

# The work of the Devil

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**Text: M**

## Introduction

1. I want to talk about the work of the Devil as it affects the life of Christians. This is not a complete dossier on what he does and how his work affects our lives but I want to remind you of some of the things we ought to be aware of so that his affect is lessened as we serve God.

## Some facts first

1. I don't want to waste time on the Devil's background but there are some things about him that we should keep in mind.
  - a. Foremost, there is nothing positive about the Devil.
  - b. It is often said that even the worst human being has some good in them. I question that but even the worst human being is not beyond the reach of God with the possibility to radically change.
  - c. In the Devil there is no good and no possibility of change.
2. The Devil is extremely powerful – beyond our ability to imagine. His knowledge about God and about the spiritual realm and about the material realm and the human realm, etc. is vast.
  - a. He also seems to have authority to manipulate, for instance the natural elements as we see from Job where he caused an army to attack, fire to fall from heaven, and gale-force winds to destroy a house.
  - b. But he is not omnipotent, nor omnipresent, and is subject to God.
  - c. He does not work alone but is aided by other fallen angels called demons. So when we say that the Devil has opposed us, we are not opposed by him personally but by demonic forces.
  - d. Demons have the same goals, i.e. they work against God and since believers belong to God, they are targets of demonic influences.
  - d. Of course, unbelievers also come under the influence of the Devil and the same applies to leaders, organisations, nations and world events.
3. I've already said that the Devil is not all-powerful. He has power and authority but is subject to God. Again, Job's story shows that he first had to seek God's "okay" before he could bring about disaster on Job.
  - a. As you study Job's story you see that the Devil knew exactly what to do to bring him to a place of total misery and self-pity.
  - b. Although he suffered at the loss of his family, his servants and his wealth, he was prepared to praise God but when his integrity and righteousness was questioned he cursed the day of his birth.
  - c. The devil knows you better than you know yourself and he knows exactly what kind of attack to bring against you, or the family, or the church, or the city, or the nation, etc., etc.

## The devil's work

1. I am not going to go into the fullest detail all that the Devil does – that would take more time than we have today. But I want to remind you of some things so that we are on the lookout and recognise that possibly some of the problems we face are due to his influence. But three things to bear in mind first –
  - a. **ONE** – If the Devil found it easy to tempt sinless Eve who had no sinful and wilful inclinations, how much easier is it for him to tempt you and me who have sinful natures.
  - b. **TWO** – even though the Devil tempted Eve she could not pin the blame on him. She was tempted but not forced to sin and you and I are also responsible for our actions when we do sin.
  - c. **THREE** – Not every motivation to do wrong can be blamed on the Devil. We also have sinful natures and would sin even if we never had the added aggravation of the Devil.
    - i. We have to understand that the Devil wars against us but that our own natures are wilful and are at enmity with God.
    - ii. Paul speaks about the warfare that Believers are engaged in but he seems to emphasise that most of the battle is with the sinfulness of our own selves rather than the Devil.
2. Here are some of the areas the Devil works in our lives –
  - 2.1.1 **He tempts us to sin:** We see that in the story of Adam and Eve how he came to Eve and tempted her to eat the fruit which God had commanded her not to.

- i. He didn't just tempt her by saying, "See how nice the fruit is. Can you imagine what it tastes like? I bet it's the best fruit in the Garden and God is mean not to let you have a taste."
  - ii. But he also made her question God, and doubt His word. The Devil makes us make light of the word of God and by doing so he makes the word of God to be less esteemed by us.
- 2.1.2** 1 Chron 21:1 says that *Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel*. He wasn't supposed to do it in case he trusted in his army rather than God.
- i. The interesting thing is that regarding this same incident 2 Samuel 24 says, *Again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, 'Go and take a census of Israel and Judah.'*
  - ii. Here it says that God tempted David but James 1:13 says, *Let no man say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God,' for God can't be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one.*
  - iii. The Bible does not contradict itself so then it means that God allowed David to be **tested** by the Devil's tempting just as He must have allowed Eve to be tested in the garden to see what was in her heart.
- 2.2.1 Blinds minds** – 2 Cor 4:4 says, *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*
- i. A Bible college teacher says that the Devil turns the mind from things great to small, the unseen and eternal to the visible and temporal.
  - ii. He robs of belief and of faith and spiritual sight so that people live in the natural rather than the spiritual. Jesus said that God is spirit and those that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and truth (Jn 4:24)
- 2.3.1 He causes men to doubt** – He said to Eve in the garden, *"Did God really say...?"* As I've already said, by saying that he attempts to rob God's word of its authority and power. But...
- i. How many promises has God made to us and desperately wants us to receive the promises. But we don't because we take lightly His promises and instructions to us as His children.
  - ii. There is not a desperate desire on our parts to receive the promises (or even know them) or we doubt that God really means what He says.
- 2.4.1 He brings about a darkness** – Isaiah asks, *Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God.*
- i. He is saying, when your world has fallen in, and when nothing makes sense, and when you seem totally alone with no help, and when you are weak, etc. that's a good time to trust in God.
  - ii. If you don't you can be sure your mind will delude you and your heart fail you.
- 2.5.1 And finally, he accuses Christians** – (1 Pet 5:8) The Devil is a liar but it's possible that when he accuses you and me before God that it's at that time that he does not lie.
- i. However, even though his accusations may be true, my sins have been cleansed by the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.
  - ii. *Illustration:* of farmer who drove a stake into the ground.

## Not a victorious Devil

1. The good news is that even though the Devil is very powerful and dangerous, what we need to understand is that he is not victorious, he has already been defeated!
  - a. Jesus said to His disciples, *I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to... overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you* (Luke 10:18).
2. Even though he is defeated he can still shoot deadly darts. We are told that he *prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour* (1 Pet 5:8).
  - a. But he can be resisted, and the struggle will not be one-sided as long as we are aware of his schemes and his tactics,
  - b. We need the armour that God has given to us as Believers (Eph 6:10-18). We need to be a people of the Word and the Spirit.