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RESISTING THE DEVIL



Sam Smith "Unholy" Performance in Grammys 2023

By David Schnittger

Until the 1970s the devil was pretty well ignored by most Christians. While all true born-again believers espoused a faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior, many backed away from the equally clear doctrine of a real and personal enemy, known as Satan, or the devil. The average Christian didn't even know much about who Satan was, much less his activities in the world today. Preachers, even fundamental Bible-believing ones, had little to say about him. Belief in a supernatural, active and destructive devil had all but been extinguished. This trend has dramatically reversed itself in the last 50 years or so, but yet there are still many Christians today who do not take the devil seriously. If you doubt this statement, I challenge you to approach a Christian acquaintance and say to him, "I wanted to come and see you, but the devil hindered me." Watch his eyebrows go up. Describe a lingering ailment to your Christian doctor as "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan," and then interpret for yourself the questioning look he gives you. Try telling your Christian employer that a difficulty on the job is due to a Satanic attack, and at once he'll have his doubts about your sanity. Pious smiles may appear to accept what you have to say about the devil's influence, but behind those smiles your sanity may be questioned.

C.S. Lovett, author of *Dealing With The Devil*, has observed concerning Satan: “Wonderful is it that he can prevail upon Christian people to banish his name as they do and pastors make only now and then an incidental reference to it in the pulpit . . . while in every room of their household, in every street of our cities, he is incessantly manifesting his hateful presence; perplexing, seducing, embroiling, uprooting and disorganizing until the whole framework of society is loosened and ready to crumble upon the first shock.”

Satan is delighted when he is characterized as a man in red underwear brandishing a pitchfork, or some other ridiculous mental picture which makes us doubt his reality or his power. He revels in such light-hearted phrases as “the devil made me do it,” or “you cute little devil.” Anything that relegates Satan to a joke, myth, or figure of speech makes us dangerously vulnerable to his very real power. The apostle Paul warns against taking Satan too lightly in 2 Corinthians 2:11, where we read, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices.” What Paul is saying in effect is that Satan is one person that we cannot afford to be ignorant about.

It is gratifying to note a dramatic reversal in this trend in recent years. As Satan’s activities have become more obvious and his followers more numerous in these last days, the Christian world has been forced to sit up and take notice that Satan is, indeed, alive and well on planet earth.

The secular world has joined in this renewed interest about the person and work of Satan, as is evidenced by the popularity of books concerning the late Bishop James A. Pike, who supposedly communicated with his departed son. Another evidence of the world’s attention toward demonic activities is shown in the staggering success of the movie, *THE EXORCIST*, based on a best-selling book by the same name. This movie is one of the most lucrative movies of all time.

But yet, amidst all the attention that the spectacular aspects of Satanic and demonic activity has received, relatively little has been written about Satan’s subtle yet unrelenting attacks on dedicated, Bible-believing Christians. Yet, these are the very people who Satan is most concerned with, for if he can frustrate, discourage and defeat those who are dedicated to the cause of Christ, God’s channel of testimony to a lost and dying world will be blocked and broken. So, it is this vital yet neglected area of Satanic activity that I would like to deal with in this article.

I contend that there are two broad areas of knowledge about the devil which we must be familiar before we can successfully resist him. For easy remembrance, let’s call these areas HIS TITLES and HIS TACTICS. Let’s examine these areas.

HIS TITLES



The devil's original title was Lucifer, used only in Isaiah 14:12, meaning "Shining One" or "Light-bearing One." Light in Scripture speaks of knowledge and purity. Most Bible scholars believe that Lucifer was an archangel of the highest order, wiser, more beautiful, and more important than any other created being at that time. He was absolutely perfect in every way, with his glory surpassed only by the members of the Godhead themselves. But alas, the sad day came when "iniquity was found" in him (Ezekiel 28:15). Where the seed of sin originated is a mystery which only God knows, but the fact remains that at a specific point in time Lucifer became enamored with his own beauty, impressed with his own wisdom, and exalted with his own importance.

Consider God's woeful lament as He is forced to bring His rebellious crown of creation into judgment. We read in Isaiah 14:12-14, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning? How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations. For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I WILL BE LIKE THE MOST HIGH."

Picture with me the long-suffering patience of God as he searches the boastful, ambitious heart of Lucifer. He listens quietly as Lucifer recites to himself: "I will ascend . . . I will exalt my throne . . . I will sit also upon the mount." The fuse of God's patience is growing shorter. Then Lucifer hurls the most audacious statement of blasphemy recorded in the Bible into the face of Almighty God: "I WILL BE LIKE THE MOST HIGH." The voice of thundering wrath and judgment explodes across the vast reaches of the universe as God declares, "YET THOU SHALT BE BROUGHT DOWN TO HELL, TO THE SIDES OF THE PIT." Lucifer, the shining one, the epitome of wisdom, righteousness and purity, became Satan, whose name means "The Adversary." Lucifer, the archangel of God, became Satan, the adversary of God.

Instead of casting Satan directly into hell, God would salvage something from this seeming calamity, and use it for His own Sovereign purpose. Now that sin was existent in the universe, God would exploit it. Satan's great powers would be used to provide a competing god, making possible a genuine test for man's affection. Satan would be used in developing a race of TESTED citizens. This testing was not available until Satan's fall.

So, Satan was spared for a season, and his ambition remains undiminished. He is still doggedly pursuing the goal of becoming like the Most High. Though now a fallen angel, he is not by any means an enfeebled angel. Though robbed of divine favor, he still possesses demonic force. As C.S. Lovett states in his excellent book, *Dealing With The Devil*, "Satan's greatness is now perverted. His wisdom is turned to guile and deceit. His tremendous intelligence produces craftiness and treachery. His fantastic genius has turned from bringing glory to God, to gratifying himself . . . Thoroughly schooled in righteousness, he now plumbs the depth of wickedness. Once a peer of holiness, his is now a personification of evil. He is able to make evil look good and good look evil since he has lived on both sides of the tracks."

Satan's authority on the earth was NOT given by God but rather was TAKEN FROM MAN! Adam was placed on the earth with authority over it. He was told in Genesis 1:28 to subdue the earth and exercise dominion over everything that moved in it. Satan, was, so to speak, "trespassing on private property" when he snuck into the garden that Adam was commissioned to protect. When Adam was tested, he knew clearly what was involved. We read in 1 Timothy 2:14 concerning Adam's encounter

with Satan: “And Adam was NOT deceived . . .” He knew full well what the cost of his disobedience would be. Not only would it mean the loss of everlasting and blissful life on earth, but also the loss of his dominion over the earth. By a single act, he joined the adversary’s gang. And since that gang already had a chief, Adam forfeited his position as ruler of the world. Satan became, “the god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4).

Other titles indicating the awesome power of Satan are the following: In John 14:30 he is called, “the prince of the world.” In Ephesians 2:2 he is called, “the prince of the power of the air.” In Matthew 12:24 he is called Beelzebub, meaning “ruler of the demons.” These titles all indicate his place of authority over unregenerate humanity and fallen angels.

There are many titles ascribed to Satan which give us insights as to his character and activities. The most common of such titles is “the devil,” which comes from the Greek word *diabolos* meaning “slanderer” or “false accuser.” Satan is also called “an angel of light” in 2 Corinthians 11:14. “Light” in Scripture denotes knowledge and purity. Therefore, Satan is very adept at clothing himself in the deceptive garbs of pseudo-intellectualism, philosophy, and seemingly fine moral and religious systems in order to lure the undiscerning. His true colors are revealed in such descriptions and appropriate titles as “tempter” in 2 Thessalonians 3:5, “hinderer” in 1 Thessalonians 2:18 and “father of lies” and “murderer”, both found in John 8:44.

Vicious animals are also used to help paint the picture of Satan’s character. In John 10:13 he is alluded to as a “wolf,” whereas in 1 Peter 5:8 he is called a “roaring lion.” He is called “the great dragon” in Revelation 12:9. Then, finally in Revelation 20:2, he is called “that old serpent.” So, we see that the devil goes by many names, and these give us concise descriptions of his character and activities. But these titles supply only partial knowledge concerning the devil we resist. Let us now take a brief look at the tactics of the devil as revealed in some of his encounters with God’s people throughout Scripture.

HIS TACTICS



1. In the book of Job, we learn that the devil is the ACCUSER of God’s people. After hearing God’s sterling appraisal of Job, Satan replies: “Does Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Though hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand

now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face” (Job 1:9-11). Here we see the devil living up to his name, as he falsely accuses righteous Job. In Revelation 12:10 we learn of his role as prosecuting attorney against believers in the courtroom of heaven: “And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.” Notice that his role as prosecuting attorney is a full-time job, requiring him to work day and night.

2. We also learn that Satan ATTACKS believers and the work of God. When Paul was in Corinth writing his first letter back to the Thessalonians, he expressed his desire to return to Thessalonica to strengthen the young church; but he states in 1 Thessalonians 2:18: “Satan hindered us.” In Revelation 2:10 the risen Lord warns the church at Smyrna: “The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried.” Here was open opposition instigated by Satan using unbelievers to seize some of God’s people and imprison them.
3. Another prominent tactic of Satan which he uses against believers is DECEPTION. We read in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 concerning some who were disrupting the church in Corinth: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ, and no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness?” Satan is thoroughly familiar with the Word of God and is a master at perverting its teachings.

His tactic is to use just enough truth to make his lies believable and attractive. Consider Paul’s warning in 1 Timothy 4:1, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, than in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons;” It has been said that one will more likely find Satan at work in a seminary than in a saloon, and the proliferation of deceptive doctrines among Christian people today validates the truth of that statement.

4. The final tactic of the devil we will touch upon is his work of OPPRESSING or discouraging the believer. In 2 Corinthians 2, Paul exhorts the church there to reinstate an erring yet repentant brother to their fellowship lest, as he put it, “such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.” Paul was aware that Satan could use this situation to discourage and divide the believers, for he wrote in 2 Corinthians 2:11, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” So, we see that Satan may oppress believers to discourage them, and cause them to yield to them.

This has been a brief look at the devil we resist. We have examined his titles and his tactics as revealed in Scripture in order that we might better understand who he is and how he works in the lives of God’s people. Next, we will discuss the believer’s authority in resisting the devil.

THE BELIEVER'S AUTHORITY

We have been informed in Revelation 12:11 regarding the believer's authority over the devil: "And they (the Tribulation saints) overcame him (the devil) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." These same tools or weapons, "the blood," "the Lamb", "the word of their testimony", and "their lives" are the weapons which constitute our authority over Satan NOW! Let's consider each one separately.

1. **The blood of Jesus** represents all that Jesus did. It is a symbol of the love of God which fashioned Calvary. It is a symbol of the finished work which finished the devil (Gen 3:15). To be under the blood is to be included under Calvary's victory. That victory is final. Mention of the blood reminds the devil of the victory won that day on the cross. When Satan plagues us with feelings of guilt, accuses us of being unworthy of God's love, and even attempts to cause us to doubt our salvation, we can plead the blood. It is the blood of Christ poured out on Calvary's tree that brought us life eternal. It is the blood which provides cleansing from sin. As a songwriter of old so beautifully put it, "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh precious is the flow, that washed me white as snow. No other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus."

As believers, we are blood-bought people, and stand in the authority of that shed blood as Satan would seek to plague us with guilt and doubts. If by the blood of the Lamb ultimate victory over the devil is to be won, then it is logical to assume that immediate victory can be unceasingly obtained in the same manner.

2. "**The Lamb**" of Revelation 12:11 obviously refers to the Lord Jesus Christ for he is identified as such in 1 Peter 1:18-19. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things . . . But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:" The name of Jesus Christ, the lamb of God, constitute much of our authority over the devil. Jesus gives us the legal right to use His wonderful name, in our prayers to the Father, and in our confrontations with the devil. In John 14:13 we read, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son." John 16:24 says, "Hitherto, ye have asked nothing in my name; Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." What does it mean to use His name, and how can this relate to our warfare with the devil?" The Amplified New Testament interprets using His name as "presenting all that He is." When we resist the devil, we do so not in our own name, or in our own power, but in the name of Jesus Christ. We are no match for Satan under any other terms, for only one Man in all of history locked horns with Satan and came out the winner. That Man was the God-man, Jesus Christ! He secured eternal victory for us over the devil when He went to the cross. What appeared, humanly speaking, to be Satan's greatest triumph, proved his greatest tragedy.

3. The next source of authority we have over the devil is **“the word of our testimony.”** This refers to our resource in the written testimony, the Word of God. The Word of God is pictured as “the sword of the Spirit” in Ephesians 6:17. This is the only piece of offensive equipment mentioned in this passage dealing with the believer’s armor.



In thinking about how God’s Word can be used in resisting the devil, let’s examine how our Lord used the Word in his confrontation with the evil one. In Matthew 4, after Jesus had fasted in the wilderness 40 days, the devil began his assault, hoping to capitalize on the Master’s weakened condition. The temptations he brought before the Lord were seemingly very legitimate. 1) Christ was hungry, and Satan offered him food. 2) Christ was under the special protection of God the Father, and Satan tempted Christ to prove it. 2). Christ will one day inherit the kingdoms of this world, so Satan offered him these kingdoms in exchange for worship. In each case, Jesus Christ drew the sharp two-edged sword of God’s Word, and pierced the evil one. For every jab from the devil, Christ parried and returned a thrust from God’s Word. After three wounds from the “it is written” assaults from God’s Word, Satan retreated, bloodied and beaten. This same victory can be ours as we resist the devil with the Word of God.”

4. The final source of authority is **“fearlessness unto death.”** In our text in Revelation 12:121, the final clause reads, “and they loved not their lives unto the death.” Here is one of the greatest weapons against the devil. Here is an indication of an abandoned life. Most of our worries stem from the fact that we love our lives. Most of our discouragements and resentments arise from the same direction. If we love our lives, we will fear death and that fear will be used by the devil to intimidate us.

We read in Hebrews 2:15 that we have been delivered from the fear of death, and its accompanying bondage to the devil. Satan may plague and threaten us with the fear of death. But answer me this . . . how are you going to threaten a man who is not afraid of that with which you are threatening him? The answer is --- you cannot. There is no need to fear death now. We have the helmet of salvation, the sure and unchangeable promise of eternal life. The worst that Satan can threaten us with is death, and it just an idle threat, for only God has the power of death. The fact is we are immortal until our work on earth is done!

We have briefly looked at the four sources of authority by which we can successfully resist the devil. We have the blood of Christ which has purchased us, and cleansed us from all sin and guilt. We have the name which is above every name, before which Satan must bow the knee. We have the quick and powerful Word of God, by which we not only ward off the attacks of the devil, but also send him scampering in defeat. And then finally we can possess a fearlessness unto death. We need not fear even the worst that the enemy might attempt against us, humanly speaking, for even in the case of physical death, "to be with Christ is far better."

Satan has succeeded in ruining the lives of many of God's children through the centuries, but his final epitaph will be, "overcome by the fearlessness of overcomers." You can help write that epitaph as you recognize and appropriate the authority that has been given you to resist the devil. I would like to close with these words of victory and praise:

Our Lord has Satan conquered,
His stronghold entered in,
And broken his dominion,
Thank God, we're free from sin!
The long, long night is ended,
And freedom's morn is here,
We sing our songs of triumph,
Our hearts are free from fear.

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