose they lose an arm, or a leg, or an eye, or an ear, or they end up with a physical affliction?" Even then, we must trust God, for He controls to what degree Satan is permitted to lay hold of such an individual. And the motive must ever be that the spirit, the soul of that individual may be saved.

The church of Corinth obeyed what Paul commanded them to do. The separation of the church from the man living in fornication produced shame in his heart and conscience, and an eventual turning to God. Later in 2 Corinthians 2, Paul reveals that the young man separated from his step-mother and deeply repented of all his sin. We are not told what darkness, guilt, shame, and rejection he experienced during this season of time in being committed to Satan by the Corinthian Church.

A new problem then arose in 2 Corinthians, that the church would not permit the repentant man to return. For Paul did not tell them in the first epistle, "Now, if he repents, bring him back." The apostle did not want to address a scenario where the man repents, because the Corinthians may not have handled it well; they may have pressed for compromise. Obedience to this spiritual father's voice was the pressing crucial need.

But now in 2 Corinthians 2:9, Paul says, “For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.” No doubt, some of the carnal believers said, “I don’t think Paul knows what he is talking about; this demand will kill this man, and where is the love of God in the matter?” But, God had moved upon Paul’s heart to write what he did, and now he declares,

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 (2 Cor. 2:10, 11a).

The apostle declares that the appointed separation did work; but now, since the man has truly repented and separated from his sins, that if you don’t forgive him, the Devil is going to take more than what has been appointed for him. Satan is going to overreach (“take advantage”).

The Overreaching of Satan

The apostle Paul, though strong in the first letter in getting rid of this fornicator, now sees in the young man’s full repentance to God and to others, another danger that could arise: “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us.” Paul is now concerned that if they don’t forgive this man, he will never get over it; he will never have any hope; he will never believe that the blood of Christ can cleanse from all

sin. So, lest Satan should get an advantage of us: “for we are not ignorant of his devices.” Amazingly, this word *devices* is in the context that we are not ignorant of his *mental thinking* or *plans*, his plan to destroy us. This is Satan’s thinking, his thoughts against us.

This truth is witnessed in 1 Corinthians 7, in the context of marriage. We read early in this classic chapter on marriage, that one of the reasons for marriage is to avoid fornication. Although this was not one of the original reasons back in Genesis 2, since the fall of man, this reason has been added.

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication [any form of sexual uncleanness], let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband [or her own man]. Let the husband render [same continuing context here] unto the wife [the] due benevolence [in the loving of her]: and likewise also the wife unto the husband (7:2, 3).

There must be a mutual reality of the purpose of this marital intimacy. “The wife hath not power [authority] of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife” (7:4). Paul, under divine inspiration reveals that separate ownership ceases once a person becomes married. A man doesn’t have a right to look at pornography: his eyes, his ears, his body belong to his wife. Although ultimately, the body belongs to God

(6:20), in the context of marriage, the body of the husband belongs to his wife, and the body of the wife belongs to the husband. Therefore,

defraud ye not one the other [do not withhold this ownership], except it be with consent for a time [and if there is this consent of not being together], that ye may give yourselves to [spiritual things as] fasting and prayer; and [but] come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency [or for the inability to control the natural passions that God has given] (7:5).

Yes, Satan can enter a marriage through the carnal misconception of intimacy.

“But Satan Hindered Us”

Another truth we must observe regarding Satan’s power to hinder God’s people. Paul declares in 1 Thessalonians 2:18, “Wherefore we would have come unto you [Thessalonians], even I Paul, once and [I would have done it] again [I wanted to come to visit you]; but Satan hindered us.” Can Satan destroy God’s will in a Christian’s life? Did he actually hinder Paul from coming to the Thessalonians? Does Satan hinder? If he does, it must be viewed that God has permitted Satan to do this. Satan’s hindrance of Paul was a part of God’s permissive design. How often this happens in our lives when we believe it was God’s will to do something or to go to a certain place,

but we were hindered by Satan. In Acts 16:6, 7, we read of Paul on his second missionary journey,

Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

In each of these contexts, it was definitely God that hindered: “they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. . . . but the Spirit suffered them not.” But Paul, under divine inspiration reveals to us that Satan himself hindered Paul from coming to the Thessalonians. We must remember that the Thessalonian Christians were under intense persecution. Paul’s presence would have been a great strength to them, and Satan knew this. Therefore, somehow, he hindered Paul from going.

Some . . . Turned Aside After Satan

In 1 Timothy 5, Paul speaks of a distinction between a younger widow and an elderly widow.

But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ [when they desire marriage; when they begin to wax wanton instead of giving their life to Christ in the aftermath of being a widow—which an elderly woman would do], they will marry. Having damnation, because they have cast off their first

faith (5:11, 12).

This account presupposes they are marrying outside the will of God for their life.

And withal they learn to be idle [as a young one, when they need to marry or keep themselves occupied], wandering about from house to house [easily done by phone and internet today]; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary [the Devil] to speak reproachfully. For some [some women have] . . . already turned aside after Satan [in this matter] (5:13–15).

This turning aside is to be understood that some widows, in the light of how they were living, had already given occasion to Satan to speak reproachfully concerning their words and actions. Such women had turned aside from living the virtuous Christian life in which at one time they walked faithfully. Now, they were following Satan whose beguiling manner had drawn them into the life of sin and folly. Yes, Satan works through women who give themselves to being busybodies. Such women tend to be given to talk—talk against God’s work, God’s way, God’s people, God’s authority—they ceaselessly talk. You would think they would have enough at home to keep them occupied. But they tend not to keep their own house and children. Being turned

aside after Satan is when Satan hinders a woman from being what God has appointed her to be at home; she involves herself in the affairs of others.

In Acts 10:38, we read the words of Peter in preaching to Cornelius and his household: “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.” Over the years we have met individuals who experienced terrible, sinful backgrounds. But one would never know their past life because of their present close walk with God. The Lord not only forgave them of their sins but also healed them from the side effects of those sins. And yet we may meet others who have never permitted Christ to deliver them from the oppression of the Devil that was evident from their younger years. They never gained the victory over it all. Sad to say, as they grew older, still the lingering side effects from the Devil that never were healed by Christ continue.

This truth is going to be more important as the days unfold. We pray for people, especially young people who were greatly influenced by the Devil in their thinking and responses to life. If they eventually come to God in salvation, or come back to God one day, we know they will suffer horrific side effects of their past—their thought life of so many years in open or secret sin. And then, there may be the grief and

pain over words they said against their parents, words and actions against God, and His Word and His work. How does one declare, "I am sorry" for all of this? How does one get over the haunting memory of all of it?

We must pray that our Lord will bring liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. When does the healing come? At what point are they released from the prison of the past? Does the Devil still have hold on them? Is this the way it will be until they die?

Conclusion

Satan has three titles given to him in the Scriptures, setting forth his malignity against God's saints: (1) a dragon, to note his malice; (2) a serpent, to note his subtlety; and (3) a lion, to note his strength. Thomas Manton, one of the great Puritan writers stated, "Till we sin, Satan is a parasite; but when once we are in the devil's hands he turns tyrant." He knows how to subtly work his influence into our thinking. He can shape himself to the fancies and desires of all men. He meets a proud man or a prodigal as a flatterer; he meets a covetous man with a reward in his hand. He met Eve with beautiful fruit though forbidden, he met Noah with the fruit of the vine, he met Gehazi with a change of raiment, and he met Judas with a bag of silver. As the Devil is called "The prince of the power of the air," he

has a way through his influences to infect the air of an age. His craftiness is drawn into the soul without pain; spiritual disease becomes a reality even before there is a consciousness of its presence.

The child of God must realize that he was born into the world with a corrupt heart that was as a factory of the Devil. Such a heart living in the corruption of sin can be at work in evil without the Devil's presence. For coming out of the heart is malice, envy, and all unrighteousness that can pervade every aspect of man. When such sins arise, they can walk on their own legs. Even if the Devil was bound, the sins of man would still be fertile and produce the fruits of hell. The Devil knows when God has forsaken a man; when this happens Satan will also leave him; for such workers of iniquity he looks upon as truly sealed in their sins. There is no need to tempt such a man.

We must remember that Satan is a great student of divinity, and he often uses the distortion of theology to drive us away from truth and eventually from God. We dare not be ignorant of his devices and his wiles. We must realize that Satan is at his most artful hour of history, the End Time. We must never sail our vessel of life daily without a convoy of God's Word, Spirit, and His anointing. Otherwise, we will be in the crosshairs of the great foe that has brought down many who professed to be God's own. **S**

The Power of Darkness in the End Time: Knowing Satan and His Power

Dr. H. T. Spence

How often in warfare a battle is lost because military strategists did not know their enemy. This becomes a sad, but obvious reality about many Christians who are not aware of Satan's devices that bring defeat to their lives. Yes, it is imperative that we know our enemy. Certainly, the number one reason for failure in the Christian life is the lack of abiding in the Lord. However, another prominent reason is that the Christian is not aware of his spiritual foe, the Devil.

"Get Thee Behind Me, Satan"

In Matthew 16, a most unusual sequence of events takes place concerning Christ and Peter. We must carefully note the context. When Jesus and His disciples came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, "He asked the disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" In verse 14, they gave their response. Then to the disciples beginning in verse 15,

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art

Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. 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.

It is at this point we read of Peter taking Christ aside and rebuking him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (v. 22). Right after the rebuke from Peter concerning Christ dying, we read,

But he [Jesus] turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence [a stumbling block] unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world,

and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

All of God's saints will have a death, a "dying daily," a "taking up his cross" as a very real part of their Christian life. Christ revealed in this incident that Peter was influenced by Satan to stop Jesus from fulfilling the will of God for His life by going to the Cross.

Oh, how often Peter was influenced by this invisible one. Let us note several passages of Scripture. In Luke 22:31–34, we read,

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 [Peter] said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he [Jesus] said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

A few years later Paul mentions in Galatians 2, the Jerusalem Council event (Acts 15), beginning in verse 9,

And when James, Cephas [or Peter], and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

But then some weeks, and perhaps months, passed, and we read in Galatians 2:11–14,

But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

The Holy Spirit through the apostle Peter will warn us years later in 1 Peter 5:8, 9:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

Yes, we must ever be vigilant for this great adversary who is out to destroy us. We must resist him, being steadfast in the faith.

Satan, the Deceiver and Deceived

The above verses reveal that Satan

is very real and is capable of influencing Christians with thoughts that lead them away from the will of God in matters. Satan is a person. He is a force that pervades the earth. He is not omnipresent, but he is ubiquitous (although at times it may seem he is omnipresent). If he is capable of traveling at the speed of light (we believe that angels can fly even faster), then he could travel seven times around this world in one second. That is not omnipresence, but it is ubiquitously fast.

Even though Satan is a force to be reckoned with, we must never forget that he is a person. He is not a people; he is a person. This tells us (understanding the fullness of the word *person*, or *personality*) that he has intellect, emotions, will, and a self. In his creation he was perhaps the most powerful of all the angels, and do we dare even approximate the brilliancy of that creation by God in him (Ezek. 28:13–15)? Yet perhaps the thing that is lacking in his concept of personality is that he has no conscience.

It is evident that he was not created with a conscience. We may wonder, “Did God create a conscience within Adam and it simply was dormant until he fell?” But there is no implication in Lucifer when he fell that there was any concept of a conscience within.

What is his character? We know that he is the original sinner in the vastness of the universe. He brought sin into

existence in the universe. He is Satan. The name is going to be identified in the Bible because of what he did at the fall and what he continues to do since his fall. He is Satan, the great adversary, or the enemy of God; and if this is true, it automatically means he is an adversary to God’s people. He is also declared with a personal name, the Devil, meaning “accuser.” He is a slanderer; he slanders God; he accused God of many things that led up to his fall, and thus he is the accuser of God’s people. We read in Revelation 12 that he accuses God’s people before the throne day and night. We also read that Satan was the first murderer (John 8:44). His intent was to kill God and everything identified with God. Christ revealed in John 8:44 that Satan is the liar. He is the embodiment of the lie, as Christ is the embodiment of truth. The End Time, according to the New Testament, will be given to the Lie. The universal lie will take over the world. Satan is proud, and all the followers of the Devil are after his image and likeness in pride, in giving over to the End-time Lie, and in the rejection of God.

But Paul reveals another aspect of the Devil in 1 Timothy 3:6, when he was dealing with those in leadership within a church. He declares that a bishop is not to be a novice. He is not to be a *neophytos* (Gr.); he is not to be “a new one,” lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation

of the devil. This perhaps is a concept that we normally do not think of concerning the Devil—at one time the Devil was a novice. When he fell, he was not a seasoned sinner. He was not a seasoned veteran in his adversarial work, in his slanderous work. This was all new to him in what he had chosen. And when we begin to read the oldest book in the Bible, Job (where the word *Satan* is used more than any other time in the Old Testament in those first two chapters), it is evident the Devil was not smart. He was more of a nuisance, like a gnat flying around, coming before God and mouthing off, not understanding anything about Job, not understanding anything about God and those who love and live for Him. Yes, the Devil was a neophyte at that time—a novice.

There is something peculiar in coming into things as a novice. This is why young people must take great warning as they are growing up in their home. They must never think they know more than their father or mother. Children coming into those early teenage years tend to believe that they know more about God and about life than their parents do. Many youth come to an early conclusion about life, and they do not see or understand the true meaning of life or how to live life. They believe as the neophyte: “I’m the seasoned veteran in the matter of living; I know better than those over me.” But every sinner starts out a

neophyte. The sinner eventually comes to a seasoned understanding about sin but not about God, truth, or making the right decisions in life. He is still a child; he is still foolish and immature. Oh, the neophytes of history who have believed they were God’s gift in wisdom and knowledge. And the Devil was one of those who bragged, creating his own pomp and circumstance before God in those two chapters, believing he knew Job and why Job served God. Yet, it is clear, he did not know; he was a novice in this matter.

The Bible also reveals that Satan is a deceiver. His very nature is deception. He is not only a deceiver, but he has also literally created the deception of himself. Jesus warned His disciples, “Be not deceived”; “take heed that no man deceive you”; and “do not deceive yourselves” because the Devil is the father of lying. He himself believes his own lie. He is the father of deception, but he has been deceived by himself. This is part of his nature.

Yet in Matthew 13, another insight about the Devil is revealed in the parable of the sower and the seed. The Devil is also a thief of truth—not so much an open robber of truth, but a subtle, secret thief of truth. In Jesus’ own interpretation of His parable (13:19), He says regarding seed sown on the hard wayside ground, “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, . . .”

This phrase “understandeth it not,” in the Received Text means that “they do not grasp it; they do not put it together.” This wayside hard ground is where the people, day in and day out, walked on the edge of the field until the trampling had compressed the dirt making it impossible for the seed to enter the soil.

When such a soil-people do not understand the word, “then cometh the wicked one [the Devil], and [he] catcheth away that which was sown in the heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.” There is a great influence of the constant trampling by the world upon a human heart. And when the Gospel comes to them, we may wonder, “Why did they not receive the Gospel?” For one thing, the trampled ground is too hard. Thus, when that seed cannot get down into the soil, the Devil comes and takes it away. While the seed is trying to get down into the heart, the Devil is capable of getting that Gospel seed out before it takes root in the heart.

Although we know that the Devil cannot read the thoughts of human beings, he can project thoughts. He has become a careful observer of humanity and human nature. Like a parent carefully observing his child daily, he or she can just about tell, when the child gets up in the morning, what he is going to do; the parent knows what the child wants for breakfast. It is not

because he is omniscient like God, but the parent just knows the habits and the proclivities and the character of that child.

The Devil has been an assiduous student of men for six thousand years now, and even though he does not have omniscience, he has learned well the proclivities and desires of every man. He knows by countenance; he knows by conversations over the years; he knows when we are spiritually backsliding; he knows when we do not come back to God in repentance. He knows our personal history well. He takes advantage of the vastness of his knowledge. His capabilities of assimilation are far vaster than all the computers of the world combined. He knows, he knows every individual; he knows the proclivities of that person, and he knows how to get that seed out from the ground before that one will believe.

The Devil Seeks Whom He May Devour

In 1 Peter 5:8, a revelation is given to us under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit that no doubt Peter was all too familiar with. This passage reveals that the Devil loves to destroy the child of God and his living for God. He is determined and settled in heart to do all that he can to destroy souls.

Now, perhaps we need to ask the question, “Why does the Devil hate

God's people?" We know he hates God. There is not one aspect of God that the Devil has any inclination of liking. He hates God, but he also hates everyone that believes in God. He hates anyone that tends to love God. But again, why does he hate God's people? There are perhaps several reasons:

(1) He knows that God loves that believer; and he knows that the true believer loves God. Although Satan loves the distorted view of the love of God of Neo-Christianity, he hates the true love of God. He hates God's loving an individual, and he hates the individual who loves God. The Devil loves to see Christians in discouragement and despair, with fallen countenances amidst the trials and troubles of life. But the thing that intensifies his hatred is when he sees them going through their troubles with a glorious spirit.

(2) Another reason the Devil hates God's people is because every true Christian resembles God. We are in His image, and Satan hates God and he hates His image.

(3) The Devil also hates us because every Christian was a former slave of Satan, and he is still angry at us for leaving him.

(4) A praying Christian is a constant threat to him and to his government. Truly a praying Christian is a power to be reckoned

with against Satan's plan and ambitions.

(5) Satan knows a Christian has hope, and he hates any and all hope in God.

(6) Satan knows that a Christian has the blessings of God, and he hates the blessings of God.

(7) Satan also hates children, knowing that one day another child of God may step forward to be another Martin Luther, or another John Wesley. He loves to abort children before they can live their lives for God.

Another activity of the Devil is his constant posture of ever opposing, hindering, and seeking to corrupt the work of the Gospel. Between the words of the preacher and the ear of the hearer in the pew, the Devil is evilly working to distort that Word. By the time it comes to the ear, he is throwing in thoughts to distort that Word from God. He is constantly casting questions into the mind as the true Word of God is being preached: "Is that what he said? Did he really mean that? Did he leave some words out? Is he trying to tell me something?" Yes, questioning, questioning the Word of God. He is notorious in hindering the Word of God from purely entering the human ear.

He also blinds the minds of men to the Gospel. The Devil may also inflict

disease and trouble. We do not believe (as the Charismatics promote in their theological system) that every sickness and every disease is of the Devil. Nevertheless, he does sometimes bring affliction to God's people. Yet, we add the postscript that when disease and affliction are permitted (as in the case of Job), God's sovereign eye is always on it, and controlling to what degree the suffering will be.

Another activity of Satan is that he is ever tempting Christians to sin. The Devil controls unsaved people. He controls their minds; he controls their logic; he controls their decisions; he controls the execution of those decisions. An unsaved person is under the influence of the Devil. Satan empowers false religions; he authors and promotes false teachings. He is ever accusing Christians before the throne of God. But the accusation does not stop there. He is constantly throwing in thoughts down here on the planet Earth into the minds of God's people, ever accusing them. He is ever testing Christians, with the motive to break them. When God tests, it is not to see if we will break; it is to see our faith become stronger. But when the Devil tempts and tests God's people, he is out to break them; he is out to wear them down.

We must also include that the Devil is ever destroying the lives of disobedient Christians. As we observed in a

previous article, the Devil empowers disobedience: "The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). Paul also noted that the Devil is "the prince of the power of the air." This is not to say that disobedient Christians are possessed of the Devil, but somehow the influence of his spirit, this spirit-creature, is ever empowering, energizing the disobedience of humans. When a professing child of God is given to disobedience, the Devil is inspiring it.

Be Sober, Be Vigilant

In 1 Peter 5:8, we initially read of Peter's warning: "Be sober, be vigilant." Satan knows that God has a plan for history. The Bible gives the details of that plan. Additionally, he knows that God has a plan for every individual. Satan desires to vehemently oppose the plan of God for the ages; but at the same time, he is opposing this for every individual. God is a personal God; He deals with everyone personally. The Devil is a personal Devil; he knows us. Everything that comes to us from him is hand-tailored by his wicked and evil mind.

We find in the earlier part of the First Epistle of Peter the extreme forms of persecution. But as the epistle comes to its conclusion, Peter brings out the final persecution. This final persecution is Satan himself. Peter, as a faithful under-shepherd of Christ, warns us about this final persecution.

With this burden, he begins with this brief segment of four words: "Be sober, be vigilant."

When we read the word *sober* in the Bible, it does not refer to abstinence from alcohol. In its classical Greek form, *sober* referred to a serious attitude of the mind about something. It is in the mental context of how I observe something. How do I think about a certain thing? Do I think about it lightly, casually, or nonchalantly? The word *sobriety* declares that I must think seriously, and with concern about a matter. In the context of 1 Peter 5:8, I must have a serious attitude of mind when I think about the Devil. Be sober! Don't think you can cast him off. I cannot discard him or make light of him. I dare not think that, "Well, I am a Christian, so I can just easily handle the Devil." There is only one power in all the universe that is greater than the power of the Devil, and that is the power of God. Apart from God, there is none equal to the Devil; we must therefore take him very seriously. I cannot underestimate him.

Additional to being serious-minded about this great enemy, I also must be vigilant. *Vigilant* means "to watch carefully." It has the understanding that we are looking around and behind ourselves; we are looking to our left and right; we are looking ahead; we are looking in the corners and the crevices of life. We cannot afford to

spiritually fall asleep, but we must be vigilant. *Sobriety* deals with my internal attitude about him; *vigilance* calls me to a defense against him. It is what I see with the eye-gate and what I hear with the ear-gate.

Children are most often oblivious to this vigilance. They may go downtown or to the mall with no consciousness of the lurking dangers surrounding them. But a conscientious Christian parent is ever vigilant, pulling the child away from certain sights and dangers. Some stores boldly and immodestly aggrandize the word *secret* in their name while their merchandise is boldly displayed in their windows. We must ever guard the mind of the child, both the sons and daughters. Even maturing Christian young people could reason, "Well, I am now old enough to see this." A day will come when they will travel to town on their own. The teenage years may not have the same earlier care of the guardian parent. Or, they may think with sobriety and vigilance and tell their soul, "I know what is down that mall aisle; I know the store that I am going to have to pass; so I need to protect my attention from seeing the 'wicked thing.'"

Conclusion

Dear reader, we are living in an age that people mock this biblical line of thinking saying, "What's the big deal?" Satan's temptations need only a sixteenth of a second to register vividly

in the mind. We must ever be guarding all the gates to the heart. Yes, the Devil has a way to influence and entice us. He knows what we see and what we hear; and he adds to these sight and sound suggestions of thought. He knows what we hear in conversations, and he feeds further secret thoughts about these conversations.

What does Peter declare in 1 Peter 5:8? "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary. . . ." He does not call the Devil God's adversary; he calls him your adversary! The Devil is my personal adversary. "Because your adversary, the devil . . ." We must remember to whom Peter is writing. He is not addressing the world. The Devil is not an adversary to the world or to the unbeliever. He is only an adversary to God's people. Peter's audience were Christians. He declares, "Your adversary," those who have been born again and taken out of the Devil's clutches and now are Christ's possession. They have left their former father, the Devil; they have left their liar; they have left the power that controlled them. This is why the Bible, when speaking of salvation in many of the contexts, deals with a snatching or plucking. "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" (Zech. 3:2b). The deliverance by God is not gradual. One day we were in the Devil's clutches, and God snatched us out of his clutch. We were translated from the Devil's kingdom of darkness into the marvelous king-

dom of God's light. We were brought from death unto life! In a moment of time! And therefore the Devil is very angry. Quicker than he could turn his head, we were plucked as a brand out of his clutches. We left him; we left this dictator; we left this lord; we left this god. Those who have come to put their trust in Jesus Christ have come to believe and recognize that Christ is the greater authority. And this too is what will make the Devil mad.

But we must also remember that in this snatching, Satan is wickedly upset. He is angry; he is crying out in anger, and he will do everything he can to get us back. He is ever attacking us with sights and sounds and thoughts and drawing desires. He knows what we enjoyed back there when we were with him. He knows our pleasures. He knows what was in that life of sin we experienced, that he did not even need to tempt us to do. He knows! And if he cannot get us back, he will be content to get us caught up in being like God in our own decisions of worldly and carnal desires.

The Devil is not upset with a carnal Christian. He knows that this Christian is not going to have the "life" of Christ; such a professing Christian is going to be up and down, in and out. The Devil knows that carnal Christianity will go for days, weeks, and months without communion. He doesn't have to spend much time in temptation on such professing Chris-

tians. All he needs to do is just give a little feeding of the world, a little pushing, a little pressing to keep the carnal, professing Christian on the road of the flesh. His projected reasoning is “You be your own god; don’t let the Bible tell you how to live; don’t let it become the standard of your life.”

Peter continues, “your adversary, the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about [with the motive], seeking whom he may devour.” Much has been written about this roaring of the Devil. But there are two reasons why a lion roars. He does not roar when he is stalking, for that would scare away the prey. The Devil is stealthful; he is very subtle. The lion’s stalking of his prey is not simply admiration. No, the lion is out to kill that prey; his intent is to devour that prey. The roaring of the lion only comes when he has successfully taken his prey! It is announcing that “I have taken down my victim to devour.” The second reason for the lion’s roar is to let all the other animals know that this is his sole possession. None has the right to come and partake of the fruit of this kill.

And yet the Devil may roar at us to create a fear, calling us to yield to him. However, he has not secured us yet. Oh, dear Christian, it is the intimidation of the roar that we often permit to bring defeat. The roar is to plant the thoughts that “God has left you; God’s power is no longer with you.” The roar is the sound as if he already

has us. It is an intimidation; it is the projection of a false understanding. We must resist him! We must cry out against the Devil, resisting him, in confidence of our blessed Saviour, “No, you don’t have me; no, I have not been taken prey by you.” The Devil may even respond, “It is senseless to pray.” He will try to convince us in the roar, “You’re going down; you’re going under.” Yes, dear Christian, the Devil is seeking—he is seeking the weak; he is seeking the secret backslider; he is seeking the one that he knows has not known the power of God in overcoming. The Devil knows it. Yes, he is seeking!

May God grant us wisdom in these days when the Devil is at his most artful hour against God’s saints. May we discern his wiles, his devices, and learn to overcome through Christ, His Word, and the Holy Spirit. **S**

FBC RADIO

FBC Radio Station offers strong, traditional Christian music as well as sound, biblical preaching 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

WWW.FBCRADIO.ORG

FBC WEBSITES

Our extensive website provides information about the Foundations Ministries and Schools.

WWW.FOUNDATIONS.EDU

WWW.FORWARDINGTHEFAITH.ORG

WWW.STRAIGHTWAYONLINE.ORG

The Power of Darkness: To Destroy God's Saints in the End Time

Dr. H. T. Spence

As we continue to witness the aggressive momentum of evil and the overt powers of darkness increasing against Christianity around the world, we must consider in the light of biblical prophecy what God's saints will face in the time of the End. It is already evident that these powers have swept across the nations of the earth, and we are now seeing this fomenting hatred against Christianity rising in our own nation. In this last article we will consider the powers of darkness and the final intent of the Devil against God's saints.

Thus far in this year's *Straightway* issues, we have mentioned several scriptures that aid us in the insightful understanding of Satan's powers and influence coming into the time of the End. Perhaps a review of several of these passages will remind us of the times in which we live in the light of the global falling away from the Faith.

Scriptures Declaring the End Time

The second parable of Matthew 13 concerns the wheat and the tares. We must never lose sight that the wheat was sown by Christ the Son of man at the time of His first coming. After Christ gave the fourth parable of seven, His disciples asked of Him the interpretation of the parable of

the wheat and tares. He revealed that the one who sowed the tares was the Devil, "the enemy that sowed them." We cannot lose sight of this. We also read in 13:38, "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one." It is most important to see that the wheat represents God's true saints; the tares are children of the Devil in subtle, religious fashion, sown all around and on top of the wheat. The tare seed was sown where the wheat seed had been sown. After two thousand years, we are at the most mature hour of history concerning intermingled wheat and tares. We are also at the most insane hour in history. It also could be said that we are at the deepest and darkest hour of global apostasy, especially in public Christianity. But whether we speak of spiritual godliness or wickedness, we are at the most mature hour. The tares have now become the controlling voice of the public, institutional church.

Christ appointed in the parable (for His own unique reason) that the separation of the wheat and tares not be dealt with during the first Church age. His judgment is set for the time of the end—and this may have already begun. Truly, the tares have become the voice of public Christianity in the End

Time, while the wheat is rarely heard.

The parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25 gives us much insight to the true remnant in the time of the End. We must be careful in speaking of the remnant in any generation, for not everyone who is identified with the remnant is of the remnant heart. Even with what seems to be remnant churches, there are those that are very close to the remnant, but they are not of the remnant heart in their living. Although much can be said about the five foolish virgins, the singular thing that kept them from being ready was their lack of *additional* oil. This lack was the only difference. They all awakened; they all had lamps; they all trimmed their wicks; and they all had some oil in their lamp. But it was that additional oil they did not have.

This parable reveals to us (whatever way we interpret that additional oil) that we must have an abundant life (the light of Christ consuming that life) that is continually ready for His coming. The remnant never has a “holier-than-thou” view of themselves. In fact, if one would inquire, they would express their inadequacy, especially from the perspective of what they long to be in Christ. My dear father, Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, would speak of the “surprises” to be found in heaven. And one of those surprises would be that “I made it! I am here! I am in heaven!” Certainly, if a person would ask the

remnant individual, “Do you know without a shadow of doubt if you died today you would go to heaven?” On the authority of the Word the answer would be, “Yes!” But when we *do* finally make it to heaven, there will be the wonder, “I made it!”

In this parable the wise virgins did not collect this addition of oil with arrogance and a “holier-than-thou” spirit. The five wise virgins did say, however, “We cannot give you, lest we will not have any.” They viewed their abundance as if they had just enough. In our walk with God, I dare not say, “I have an abundant life.” We certainly have an abundant life in Christ, for the Scriptures reveal this to be true. But is that abundant life flourishing in me? Although meekness and lowliness will not permit the true child of God to boldly say so, his abundant life is clear to even foolish virgins.

Another important passage for the End Time is the first parable given in Matthew 13, presenting the four types of soil. The question may be asked, “Which of these four types of ground are Rapture ground?” The first ground is the *hard ground*—ground that has known the world’s constant traffic hardening the soil, making it incapable of receiving the seed of the Word of God. We read of this ground,

When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and

catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side (Matt. 13:19).

We then read of the *stony ground*:

But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended (13:20, 21).

This ground would not be ready for the Rapture. Then we read of the *thorny ground*:

He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful (13:22).

This ground concerns a heart that may have believed, but over time the soil has become encumbered. It is evident that God is not number one in the life; for other desires and loves take the place of Him; Christ is not preeminent. The soil of the heart is either stony (with carnality flourishing), or the cares of life and the desire for money have encumbered the natural life. Luke 8:14 adds, “and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” This certainly indicates a life with little oil and desire for the things of God.

We are then introduced to the *good ground*. This ground

is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty (Matt. 13:23).

In Luke 8:15, we also read,

But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it [hold it down], and bring forth fruit with patience.

Therefore, of the four soils, only twenty-five percent is declared as “good ground.” And even within the good ground, only one-third of that twenty-five percent is one hundred percent in the reception of truth for its heart and life. So again, we are viewing the End Time with a lot of spiritual problems of heart and life. Who is going to be ready for the Lord’s secret coming?

Another crucial passage concerning the End Time is Revelation 3:14–22. This Scripture reveals the last Church age. Such a “Christian” Church age has a powerful influence on anyone living in it. How often over the years we have quoted the Greek scholar R. C. Trench’s definition of the *age* (Gr., *aion*):

It is all that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, being the moral, and or immoral

atmosphere which at every moment we inhale, again inevitably to exhale.

This definition is not simply revealing the secular age in which we live; it also addresses the present Church age. We are breathing in this age (at times unconsciously). The easiest life to live today is lukewarmness.

We must take heed to the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:12, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." This insightful statement from the Lord reveals that only those whose mind is fully made up realize they must grasp for themselves the kingdom. Yes, we will have to be aggressive to take the kingdom by violence and go on with God. The present Church age's powerful lukewarmness is greatly against an aggressive walk with God.

Back in the Philadelphia Church Age, revival was the atmosphere of God's moving on both sides of the Atlantic. Revival was part of the age; one seemed to have breathed revival and awakening. But this last Church age atmosphere is lukewarmness. Therefore, it will be only a minority, a remnant that will be diligent in their pursuit of God and with God. Yes, there is the hope in this last Church age of the promise to the overcomer (Rev. 3:20, 21). The very word *overcomer* is referring to the one who

overcomes both his secular and religious age. In this overcoming, we read in Revelation 3:20 of a supping with Christ and Christ with the individual. This is the description of one with that additional oil, one who is in communion with God, in fellowship with God. No matter how weak the Christian feels, the life is in fellowship with God. Though we may view our life in certain situations weak and frail, God sees us deeper than what we see ourselves. We tend to conscientiously judge our life by how we feel on a given day: "I feel victorious today!" And yet, other days we may view ourselves down in the deepest valley of despondency. But God judges our overcoming by the steadiness of our life, that we are going on with God.

The Most Difficult Hour to Live for Christ

Dear reader, we live in the most precarious time of history. Where am I in this? It seems, according to Scripture, that the Rapture comes in the End Time. It seems it comes at the culmination of the last Church age. It seems it comes at the darkest hour of the declining of souls bringing the end. The Rapture, it seems, will be composed of two orders of saints—the Bride and her attendants. Every true saint raptured will be in one of these two companies mentioned in Revelation 4—the four living creatures in the throne, and the twenty-four elders around the Throne.

The parable of Matthew 25 seems to deal with the attendants to the Bride and Groom rather than the Bride. Note an Old Testament shadow and type of these groups:

There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her (Song of Sol. 6:8, 9).

The attendants are closely associated with the Bride. The attendants are identified with the true remnant. They may not have the boldness of a Luther; they may not have the depth of the heart of Wesley; they may not have the prayer life as deep as maybe what Andrew Murray talks about; but they have those spiritual characteristics in their lives. Yes, they have them, but perhaps not the depth. Some of God's people, amidst deep trials, were constant in their faith and walk with God. Yes, they were mortal; yes, they had weaknesses; yes, there were lingering side effects of a past; but do we even live the depth of what they lived? Do we live a life that even approximates what they lived? The End Time is going to be the most difficult of times to live the Christian life; nonetheless, some of the greatest Christians will be overcomers in the End Time. I think if you were to ask them, they would say,

"It's not me; it's the Christ within me!" God often uses our weaknesses to keep us humble so that we will not think more highly of ourselves than what we ought to think. This probably is part of the surprise, "I made it to heaven!"

The End-Time Trilogy of Satan's Attacks

We must prepare our hearts for the rise of three major attacks of Satan against God's saints. The year 2020 may be the year when any remaining stability in our country collapses. It may truly be the most crucial year for God's people and remnant ministries in our country. We may witness several Bible schools closing or compromising in order to stay in existence. But whatever arises to shake what presently exists, nothing is to touch the heart and the walk of the true child of God, even the closing down of precious things. We must not view these changes as God leaving His blessed children; rather, God is giving more over to the Devil to bring about the culmination of the ages. Such dark situations must not affect our hearts; we must go on with God. But again, we must get ready for what is ahead in the Devil's strategy to set forth his "man of sin," the Antichrist.

In Daniel 7, there are three End-time workings of Satan leading up to and including the coming of Antichrist that Christians need to be ready to face. As chapters 1 through 6 of Daniel

reveal more of the history of Daniel's contemporary (yet including some prophecies), Daniel 7 begins the prophetic section of his book.

Daniel 7 explodes with prophecy as somewhat of a comprehensive chapter giving us insights of the past, the present, and leading us into the future (though not necessarily in that order). In verses 9–14, we read of the culmination of history with the coming of the Kingdom of Christ. But in verse 15, Daniel was grieved in his spirit by troubling visions. He returns in thought to the great beasts (v. 17) which he mentioned earlier in the chapter. Yet, it is revealed to the prophet (v. 18), "But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even for ever and ever." Thus we read that there will be the Son of man in verse 13 Who will take the kingdom, but the kingdom will include the saints of the most high (v. 18). This term *saints* continues to be mentioned throughout these verses. We understand that the saints mentioned in the latter part of the chapter are the prophetic saints found in the Tribulation Period. We do not declare necessarily that these are only Jews, but the title certainly will include Jews who have come to know the Messiah during that Tribulation Period. Although there will still be many Gentiles, the Jews will become the more prominent saints of the Tribulation Period. Additionally, there

are saints in the End Time, before the Tribulation Period; therefore, this chapter is somewhat going back and forth between these times.

We must establish a principle, beginning in verse 24.

And the ten horns [in the Tribulation Period] out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise; and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they [the saints] shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him (7:24–27).

From the context of verses 18 through 27, the saints will take the kingdom. However, what will happen before they take the kingdom?

Although the word *Antichrist* is not mentioned in the Old Testament, the little horn is mentioned in the Book of Daniel. It is not until we enter the latter part of the New Testament (the writings of John) that this name *Anti-*

christ and its description step forward in sacred writ. It is a name in the Greek language that describes him as one who both will be *against* Christ and will present himself as a *substitute* for the Messiah.

There are three evils this Antichrist will escalate against the saints. In the first context, he will *bring persecution*. In the second context, he will *make war* with the saints and prevail. There may not be a deliverance from the fiery furnace when he comes; there may not be a miracle that takes the saints out of the clutches of the Antichrist. Within the war against the saints, Antichrist will prevail. In the third context, he will *wear out* the saints.

The context in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 takes place in the Tribulation Period. It will be the most difficult time of all human history to live for God. If you are caught living for God, the consequence will be death.

We must remember that prophecy can be a one-time prophecy, or it can have several stages of prophetic fulfillment. This aspect of prophecy has been an enigma for interpretation, and God has made it so. In Matthew 24, we see this enigma of how to interpret the time period of the prediction: the End Time's increase of false prophets, precarious situations in the weather, the falling away, and even matters regarding the "elect." We must also include the abounding of deception. When

are these prophecies to be fulfilled? The hermeneutical interpretations concerning prophecy certainly vary as to whether prophecy is fulfilled before or after the Rapture (or with no rapture at all). Many Bible prophecies are preliminary to a final fulfilled prophecy in the Tribulation Period. The global falling away will bring fearful sights even before the Tribulation Period. In fact, situations and circumstances may get so bad that one would think we are in the Tribulation Period. Such sights and evils will come and will escalate within the Tribulation Period after the Rapture. This will be true in this matter of the trilogy powers of the Devil against the saints—there will be increased persecution; there will be war with the saints; and there will be the wearing out of the saints. These three will begin by Satan before the Tribulation Period but will culminate under Antichrist.

Antichrists versus Antichrist

The apostle John is the one that introduces the term *Ho Cristos*, or "the Antichrist." First John 2:18, 19 states,

Little children, it is the last time [the last hour]: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They [the many antichrists] went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that

they were not all of us.

We then read in verse 22: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." We also read in 4:3, "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." John will also mention the word *Antichrist* in 2 John 7, "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

What is to be seen by these verses concerning this term *Antichrist*? The prefix "anti" is to be viewed from two perspectives. He is (1) a substitute of Christ, and he is (2) opposed to the Christ. We also view from these contexts that *antichrist* is also a mood and spirit that will prevail in the last days. We know the last days began with the first coming of Christ. So, this spirit is against Christ Jesus. We do have shadows and types in the Old Testament of Antichrist; but, there cannot be a false Christ imitating before there is the true Christ.

These Scriptures indicate there will be a "spirit" of Antichrist that will pervade the earth before the coming of this person of the Antichrist. This spirit is what Paul refers to in 2

Thessalonians 2:7, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work." It is already working; it is already prevalent in the earth. It is true, we have not come to the man himself yet, but the spirit of Antichrist is universally among us. It indicates that this spirit of Antichrist will be so deep, so powerful, and of such global proportion that it will finally birth a person who is the enfleshment of that spirit. The question may be asked, "Is the Antichrist living today somewhere on the planet? He may be, but we must definitely say that the spirit of Antichrist is intensely controlling our world in nearly every compartment of humanity. Antichrist is a spirit; it is a mood; it is an attitude that is becoming more and more the controlling spirit of the earth. It is the spirit of Antichrist.

This spirit is evident in the growing aggressive persecution increasing in the world, especially in the United States. Our President communicated with international leaders this year encouraging them to support laws that would preserve Christians from being killed. It is evident that tens of thousands of churches are being burned with tens of thousands of Christians (at least, in name) being decapitated in many countries while government leaders simply stand by without any retaliation. The news media is not reporting these incidents; they keep the public in the dark as to the countries of such intense persecu-

tion and the number of killings taking place. Certainly, the term *Christian* is a very broad one in our times; most identified with it would be in the apostasy. But the very term *Christian* now incites hatred at escalating proportions. The present, growing voices among Washington politicians are boldly attacking Christianity while overtly endorsing Islam. Much of the persecution is from radical Hinduism and Islam; the Koran promotes such persecutions against both the Jews and the Christians.

Why are such religions madly against Christianity? One of the passages of Scripture, mentioned in the list from John's writings, declares that if one denies that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, or if one denies that Jesus is come into the flesh, he is antichrist. *A key hatred of these religions is they do not believe that God has a Son.* The Muslims hate Jesus because of what they believe Christianity has done with Him. Islam says that Allah (their god) is so great that he cannot have a son. Yet, the Koran declares that Jesus was born of a virgin. How can a person come into the world in the flesh, be born of a virgin, without the seed of a man, and not be of God? Of course, Islam believes Jesus is one of twenty-seven prophets, but not the Son of God. This is where the attack is today. They claim Jesus is not the Son of God; He did not come in the flesh; He may have died on a cross, but was

not resurrected; He is not sinless; He never preexisted in heaven as a person.

These are the truths about Christ Jesus that are denied. For these reasons, they are against Christianity. Therefore, these religions persecute those who believe such truths. They violently hate the declaration there is one Son of God, and that Son is the only Saviour; He did triumph over death, hell, and the grave; He is the only Mediator; and today He is at the right hand of God the Father, ever living. The world religions cannot take this; the irreligious cannot permit such an absolute decree of Jesus. There is no other Person in all the religions of history that even approximates what the Bible declares Jesus, the Son of God, to be.

Sadly, the more aggressive the attacks of the world and the nominal church against Jesus become, the quieter the professing Christians become. Christians do not want to be persecuted, so when Christ is attacked, the tendency is to back off in the testimony of Him. Persecution is intimidating. The tendency is to separate oneself from Christ (and even from His saints) when the persecution increases.

Conclusion

The final attack (through the spirit of Antichrist) in the End Time is to wear out the saints. How does the Antichrist spirit wear out the saints? It starts with the persecution of the

saints, the constant pounding, defaming, intimidating, and maligning of their reputation. The second is to make war with them. We are already witnessing this in many countries of the world with the public execution of Christians; the world religions and governments are making war against the Name of Christ. This certainly has been part of history, but it is escalating in our contemporary.

The open war and persecution against the saints have become evident on television, in the social media, in the public schools and universities. Christianity is being boldly attacked in Washington in an unprecedented manner. These attacks would have never been “publicly” known thirty years ago, because some semblance of righteousness restrained the wicked.

The Book of Jude warns us of the way of Cain, the wages and greed of Balaam, and the gainsaying of Core. This trilogy is a spirit that pervades history. We see this becoming an integral part of the contemporary Christianity with the Charismatics’ greed for money; this is the way of Balaam. In order to gain the wealth today, Christianity must compromise. We also have never witnessed a day of gainsaying and the bold, aggressive talk against authorities as is witnessed today. It is the spirit of the times! It is the spirit of Antichrist.

Such powers’ constant onslaught and

beating down (physically and emotionally) will finally wear out God’s saints. People will leave good churches because of this wearing out. They will reason, “I can’t take this any more.” “The standards of dress and living are too strong; even my family is turning against me.” “Things are being said against me; it is too much to bear.” “I must resort to an easier form of Christianity.” We will witness an increase of professing Christians falling away because of this wearing out of the saints. That is the reason why the Bible tells us we must endure unto the end; it is the only way we will be saved. Yes, we must endure to the end.

We are in a bold hour against God, against Christ, and against God’s saints! And in such a wearing out over time, the love of many is waxing cold. Certainly, this will be true in the Tribulation Period, but we are in its prelude. This is the spirit of Antichrist that will lead to the Antichrist himself. The tendency today in ministries is to compromise in order to continue existing, yea, to keep the people’s very lives from perishing.

May God help us in these days of the spirit of Antichrist, this mystery of iniquity that is already energizing society. May we overcome in the power of Christ and His Word through the persecutions, the wars against us in the various fields of human existence, and in the powers that are endeavoring to wear out the saints.