

Spiritual Warfare: The Christian Versus the Devil

By Dr. Gary M. Gulan, ©1983 (Rev. 86,89,92,95,05)

Introduction: Before studying this area of doctrine, we must note a word of caution. "While it is urgent for us to learn what God has revealed about His archenemy Satan, we must be careful not to give the adversary honors which belong only to God. Moreover, we must take care not to allow an unhealthy curiosity about the Devil and his work to involve us beyond what is lawful. God has revealed all that we need to know about the devil. It is safe and wise to be contented with this information."¹

"It is clear from the Bible that a serious and intense struggle is going on between, on the one side, Christ and his followers and, on the other Satan and his forces."²

"Satan is the great opposer, or adversary, of God and man; the personal name of the devil. ...Whenever, this word [Satan] is used as a proper name in the Old Testament, it refers to the great superhuman enemy of God, man, and good."³

"The devil is a real, personal being who opposes the Christian and seeks to make him ineffective in his Christian life. He is a formidable enemy of the Christian since he is intent on devouring Christians (1 Pt. 5:8)."⁴

"It now becomes clear that the readers need to be strong because they are in a battle whose ultimate antagonists are God and the devil (cf. the implicit contrast between the armor of God and the schemes of the devil). ...Here the devil is singled out as the primary enemy, the chief of the opposing army, so that the forces of evil which lie behind human activity are seen as having a personal center (Eph. 2:2; 4:14) but cannot be reduced to or explained solely in terms of their activities. ...Human scheming (Eph. 4:14) had been mentioned; here it is the schemes of the devil against which believers have to stand. This language makes clear that the devil does not always attack through obvious head-on assaults but employs cunning and wily stratagems designed to catch believers unawares."⁵

1. THE DESIGNATIONS OF THE DEVIL

In order to understand how detrimental the Devil is to the Christian and to life, we must understand who the Devil really is.

"The various names and designations for Satan not only affirm the reality of his existence but also reveal his many-faceted character and aspects of his work. A name often reveals something about the person.... He is a powerful, intelligent, clever creature, and we must never forget or underestimate the reality of our enemy."⁶

A. Satan (meaning "adversary"), (Job 1:6; Mat 4:10; Acts 5:3; Rev. 12:9).

B. Devil (meaning "slanderer, false witness, malicious accuser"), (35 times, Mat. 4:1; Jn. 8:44; 1 Pt. 5:8; Rev. 12:9; 20:10)

C. Abaddon (meaning the "destroyer"), (Rev. 9:11)

D. Apollyon (meaning the "destroyer")

E. Dragon meaning "huge serpent," (Rev. 12:7,9; 20:2)

F. The old serpent, (Rev. 12:9; 20:2)

"The devil is called the serpent of old (Rev. 12:9; 20:2), and the allusion in Romans 16:20 indicates that the judgment of Genesis 3:15 refers to Satan, not simply the serpent. The serpent was crafty (Gen. 3:1), hence, Satan would be crafty in conducting his test. His strategy can be summarized in three phases. (1.) Satan raised doubt concerning God's Word (Gen. 3:1). (2.) Satan lied by saying they would not die, (Gen. 3:4). (3.) Satan told a partial truth (Gen. 3:5)."⁷

G. Lucifer, (meaning "the shinning one"), (Isa. 14:12)

H. Son of the morning, (Isa. 14:12)

I. Prince of the power of the air, (Eph. 2:2)

J. Prince or ruler of this world, (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)

"When Satan fell because of his sin, he instituted a counter-kingdom. He rules the 'cosmos' the world or orderly system of the wicked angels and unregenerate humans. This counter-kingdom over which Satan rules is opposite of and stands in defiance of God's rule. ...Though Satan is the ruler or prince of the world system that opposes God, his empire or rule is limited. He is not sovereign as God is. All Satan does is under the wise permission of God himself and for His own good purposes."⁸

K. Prince of the demons, (Mat. 12:24)

L. god of this age, (2 Cor. 4:4)

M. The wicked or evil one, (Matt. 6:13; 13:19, 38; 2 Thess. 2:8; 1 Jn. 2:13)

N. Beelzebub (Greek meaning, the "Lord of the flies" from the Hebrew "Lord of filth"), (Mat. 9:34; 12:24-26)

O. Father of lies, (Jn. 8:44)

P. Belial (meaning "worthless"), (Rev. 12:9)

2. THE DOWNFALL OF THE DEVIL

We can see the Devil's downfall from a brief history of his life.

A. He is a created being, (Ez. 28:13).

B. He is an anointed cherub, (Ez. 28:14).

C. He was created perfect and beautiful, (Ez. 28:15).

The Devil is not some red, long pointed eared, long pointed tail, being, with a pitch fork. He is a very attractive, seductive, alluring creature.

D. He had every precious and had beautiful trappings, (Ez. 28:13).

E. He was in charge of music around God's throne, (Ez. 28:13-14).

The "king of Tyre" was as wicked as "Satan" and Ezekiel gives insights into both the "king of Tyre" and "Satan," (Ez. 28:11-19). Ezekiel tells us that (1.) "Satan" was the director of music in heaven, (Ez. 28:13); and (2.) "Satan" was the director of worship in heaven, (Ez. 28:14).

Concerning the "timrel" and the "pipes" with reference to Satan, J. Dwight Pentecost writes, "Musical instruments were originally designed to be a means of praising and worshipping God. It was not necessary for Lucifer to learn to play a musical instrument in order to praise God. If you please, he had a built-in pipe organ, or, he was an organ. That's what the prophet meant when he said 'the workmanship of thy tabors and thy pipes....' Lucifer, because of his beauty, did what a musical instrument would do in the hands of a skilled musician, bring forth a paean of praise to the glory of God. Lucifer didn't have to look for someone to play the organ so that he would sing the doxology, he was a doxology."⁹

F. He directed worship and activity to God, (Ez. 28:14).

G. He was active in the garden of Eden, (Ez. 28:13).

H. One day iniquity was found in him and he sinned, (Ez. 28:15-16).

"Spiritual warfare between Satan and God has persisted ever since Satan sinned. The conflict has centered in authority and control. The prideful desire to be like the Most High God was at the very heart of Satan's sin. Ever since he fell, Satan, together with his demons, has been in combat with God and His people. ...Christians face a lifelong battle with Satan and his evil hosts. ...The Scriptures certainly do not hide the fact that believers are the target of Satanic and demonic opposition. Spiritual warfare is real. ...The triune God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is absolutely sovereign, even over Satan. Satan is God's wicked supernatural foe opposing Him and battling for people's soul, but he is always subject to God."¹⁰

I. He was prideful, (Ez. 28:17).

"Being a personal creature, he had self-determination and the ability to worship. But struck by his own dazzling beauty, he chose to exalt himself rather than the Creator. This self-exaltation was a manifestation of pride, the first sin. Motivated by pride, Satan set out on an irrational course to seize for himself God's authority over the universe."¹¹

J. He wanted to be like God, (Isa. 14:13-14).

K. He was cast out of the mountains of God, (Ez. 28:16-17; Isa. 14:12).

"Satan, the leader of the angels that fell (2 Pt. 2:4) was the first to rebel against God and His government of the universe. Now, with the creation of man, he brought that rebellion to the newly formed earth, hoping to recruit the human race to his cause. As we know, to our sorrow, misery, and death, man succumbed to Satan's temptation, believing his lies, and fell. ...As to the

war on earth, then, we know only that it was brought into the human sphere from outside as part of a cosmic war between God and Satan that had been going on previously."¹²

3. THE DANGER OF THE DEVIL

The Devil is the enemy of God. The Devil wars against Israel, (Rev. 12:7,12-17). The Devil wars against Michael and the angels, (Rev. 12:6, 13-17). The Devil wars against God, (Dan. 10:10-14). The Devil wars against the Christian, (Eph. 6:11-12).

"A part of Satan's continuing ambition to replace God is his passionate yearning to have others worship him, (Mat. 4:8-9; Rev. 13:4,12). Since God has frustrated this desire and put down Satan's rebellion, he has become God's exact opposite. He is 'the wicked one,' (Matt. 13:19,38), while God is 'the Holy One, (Isa. 1:4). Satan's nature is malicious. His efforts in opposing God, His people, and His truth, are tireless (Job 1:7; 2:2; Matt. 13:28). He is always opposed to man's best interests (1 Chron. 21:1; Zech. 3:1-2)."¹³

"Just as Satan tempted Eve to sin against God (Gen. 3:1-6), so he tried to get Jesus to sin and thus fail in his mission as Messiah (Matt. 4:1-11). The tactics of Satan and his demons are to use lies (John 8:44), deception (Rev. 12:9), murder (Ps. 106:37; John 8:44), and every other kind of destructive activity to attempt to cause people to turn away from God and destroy themselves."¹⁴ The Devil's danger is seen: (1.) by his "wiles" (Gk. "methodeias" meaning "cunning, abilities to investigate, to handle methodically," Eph. 6:11); (2.) by his "devices" (Gk. "noemata" meaning "thoughts, conceptions, intelligence, or devices," 2 Cor. 2:11); and (3.) by his "subtily," (Gk. "panourgos" meaning "ready to do anything, crafty, cunning, artful, wily," 2 Cor. 11:3). "...The adversary is seeking to discredit our Christian testimony, to cause us to fall in such a way that we cannot rise and pursue the Christian walk again or manifest the resurrection life of Christ again."¹⁵

A. He is not "God" and cannot be in every place at the same time, so he uses "demons" to accomplish some of his purposes.

"We are wrestling 'against principles, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual [hosts of] wickedness in high places,' (Eph. 6:12). ...We learn that there are different ranks among these spiritual hosts of wickedness made up of fallen angels. We know from the Word of God that angels are beings which were created by God to be His ministering servants, executors of God's will. In God's governmental order, the angels were arranged in different hierarchies, each of which had different spheres of authority and responsibility. The archangels, the highest class, received their commands from the throne of God and passed them down through the ranks to subordinates who sped to execute God's will. When Lucifer rebelled against God, a great host of angels followed him in his rebellion and Satan became their ruler. Organizing his fallen minions after the pattern of God's organization, Satan became the god of this world. He divided his demons into different classes with various responsibilities and graded authority. 'Principalities' are the leaders among the demons who serve Satan. 'Powers' refers to all of the angels who are under the authority of these leaders. 'Rulers' refers to those who are in authority over this world. They are called the rulers of the darkness of this world. ...We are fighting against a horde of fiends who are organized by their evil leader to defeat and overthrow God's children in the battle."¹⁶

B. He is a tempter, (Mt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5).

"The avenue through which the temptation came to man and woman was the serpent (Gen. 3:1). However, the temptation must be seen as coming through Satan; the devil inspired Cain to kill his brother (Jn. 8:44)."¹⁷

C. He is a murderer, (Jn. 8:44).

All through the Old Testament, Satan tries to kill off the godly seed through whom God was working His purposes (CF. the evil one's attack upon, and God's providential preservation of, the infant Moses). Many saints through the ages have been murdered and their Christian testimony stopped. Though murder cannot be so easily discovered in the inner battles of the individual Christian, the destruction of one's personal testimony and even self-destruction, is included in this thought.¹⁸

D. He seeks to mix and compromise, (2 Cor. 6:14-15).

Satan weakens the people with "mixed-multitudes" can be seen all through the Old Testament. Mix-multitudes tempted Israel to murmur and rebel. We also see it by Israel's history with the many compromises with idolatry and alliances with Egypt and Assyria, who tempted them to sin. "Christians have been weakened, but above all else it has been by becoming eclectic, (which is simply another way of saying 'worldly-minded'). All these compromises, leading to mixtures that weaken the fighting capacity of the church, begin with battles lost in the inner life of the individual Christians."¹⁹

E. He seeks Christians to devour as roaring lion, (1Pt. 5:8).

F. He is a "stalker," (Eph. 6:11).

"The word here translated 'wiles' is a most interesting word and means 'to stalk.' It suggests an animal seeking prey. ...Our adversary will use the craft, guile, subtlety, and deceit of a predatory animal in pursuing his prey."²⁰

G. He is a deceiver, (Rev. 20:20; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; 1 Tim. 3:6-7; 2 Tim. 2:26).

H. He tries to "take advantage " of Christians, (2 Cor. 2:11).

I. He accuses the brethren, (Rev. 12:10).

J. He controls the world's system and uses it to oppress Christians and to tempt Christians away from the Lord, (Jn. 12:31; Eph. 2:2; 2 Cor. 4:4).

"Satan's influence in worldly affairs is also clearly revealed. His various titles reflect his control of the world system: 'the ruler of this world,' (Jn. 12:31), 'the god of this age,' (2 Cor. 4:4), and 'the prince of the power of the air,' (Eph. 2:2). The Bible declares, 'The whole world lies under the sway of the 'wicked one,' (1 Jn. 5:19)."²¹

K. He tries to silence the gospel, (Matt. 13:19; 1 Thess. 2:17-18; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; 2 Thess 2:9-10).

L. He opposes the work of the Lord, (John 13:2,27; 1 Pt. 5:8).

M. He seduces, (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Thess. 2:2).

N. He spreads false doctrine, (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Thess. 2:2).

4. THE DELIVERANCE AGAINST THE DEVIL

Michael Horton writes, "Spiritual warfare is real but often misunderstood these days. ...Notice that this warfare is not vague; it centers on truth and error rather than merely a display of force in 'power encounters.' The Devil wishes to destroy the gospel, and the church is fighting to preserve and proclaim it until it buries the demonic fortresses in obscurity. No weapon is offered here (Eph. 6:15) for the saint's use that compares with the sort of 'spiritual warfare' one often sees in rallies in which the demon of this or that is 'bound.'"²²

What God's Word teaches about spiritual warfare and the Devil contrasts strikingly against what the "deliverance ministries" teach. There is a danger in adopting the "deliverance" ministry of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. "Though spiritual warfare is not new, there is a renewed emphasis on it today. Entire ministries, in some instances, focus on human confrontation of evil powers and spiritual warfare, especially in relation to evangelism."²³

The devil is strong, but the believer in Christ is stronger, (Eph. 6:11). In order for the Christian to be victorious, he or she must follow six important preparations:

- (1.) you must not be ignorant of his devices, (2 Cor. 2:11);
- (2.) you must be innocent concerning evil, (Rom. 16:19-20);
- (3.) you must not allow Satan to take advantage of your spiritual immaturity, (2 Cor. 2:11);
- (4.) you must be sober or vigilant, (1 Pt. 5:8-9);
- (5.) you must be alert, (1 Pt. 5:8-9); and
- (6.) you must be ready, (Eph. 6:11,13).

A. Use the complete and full armor God has given to us, (Eph. 6:11).

B. Take a stand against the Devil, (Eph. 6:11-18).

C. Submit to God and resist the Devil and he will flee, (Ja. 4:7).

D. Trust in God's protection from the evil one, (1 Jn. 5:18).

E. Resist the Devil, (Ja. 4:7; 1 Pt. 5:8-9).

F. Do not give place to the Devil, (Eph. 4:27).

5. THE DEFEAT OF THE DEVIL

"The decisive battle in the war between good and evil was fought and won by Christ in the crucifixion and resurrection."²⁴

A. Jesus has already judged the Devil, (Jn. 16:7-11).

B. Jesus destroyed the Devil's power, (Heb. 2:14).

C. Jesus delivers the Christian from the Devil's kingdom, (Col 1:13).

D. Jesus has prepared a place for the Devil, (Matt 25:41).

E. Jesus will crush the Devil, (Rom. 16:20).

F. Jesus will cast the Devil into the pit forever, (Rev. 20:10).

Conclusion: We do not need to fear the devil and we do not need to make a deal with the devil to keep him from his attacks. Christians just need to be aware of the devil and what he wants to do to them.

"While the devil may attack at any time, he will do so when he thinks it is to his advantage. He may approach us (1.) when we are in the wake of a great spiritual experience (Mat. 3:16; 4:1-2), (2.) when we are at the beginning of some spiritual endeavor, (Mat. 3:17), (3.) when we are in a state of physical weakness or mental exhaustion (Mat. 4:2), or (4.) when we are alone (Mat. 4:1). We must always be alert for him (1 Pt. 5:8), for he generally attacks unexpectedly, (Mat. 16:21-23)."²⁵

Notes:

¹Practical Christian Theology, Floyd Barackman, Old Tappan: Revell, 1984, p. 175.

²Christian Theology, Millard Erickson, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989, p. 450.

³Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Hebert Lockyer, Ed., Nashville: Nelson, 1986, p. 952.

⁴The Moody Handbook of Theology, Paul Enns, Chicago: Moody, 1989, p. 314

⁵Ephesians, Andrew Lincoln, Waco: Word, 1990, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 42, p. 443.

⁶Basic Theology, Charles Ryrie, Wheaton: Victory, 1986, p. 140.

⁷The Moody Handbook of Theology, Paul Enns, Chicago: Moody, 1989, p. 309.

⁸Understanding Christian Theology, Charles Swindoll and Roy Zuck, Nashville: Nelson, 2003, p. 578.

⁹Your Adversary The Devil, J. Dwight Pentecost, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976, p. 16.

¹⁰Understanding Christian Theology, Charles Swindoll and Roy Zuck, Nashville: Nelson, 2003, p. 620.

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¹¹Practical Christian Theology, Floyd Barackman, Old Tappan: Revell, 1984, p. 176.

¹²The War Within, Jay Adams, Eugene: Harvest, 1989, p. 12.

¹³Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Hebert Lockyer, Ed., Nashville: Nelson, 1986, p. 953.

¹⁴Understanding Christian Theology, Charles Swindoll and Roy Zuck, Nashville: Nelson, 2003, p. 415.

¹⁵Designed To Be Like Him, J. Dwight Pentecost, Chicago: Moody, 1972, p. 219.

¹⁶Designed To Be Like Him, J. Dwight Pentecost, Chicago: Moody, 1972, p. 220.

¹⁷The Moody Handbook of Theology, Paul Enns, Chicago: Moody, 1989, p. 308.

¹⁸The Unfolding Plan of Redemption, James Graham, Quoted by The War Within, Jay Adams, Eugene: Harvest House, 1989, Pp. 33-37.

¹⁹The Unfolding Plan of Redemption, James Graham, Quoted by The War Within, Jay Adams, Eugene: Harvest House, 1989, Pp. 33-37.

²⁰Designed To Be Like Him, J. Dwight Pentecost, Chicago: Moody, 1972, p. 219.

²¹Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Hebert Lockyer, Ed., Nashville: Nelson, 1986, p. 953.

²²Power Religion, Michael Horton, Ed., Chicago: Moody, 1992, p. 16-17.

²³Understanding Christian Theology, Charles Swindoll and Roy Zuck, Nashville: Nelson, 2003, p. 620.

²⁴Christian Theology, Millard Erickson, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989, p. 450.

²⁵Practical Christian Theology, Floyd Barackman, Old Tappan: Revell, 1984, p. 175.

Sins Satan Energizes

(Sins Satan capitalizes on or uses to his own ends)

- 1. Mates depriving each other (1 Cor. 7:5)**
- 2. Unresolved anger, (Eph. 4:26-27)**
- 3. Failure to forgive the repentant, (2 Cor. 2:11)**
- 4. A poor testimony, (1 Tim. 3:7)**
- 5. Disobedience, (Eph. 2:2)**
- 6. Lust and desires of the flesh, (Eph. 2:2)**
- 7. Love of money, (1 Tim. 6:10)**

Satanic Sins

(Characteristics of Satan, originated by Satan, prompted by Satan)

- 1. Lies, (Jn. 8:44; Acts 5:3)**
- 2. Murder, (Jn. 8:44)**
- 3. Speaking reproachfully, (1 Tim. 5:14)**
- 4. Savoring the things of the world, (Mat. 16:23)**
- 5. Lust, (Gr. "epithumais" Jn. 8:44)**
- 6. Falsehood, (Jn. 8:44)**
- 7. Deception, (2 Thess. 2:9-10; Rev. 20:3,10)**
- 8. Fear (Job 3:25; Gr. "deilias" 2 Tim. 1:7; "phobia" Heb. 2:15)**
- 9. Accusation, (Job 2:1; Rev. 12:10)**
- 10. Disobedience, (Eph. 2:2)**
- 11. Pride, (Isa. 14:12-14; 1 Tim. 3:6; Ja. 3:14, 4:7)**
- 12. Covetousness, (Isa. 14:14)**
- 13. Envy, (Ja. 3:14-15)**
- 14. Strife (Ja. 3:14-15)**
- 15. Self-seeking, (Ja. 3:14-15)**
- 16. Betrayal, (Jn. 13:21,27)**

Satanic Devices

The "wiles" (Eph. 6:11) and "devices" (2 Cor. 2:11)

- 1. Temptation, (1 Thess. 3:1-5)**
- 2. Seduction, (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Thess. 2:2)**
- 3. Deception, (2 Thess. 2:9-10; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 20:3)**
- 4. Lies, (John 8:44; Acts 5:3).**
- 5. Take advantage of a situation, (2 Cor. 2:11)**

6. Snares, entrapments, entanglements, (1 Tim. 3:7; 2 Tim. 2:26)
7. Adversarial role, (1 Pt. 5:8; 1 Tim. 5:14; Mat. 6:33)
8. Destruction, (1 Cor. 10:10)
9. Hinders God's work, (1 Thess. 2:18)
10. Accusation, (Job 2:1; Rev. 12:10)
11. Physical ailments, (2 Cor. 12:7)
12. Corrupting minds, (Gr. "phthare" meaning spoil, ruin, deprave, 2 Cor. 11:3)
13. Blinding minds, (Gr. "etuphlose" 2 Cor. 4:4)
14. Spreads false doctrine, (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Thess. 2:2; 1 Cor. 11:3)
15. Persecution/infirmities, (2 Cor. 12:7-9)
16. Opposition, (Matt. 16:23)
17. Betrayal, (Jn. 13:21,27)

Satanic Masquerade
2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15

Satan's counterfeit system

1. False apostles "transformed" (Gk. "metaschematidzo") into apostles of Christ, (11:13)
2. Satan "transformed" (Gk. "metaschematidzo") angel of light, (11:14).
3. Satan's ministers "transformed" (Gk. "metaschematidzo") ministers of righteousness, (11:15).
4. Another (Gk. "allon") Jesus, (11:4)
5. Another (Gk. "heteron") spirit, (11:4)
6. Another (Gk. "heteron") gospel, (11:4)