

Isaiah 14:12-14 How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.

THE TEMPTER AND THE TEMPTED (1)

One—The Origin and Kingdom of the Tempter

1. *His Names.* According to Revelation 12:9, he has four different names: the *Great Dragon* indicates his *cruelty*; the *Old Serpent* discloses his *deception*; the *Devil* speaks of his *temptation*; and *Satan* tells of his *hatred*. “The god of this world” in 2 Corinthians 4:4 refers to his being the head of the religions of the world. “The prince of the world” in John 14:30 alludes to his being the chief of world politics. “The prince of the powers of the air” in Ephesians 2:2 adverts to his being the king of evil powers. Revelation 12:10 says he is “the accuser of our brethren,” and 9:11 states he is “the angel of the abyss.” To the unwatchful and careless he is “as a roaring lion” (1 Peter 5:8). And to the watchful believers, he “fashioneth himself into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

2. *His Kingdom.* “The whole world lieth in the evil one” (1 John 5:19). This confirms that the Devil was not speaking empty words when he declared to Jesus while tempting Him, “To thee will I give all this authority (“all the kingdoms of the world”—v. 5), and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered unto me” (Luke 4:6). By reading Luke 11:14-18, 20-24, we know that *men* are also included in the scope of the Devil’s kingdom.

3. *His government and subordinates.* By reading Revelation 2:13 we know where the Tempter’s dwelling place is. From reading Ephesians 6:12 we know all those who are in his army. Through reading Daniel 10:13, 20 we learn about his subordinates. And as we read 2 Corinthians 12:7 we know something about his messengers.

4. *His religion.* Satan also has his religion, a worshipping with the spirit of confusion: “the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan” (Revelation 2:9). This indicates that the words spoken in the synagogue of Satan are but words of blasphemy and of distortion! How many are the synagogues of Satan today! Full of criticism and doubt, mocking and slandering – this is the religion of Satan. 1 Corinthians 10:20-21 mentions about “sacrifice to demons” and “the cup of demons,” thus revealing that Satanic religion also has sacrifice and communion. 1 Timothy 4:1-4 speaks of the “doctrines of demons.” By studying carefully these four verses we come to know how the present-day apostasy concurs with the Scriptures. We thereby also discern that this present time is really the end time. How very pitiful that those who believe in the doctrines of demons do not realize they are of the demons. They not only follow but also propagate them.

5. *His people.* (a) *Satan works in the hearts of men without their knowing it:* “according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). (b) *Satan blinds the eyes of men:* “the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving” (2 Corinthians 4:4). (c) *Satan gives false peace:* “When the strong man fully armed guardeth his own court, his goods are in peace” (Luke 11:21). Those who are under the power of Satan think they have great peace, not realizing that such peace is unreal and is available only when everything goes smoothly. It is not the true peace and blessing which the Christians have. (d) *Satan secretly stirs people to oppose the truth:* “in meekness correcting them that

oppose themselves; if peradventure God may give them repentance unto the knowledge of the truth, and they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him unto his will” (2 Timothy 2:25-26). Many are those who rebel and oppose the truth today. Actually, they have been taken captive by the Devil and have fallen into his snare.

Two – The Tempter and Those Who Overcome Him

1. *The Overcomer.* Besides our Lord Jesus Christ, there is no other: “To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8); “he (the seed of the woman) shall bruise thy (the serpent’s) head” (Genesis 3:15). Christ is the Overcomer who destroys the works of the Devil and breaks his head. Christ has overcome. By constantly confessing this fact and joining oneself to Christ, one may always triumph. What Satan fears most is “the word of their testimony” in the mouth of the saints to the effect that Christ is the Victor (Revelation 12:11). Such a word of testimony will cause him to flee. Christ is Victor! Hallelujah, praise the Lord! (see Mark 1:24,27; 3:11).

2. *The place of victory.* Apart from Calvary, where else could the place of victory over Satan be? The cross of Calvary is where Satan and his powers are defeated. The victory of Calvary is still powerful today: “. . . nailing it to the cross; having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Colossians 2:14-15); “that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). Many think that Christ crucified was the Lord’s defeat, not realizing that this is where the victory was won. At the end of this age two armies will confront each other. But the battle is won without fighting. For when Christ was crucified and raised from the dead, He had entered into death, fought with it, and conquered it. The victory was then and there secured. His victory over Satan was not accomplished without His death and resurrection. In death Christ fought with Satan – who had the power of death – and conquered him. His resurrection is the evidence of His victory. As He moved forward, with His face towards Calvary, He declared: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (John 12:31). Satan was defeated at the cross. Waging war against Satan in any other place would have ended in defeat. Satan is victorious in all places except Calvary. He was defeated *only* at the cross, and he was forever defeated there. So that all who are joined to the Lamb of Calvary stand on the ground of the victory of Calvary. They are not opening a new frontier; rather, they are applying that former victory to this present conflict. And in so doing, they shall overcome. Defeat is due to our depending upon self, but victory is because of standing on Calvary. The cross is the victory ground! Calvary is our home! What, then, do we have to fear?

3. *The battle announced by messengers.* We are the Lord’s messengers. We proclaim the victory of Calvary and Christ the Victor: “I send thee to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God” (Acts 26:17-18). The victory of Calvary is still in effect today. Jesus the Savior is still the Conqueror. And Satan is still the vanquished. Satan has no power over us, for we have been delivered from the power of Satan unto God.

4. *The captives freed.* “. . . who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love” (Colossians 1:13). Christ has overcome, and He is now overcoming. We are at this present moment in His kingdom, for we have been translated out of the power of darkness. Let us keep this fact well in mind, and trust in Him; and thus the power of darkness shall never come upon us. Always declare this position with faith and will. This is the best way to keep ourselves in that position.

5. *The victory of the Christians.* Christ is the Overcomer. We are in Christ; and being united with Him, we too are overcomers. We may overcome every day, for our Lord says to us: “Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: . . . the spirits are subject unto you” (Luke 10:19-20); “in my name shall they cast out demons” (Mark 16:17; see also Acts 16:18; 19:15). Outside of Christ we can do nothing. We need to abide in Him and do all things in His name. Satan then will always be defeated.

Three—The Wiles of the Tempter

Though Satan is most wileful, “we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11). What, then, will be the use of his trickery? Unfortunately, though we know his cunning, we are often not watchful. In Christ we should discern all things through depending on the Holy Spirit. If so, we shall be able to detect all the maneuvers of Satan, and by the Lord’s power we shall make them ineffective.

1. *His artifice against the unsaved.* A certain class of unsaved people love to hear the word of God, but Satan steals the word away. It is written in the Scriptures: “those by the way side are they that have heard; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved” (Luke 8:12). What the Devil is afraid of is God’s word, not a dissertation on the word. In our preaching let us be careful not to speak carelessly lest we lose the power of God. Whenever the Devil sees the word of God he will try to take it away. The minds of the unsaved, the uninterested, and of even those who are on the verge of believing have been blinded by the Devil: “in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them” (2 Corinthians 4:4). We ought to pray that the minds of the unsaved would be opened to receive the word of the Lord, and that it might grow and bear fruit.

2. *His stratagem against the saved.* (a) *He causes them to have incomplete consecration* (Acts 5:3). God is a jealous God. He demands full consecration, loving Him with all our hearts, all our minds, all our strength and all our soul. He wants us to be so selfless that we would not retain any part of our offering for self-consumption. Satan, however, is most afraid of our *total* consecration, for in so doing he will lose his working field. “Why hath Satan filled the heart . . . to keep back part of the price of the land?” (Acts 5:3) Satan had filled the hearts of this couple (Ananias and Sapphira) in that they kept back a part for their own use and yet claimed publicly they had offered all. How many are the believers today who know they should offer, and yet they consider the price too high; so they cheat themselves as well as others by keeping back a part for themselves and offering the rest to God in pretence of a total offering. Do they know how Satan has filled their hearts? Let each reader ask himself if he has fully consecrated.

(b) *He hinders them from taking off the filthy garments* (Zechariah 3:1-3). When in Jesus’ famous parable the prodigal son comes home, his father puts the best robe on him. The son will never wear his beggarly clothes in his father’s house. Clothes represent righteousness. Satan is afraid of man removing his old righteousness. So he frequently entices man to establish a righteousness other than the righteousness of God (see Romans 10:3). We ought to put on the Lord Jesus as our righteousness and get rid of that self-made righteousness of service and sacrifice as advocated by today’s moralists. “Satan standing at his (the high priest Joshua’s) right hand to be his adversary . . . Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments” (Zechariah 3:1, 3). Satan would not have us taking off that which naturally belongs to us. Although believers have already been saved by trusting in the Lord Jesus as their righteousness, they are often deceived into retaining all their natural

righteousness. Their old garments were naturally filthy, yet these are still their garments. Their own righteousnesses were filthy, but still are recognized as righteousness. So that Satan causes them to do good in their own power, stirring up their original righteous deeds in order to please God and obtain men's praise. Do they not know that their old garments are as filthy rags before God? Our natural righteousnesses are totally unacceptable to Him. Nonetheless, Satan wants us to use our soul power to execute the will of the spirit. Let us therefore be very careful.

(c) *He drives believers to work with fleshly envy and strife* (James 3:14-15). Satan is not willing to see Christians being united in one. If he finds two believers in agreement, he will try to split them apart. If he discovers three disciples in unity, he will break up their harmony. If he learns of more being together, he will smash their oneness. He will sow jealousy and strife in the hearts of the believers so that they will refuse to work together. This happens in spiritual works as well as in secular works. Believers are deceived into musings like this: "You are stronger spiritually than I am; you are more appreciated in preaching than I am; your interpretation of doctrine is different from mine." All these create envy and strife. How poisonous are such strifes in the hearts of men. And how dangerous they are, for they are not easily detected in appearance.

(d) *He hinders believers from the cross by means of other people*: "Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matthew 16:22-23). The defeat of Satan is at the cross, therefore he is most fearful of people going to the cross and obtaining the victory of Calvary. Here he was bold enough to tempt the Lord Jesus, enticing the latter to mind the things of men instead of His minding those of God. The Devil is skillful in manipulating human affection, causing people to depart from the way of the cross by judging it to be too difficult, too painful. To walk in it indicates a lack of self-preservation. But to mind the things of men automatically shuts off the minding of the things of God. Irrespective of self-pity or considering others, God's will shall suffer. When "I" is in ascendancy, Satan can easily put what is his into it. Self-love, self-esteem, self-pity—these all travel in the opposite direction from the cross. Human consideration, sympathy, fear and compromise—these, too, run opposite to Calvary. Inability to deny self and human affection is the method Satan uses to stop men from going to the cross. Satan trembles at seeing people crucified and resurrected (see Matthew 16:21). Consequently, he tries his best to block them from the cross. But the Lord has appointed for us no other way except the cross (1 Thessalonians 3:3). What way are you taking today? How very sad that nowadays many Christians see the cross and by-pass it because they are not willing to be crucified. The affliction may be avoided and self may enjoy peace, but the will of God is missed. With real death, there comes real resurrection. There, Satan has no foothold. This he hates most. Since Satan is afraid of our going to the cross and dying and being resurrected, we must all the more die to self and be resurrected from the dead by faith in the Lord.

(e) *He threatens as a roaring lion* (1 Peter 5:8). Satan not only entices in secret, he even dares to seek the careless and unwatchful to devour. Satan threatened Martin Luther with a scroll on which was written all of his sins, tempting him to doubt his salvation; but he overcame by the grace of the Lord. We realize how Satan frequently threatens and devours at the time of our weakness. This is truly one of his master tactics. His plot is to intimidate people. As a lion roars to cow and devour, Satan in like manner threatens believers so that they may be defeated through fear. How often all he does is merely threaten and nothing else. Those who are not intimidated recognize its vanity. Those who accept his threatening will encounter what is threatened. Are we not frequently faced with false alarms? Why should we be afraid of him?

(f) *He causes pride*: “Lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Timothy 3:6). Many Christians profess well in their spiritual life, and they are also fruitful in their service. Then, Satan seeks opportunity to work by causing them to be puffed up and fall. We have often witnessed great spiritual warriors and revivalists fall because of this sin. For this is the frequently-used device of Satan. He deceives man into counting the grace of God as his own. When grace begins to work in man’s heart, Satan causes him to develop self-esteem, the man thinking that he now is different from ordinary people. He considers himself to be a wonder. Satan wants man to be puffed up since this is the Tempter’s own nature.

(g) *He stirs people to do things beyond God’s will*: “Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel” (1 Chronicles 21:1). God had not commanded David to number the people of Israel. It was Satan who moved David to do this thing that was beyond God’s will because he loves to have men suffer the wrath of God along with him. He will either hinder man from advancing, or push him too far. Today Christians are so careless as to deem all movings as being those of the Holy Spirit, not realizing that Satan can also move people. To number the children of Israel and of Judah cannot be counted as constituting a grievous sin, yet it was outside of God’s will. So that Satan’s instigation proved to be successful. Due to the lack of spiritual discernment, believers sometimes are moved to do a thing which, because it does not appear to be bad in itself, they judge themselves to have been moved to do by the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, we should not look at things on the basis of their being good or bad in order to determine the source of inspiration. We should only decide by judging whether or not such things are the will of God. For outside of God’s will there certainly do exist *many* good things!

(h) *He beguiles people to disbelieve in God’s word* (Genesis 3:1). In Genesis 2:17 God had explicitly ordered man not to eat the fruit of the tree of good and evil; but the Devil suggested: “Hath God said?” The entire Bible is the word of God which is effective in attacking Satan. This is why the Tempter is so afraid of it that he beguiles people to doubt that the Bible is indeed the word of God. What is surprising is that the majority of people who doubt the Bible are so-called believers and not those who are total strangers to the Christian faith. The Devil first entices men to doubt God’s word, then to believe in the Devil’s word, thus causing men to fall into sin (see Genesis 3). Such work has not yet ended from the time of the garden of Eden even up to this present day.

(i) *He oppresses people with sickness* (Acts 10:38). How very many are the wiles of the Devil. If he cannot stir people into rebellion in their spirit, he will attack them in their body. He will oppress them with sickness so that they cannot enjoy the blessing of resurrection life. Due to discomfort in body, believers are able to be weakened in steadfastness and watchfulness in the spirit. We frequently see how workers who are active in the work of Christ easily fall into sickness. This is because the Devil wishes them ill so that they will cease to do the Lord’s work.

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