

The Malice of Devils

The Bible speaks of the Christian's warfare when it says, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spirit hosts of wickedness in high places." One of the most fascinating and frightful truths of the Bible, is its teaching concerning the presence and power of the devil. And to make it even more frightful, the Bible says the devil has a great host of helpers, called demons. These evil spirits compose an entire kingdom of spirit-beings, that are governed and controlled by Satan himself.

Devils work in opposition to God; they oppose the message of the Gospel; they do their evil work by invading the hearts of men, and sometimes they have even invaded the courts of heaven. When God created the being who is now the devil, he was known as Lucifer (the shining one). He was the most magnificent creature ever created by the Creator; he was a beautiful angel; he was the climax of God's creative wisdom. But Lucifer was not satisfied with his subordination to God, and so he tried to make himself not only equal with God, but even as one above God. As a result, he was expelled from heaven (Jesus says, "I saw Lucifer fall from heaven"). Lucifer was not alone in his sin and rebellion against God. Many of the other angels likewise rebelled against God. Some of these angels were cast down to hell (2 Peter 2:4); others are permitted to work their evil designs here on earth, until some later judgment.

Most of us may never fully realize the power of this evil satanic kingdom, but one thing sure, the devil does have a kingdom, and under his direction, untold millions of demons are constantly in operation. And as the second coming of Christ draws closer, demon activity will once again be on the increase. Attacks upon the Church, and upon God's Word, and upon God's people will become more intense. Revelation 9 tells about frightful creatures who (during the Great Tribulation) will come up out of the pit, and consume a third part of the earth's population—but verse 20 says that even in spite of all this, men will still not turn from the worship of devils. This is a clear indication that devil-worship will be a common practice during the last days of this age.

1. The Existence of Devils

Many folks in this age of science and progress dismiss the whole teaching of a personal devil and his host of evil angels, as a superstition. They say that belief in devils is merely a superstition carried over from the Dark Ages; they treat the whole matter as an amusing joke; they say that educated, civilized people in our day simply do not believe in devils. But the Bible most emphatically declares that devils actually exist, and that they are very real beings. Moses says of idolatrous Israel (in Deuteronomy 32:17), "They sacrificed unto devils, not to God." The Apostle James says, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble." Luke says, "And in the synagogue, there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil" (Luke 4:33). In fact, the Gospels alone contain more than seventy references to demon activity and to the work of unclean spirits.

Jesus believed in the reality of devils. He commanded the disciples to cast them out (Matthew 10:1); He rebuked them (Mark 5:8); He had complete power over them (Matthew 12:29); He tells of their final doom (Matthew 25:41). Jesus said, "Then shall he say unto them on the left, 'Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'" No honest mind can read the Bible without coming to the conclusion that great hosts of devils actually exist. The very atmosphere through which we move is literally filled with fallen spirit beings who are bitterly engaged in opposing God and His people. Shakespeare was right when he said, "There are still beings between heaven and earth, which this world has never dreamed of."

2. The Nature of Devils

Devils have become the source of much wild superstition because their nature is widely misunderstood.

Devils are created spirit beings. The Bible uses the phrase "unclean spirits" interchangeably with the word "devils." Luke tells how the disciples came back from the mission on which Jesus had sent them, and they said, "Even the devils are subject unto us." Jesus replied, "In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you." You see, Jesus called the devils, "spirits." And Jesus explained one time that spirit-beings do not have physical bodies, but they do have personality and intelligence. Jesus carried on conversations with devils; they know that Jesus is the Son of God; they tremble in His presence; they can discriminate between men here on earth. One time when Paul was casting out devils, the seven sons of Sceva tried to do the same thing. But when they tried it, the demon spoke out and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?" Read about it in Acts 19. Devils have intelligence and can discriminate between men on earth, and yet they are limited and finite. The devil, for example, can only be at one place at any given time (he is not omnipresent), but still his activities can be felt throughout the entire earth because he has such a vast host of dreadful beings working with him. And these evil spirits are constantly standing ready to do the bidding of their wicked master.

Devils are unclean vicious beings. Devils by their very nature are wicked creatures. Their desire is to harm others. The Bible describes a man possessed of devils by saying that he had "his dwelling among the tombs, and no man could bind him, no not with chains . . . and night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones" (Mark 5:3,5). This poor wretched man was possessed with six thousand devils. He lived in the tombs; he wouldn't stay in a house; he cut himself with stones; he couldn't be bound with chains.

Devils are sometimes called "unclean" spirits. They operate in darkness; they plague human bodies; they instigate the practice of witchcraft and necromancy. Missionaries say that it's common practice among witches and wizards (in uncivilized countries) to rob the graves of small children and use their bones to make magic salves. They commonly use toads and serpents and other reptiles as channels for their wicked arts. And these mediums that claim to talk with the dead (practice necromancy) may seem to have some strange mystical power, but it is not because they are in

touch with the dead; it is because they are controlled by wicked unclean devils. That's why Moses (time and time again) warned Israel against the practice of magic and divination and prognostication and necromancy. These things are connected with the work of devils. Never tamper with the fortune teller, the astrologer, the stargazer, and that sort of person. Stay away from seances, and Ouija boards, and spiritualism. One lady appeared at a police station a few years ago and stated that she had just shot her son to death. An astrologer (one who prophesies human character and fate from the constellations of the stars) had told her that her son who had been sick would never regain his mental strength —and so to save him from a terrible future, she took a rifle and shot him to death. And yet 170 newspapers here in America carry the daily astrologer's horoscope. The Bible says, "There shall not be found among you anyone . . . that useth divination, or an observer of the times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a necromancer, for all that do these things are an abomination to the Lord" (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). Steer clear of witch doctors, palm readers, fortune tellers, pow-wow doctors, etc. If you have some problem that calls for healing, do like the New Testament says, call for the elders of the church and let them pray over you, anointing you with oil.

Devils may influence and even inhabit the bodies of men. There is a difference between demon influence and demon possession. Demon influence means that devils tempt and suggest and allure and persuade from without; demon possession means that devils not only allure from without, but they actually invade the mind and inhabit the body, and hold the individual under their control. Just as Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and are under His control, and act in obedience to Him—so it is possible for men to be indwelt by evil spirits, and to come under their control, and act in obedience to them. Adolf Hitler, for example, showed definite marks of demon possession. A survey of Hitler's life was made under the direction of the British government, and nearly all the writers speak of him as a devil-possessed man. He had an awful lust for blood; he rejoiced in bloodshed and destruction; his eyes seemed to cast a spell over people; way back in 1934 he said, "If I can send the German nation into the hell of war, even if we can't conquer, we will drag half the world into destruction with us."

A missionary to Mexico tells about a young man of seventeen who was demon possessed. He says that when these demon attacks came upon Fernando, they usually came about dusk and lasted well on toward midnight. The young man would see all sorts of black ugly animals coming toward him, and then he would completely lose his own personality for a period of several hours. On one occasion, when the missionary and several other believers had gone to visit in his home, he suddenly had a faraway look in his eyes, and he began to speak. He spoke in an abnormal voice, and said to his visitors, "Why have you come to disturb my peace?" The presence of these men of God made the devils tremble, you see. And then this demon-possessed man threatened the missionary, saying he would be disturbed at three o'clock the next morning. The missionary says that at three in the morning, both he and his wife suddenly sat up in bed, apparently scared for no reason at all. He says, "We heard weird sounds like an owl hooting outside our window. There was a noise like a snake hissing. The house creaked and cracked." He says, "In the name of Jesus, we begged God to

dispel the demons, and after a while the noises ceased.” I am simply saying that devils do have power, and that if the Holy Spirit can enter into and take possession of the hearts of those who choose the way of salvation, why should it be impossible for devils to enter into, and take possession of the minds of those who yield themselves as slaves to these wicked spirits?

3. The Activity of Devils

Beware of thinking that demon activity is merely something that happened many years ago and only in far away places. Demon activity is a dreadful reality today.

Devils subject men to temptation. These wicked spirits will do anything, anytime, anywhere, to carry out their program of opposition to God’s plan for your life. Just as the serpent beguiled Eve, so these devils would like to bring defeat into the life of every Christian. Paul says, “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3). Many times I have heard folks say concerning some sin they had committed, “I just couldn’t help it; it seemed like something just took hold of me.” Have you ever been conscious of a personality that was driving you to sin? You were driven into the thing, even though in your heart you didn’t really want to do it. Have you ever found that there were times when it was difficult to pray? Remember that the very atmosphere about us is infested with devils who are doing their level best to ruin our testimony, and to drag our souls down to Hell. Devils have energized every rotten deed that has ever been committed by every fallen soul that has ever walked on the face of this earth. Their ultimate aim is to mar you and scar you; to disfigure the image of God in you; to saturate you with filth and moral rot; to wrap you in darkness; and to lock you forever in that place where there’s only weeping and gnashing of teeth. It is the devil that entices us to do wrong. He’s the one that inflames the passions and stirs the appetites and awakens old habits. If we would only recognize that the evil temptations we get from time to time are coming from a real personal devil, we’d do more to resist his onslaughts.

Devils inflict infirmities of the body and the mind. They can cause dumbness (Matthew 9:32), blindness (Matthew 12:22), insanity (Luke 8:26), suicide (Mark 9:22), and physical deformity (Luke 13:11). I am not implying that all blindness and all insanity and all suicides, are the result of demon possession—but sometimes they are. The Gospels distinguish between sickness resulting from natural causes, and sickness caused by demon activity, but devils can cause sickness. Certainly the destruction of Job’s house and of his flocks, and the boils that tortured his body were caused by Satan. The “thorn” which tormented Paul was some kind of physical ailment, and the Bible says that this was a “messenger of Satan” (2 Corinthians 12:7).

Devils also attack the mind. Much mental difficulty is brought on by the activity of devils. Who is it that stirs men to corruption, and goads them into adultery, and feeds them with iniquity? What about the hideous sex crimes—the brutal raping of little five-year old girls, and the tortuous murder of husbands and wives? The answer is simply, devils. There are men and women who walk the

streets and lanes of our cities today, who are just as full of devils as that poor man who lived among the tombs.

Devils exercise authority in the political world. A careful study of the tenth chapter of Daniel reveals that Satan has a mighty prince over the nations of earth, and that these evil spirits are largely responsible for the turmoil within world governments. Satan's evil design is to take full possession of the earth for himself, to banish God's name from the globe, and to defeat God's plan for setting up His millennial kingdom. World leaders are not entirely free to do as they please; evil spirits constantly seek to control men in places of authority. These wicked spirits (such as those which prompted the Supreme Court to dispense with directed Bible reading in the public schools) will croak and defile until they stir up the nations of earth to undertake an insane march against Palestine. This will be Satan's final effort to crush the establishment of God's kingdom on earth, and in that last great battle (Armageddon), God will put an end to political turmoil.

Devils deceive men by promoting false teaching. One of the primary objectives of demons is to deceive men and to lead them astray. They constantly distort the truth and promote evil doctrines. The Bible says, "In the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." (1 Timothy 4:1). The great heresies within the church today are doctrines promoted by devils. The teaching that **a priest** can forgive sins; that a man can **earn** eternal life by his own good deeds; that there is no place of eternal punishment—these are doctrines of devils. Preachers that come into a congregation that was built up by faithful saints of the Lord—and tear out the altar and junk the revival meetings, and build a soup kitchen in the basement—these men are led by seducing spirits. The false teachers of our day are often very pleasant, cultured, and highly educated men—yet they are influenced by devils.

4. The Victory Over Demons

Satan and his angels are active today, but the time is soon coming when they are going to be eliminated from the scene. One of these days God will take hold of that old serpent the devil and bind him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him forever! And the Bible says he will be able to deceive the nations no more. "And the devil that deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone . . . and shall be tormented day and night forever."

Devils know that their days are numbered. When Jesus approached the man of Gadara, the demons said to Him, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" And because they know that their doom is certain, they are doing their level best to hinder our salvation and to drag our souls down into the pit with them.

What shall we do? What is our resource against this enemy of our souls? How can we be victorious over his onslaughts? The answer is given in the Bible. It is a two-fold answer: James says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God." And again, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." **We must**

submit to God. John says of the believer, “Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.” The devil is a supernatural being and it takes a supernatural power to overcome him. **We must also resist the devil.** This requires using the armor that God has provided. Our loins must be girt about with truth; we must put on the breastplate of righteousness; we need the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

The Word of God was the weapon Jesus used when He was tempted of the devil. Each time the devil tempted Him, He quoted a portion of Scripture. He said, “It is written.” He could have summoned ten thousand angels; He could have displayed His own divine power; but instead, He used the same weapon that’s available to every one of us—the Word of God. Let each Christian put forth an increased effort to study the Scriptures! Memorize the Bible. Help your children to memorize it. In this way we will have a scriptural dart to pour down the devil’s throat every time he comes our way with a temptation.

To those out of Christ, let me remind you that these wicked spirits are determined to seal your damnation. They’ll do everything possible to keep you from getting saved. Jesus Christ is the only one who can deliver you. The only way you can ever come out from under the grip of Satan, is to surrender your life to Jesus. The devil will say, “Not now; sometime later.” God says, “Behold now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.”

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