

"RESIST, STEDFAST IN THE FAITH."

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your Adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, stedfast in the faith." – 1 Pet. 5:8,9.

THE SCRIPTURES set before us the thought that as Christians we are subject to assaults from three different quarters, by three different enemies, who, nevertheless, frequently cooperate the one with the other; – the world, the flesh and the devil. We are not to suppose that every difficulty and trial which besets us is of the devil; but rather to remember the Apostle's words, "A man is tempted when he is led astray of his own desires and enticed." (James 1:13,14.) Such temptations, then, are of the flesh – the result of our being members of the fallen race, whose weaknesses and imperfections have been aggravated and intensified for now six thousand years. So, then, we are to recognize as one of our chief foes our own inherent weaknesses and predisposition to things depraved, selfish, sinful.

The whole world, thus depraved and under the control of the spirit of selfishness, is largely, tho unconsciously, the tool of Satan, who now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience. (Eph. 2:2.) The world has become an enemy and tempter by reason of the fact that we (the Church) have been "begotten again" to *new* hopes, *new* ambitions, *new* aspirations, *new* desires, which are along radically different lines from any the world knows or has sympathy with. Our begetting is of the holy spirit, and its tendencies are heavenly and spiritual, and in harmony with principles of righteousness, truth and love. Yet it is only our hearts that are thus changed – our flesh is still much more in harmony with the world than with the new order of things

established in our hearts and wills by grace and truth, through Christ. Consequently, when the world, through any of its children, by their words or writings or general spirit, comes in contact with the Lord's people, immediately they find that altho their hearts are loyal to the Lord and loyal to all the gracious things which he has promised them, and to the spirit of righteousness, love and truth, nevertheless their flesh has an affinity for and an attraction toward the world, its things, its views, its arguments, its pleasures, etc.

It is for this reason that the Christian is called upon to reckon himself dead, not only to sin, but to his own natural desires, appetites, inclinations, and to the world, which is in harmony with sin and perverted tastes and appetites. As the Apostle intimates, there is a constant battle between the new creature, the new will, and the old creature, the fleshly or depraved disposition. He says, "The flesh desires *contrary* to the spirit, and the spirit *contrary* to the flesh." (Gal. 5:17.) And even tho the advanced Christian has reached the place where he is enabled to reckon his flesh and its will completely dead and buried, he nevertheless has need continually, with the Apostle, to reexamine the matter, lest the flesh should become alive again. This was the Apostle's method; he says: **[R2769 : page 71]** "I keep my body under [dead, buried, in complete subjection to the new mind], lest having preached to others I myself should be a castaway." (1 Cor. 9:27.) This keeping of the body under, this watching of it lest its will become alive again, is a constant necessity to those who would be "overcomers;" for it is the victory of the new mind, the new will, over the old will, the will of the flesh, that constitutes us victors, by developing in us strong, holy characters.

And now we come to the third feature of the Christian's temptations – Satan, our Adversary; strong and lion-like, vigilant and fully awake, he seeks to use every opportunity against us, as

the Apostle declares. He seeks to devour us, to swallow us up in calamity, patiently waiting and insidiously laying snares for the "new creatures," using his many blinded servants to brow-beat or cajole or otherwise inveigle us into yielding to the old will; – thus separating us from the Good Shepherd and making us more and more deaf to his Word. Since our Lord sees best to permit Satan to have this liberty, and will not take it from him until the beginning of the Millennial age, when he shall be bound, to deceive the nations no more, it implies that in some sense it is profitable to the Lord's people that this Adversary be granted liberty against them. If it were not so, faith assures us that he would be bound forthwith, – at once restrained of liberty to assault us. **[R2770 : page 71]**

Writing on this same subject, the Apostle Paul declares, "We are not ignorant of his devices." Again he refers to the "wiles of the devil;" implying that he is an ensnarer who seeks to entrap us. Again he declares, "For we wrestle not with flesh and blood [merely], but [our chief conflict is] with principalities and powers [unseen], with wicked spirits in exalted positions." (2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11,12.) The Apostle here seems to call attention to the fact that not Satan alone, but all the fallen angels, the demons, his coadjutors, are the foes of the Church, against whose wiles and schemes and plottings, more subtle than that of human beings, the Lord's people must be continually on the lookout.

As to Satan's methods of attack, we are given some suggestions also. Altho he is alert, like the roaring lion, he never attacks us with a roar, but, on the contrary, subtly; he creeps upon us in an unlooked for place and at unlooked for times, to devour us, to overcome us, to crush out of us the spiritual life, and particularly to deprive us of faith in the Lord.

The Apostle Paul shows us that these subtle approaches of the Adversary are to be expected through human agencies, assuring us that the Adversary worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience, and the better and more honorable and more closely identified with the Lord and his flock these children of disobedience may be, the more pleased the Adversary will be to use them, and the more service they may render him. Thus the Apostle declares that Satan presents himself in his temptations as an angel, a messenger of God – not a messenger of darkness, of error and of gross sin, for he knows that these qualities would alarm and repel all the children of the light: rather he appears as an angel of light, a messenger of divine grace and truth. And we are not ignorant of his wiles and devices; we see that for centuries he has used not only heathen religious systems to delude and ensnare the heathen, but Christian religious systems, to deceive and ensnare God's people. At the making of the creeds of Christendom, during the dark ages, we may be sure that he was present, and that through various agencies he took an active part in framing their many blasphemous misstatements of the divine character and plan, and of deluding the people into thinking that these were the teachings of the divine Word; and so through these channels he has wrought great havoc with the truth and greatly hindered God's people from receiving both the milk of the Word, and its strong meat, and from growing by these means to the stature of the fulness of manhood in Christ.

We see again that after he could no longer control the world under Papacy and its darkness of error, when he perceived that the light of a clearer knowledge of divine things was breaking out here and there, he zealously presented himself as a messenger of light, to help on in the formation of the various sects and parties which then sprang up. How well he succeeded in getting into them all the leaven of false doctrine, and in getting each denomination, after having organized, to declare that it had the whole truth, and that *there must be no further progress* in

the knowledge of the Lord and in the understanding of his Word, all may judge.

Coming down to our own day, we see that as the light of truth became due, and when the minds of all thinking Christians were surely awakening from many of the superstitions and fallacies of the past, Satan again becomes the leader and reformer, and starting in with the principal colleges and theological seminaries, he leads them, professedly in a search for truth, into the gross darkness of skepticism, under the names of Higher Criticism and Evolution; and through these fountains of learning and instruction his influence is permeating Christendom through the ministry, in all denominations and in every quarter of the civilized world.

But, foreseeing that all minds would not be influenced along the same lines, our wily adversary has been leading other parties into other doctrines along **[R2770 : page 72]** other lines, all of which, however, have the Satan mark upon them; *viz.*, either a tacit or an active *denial of the Ransom* – a denial of the redemption accomplished once for all by the man Christ Jesus at Calvary, and a denial, consequently, of all the gracious things which the Scriptures declare respecting the establishment of Christ's Kingdom and the blessing of all the world of mankind with a knowledge of the truth, and with opportunities of restitution to Edenic conditions and harmony with God and everlasting love.

These various devices of the Adversary in recent times are well known. Mormonism is one of these that attracts and ensnares a certain class; Spiritualism is another which attracts and ensnares another class of minds; Christian Science is another, very distinctive and totally different from the others; Theosophy is still another that has its attractions for other minds. In testing all the "new light" theories let us not forget that the

Cross of Christ and the redemption thereby accomplished are the central point of antagonism between all these spurious theories, and the doctrine of the Scriptures. "The faith once delivered to the saints" has as its foundation, "how that *Christ died for our sins* and rose for our justification." However much Satan's various systems of delusion may differ from one another, they all agree in opposing this central point of the truth; and however they may seek to use the name of Christ, call themselves Christians, and seek to cover themselves with that "holy name" as a garment of light, it is only to deceive; it is in full accord with the policy which our great Adversary has employed for centuries.

One of the most recent of Satan's devices to ensnare those of God's people who could not be misled by something presenting itself as another religion and another gospel, is what claims to be a Christianity of good works and good morals without respect to faith in things past or future. The good works are usually presented in the form of healing of disease. The methods employed, and the claims set forth vary considerably, yet back of and underneath all is an occult power, a hypnotic power, which, however much it claims to be "merely human power," nevertheless gives evidence in various ways that it is a part of the great deception of our day, wrought by the Adversary himself as an angel of light, and respecting which the Scriptures forewarn us that there would be such strong delusions, which, if possible, would deceive the very elect. – Matt. 24:24.

If the very elect will be in danger, what must we expect respecting the world of mankind in general, and nominal Christianity? We must expect, as the Scriptures forcefully picture it, that many will "fall from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." We must expect the number thus to fall from the faith to be large, as again it is prophetically stated, "A thousand shall fall at thy side; ten

thousand at thy right hand – but it shall not come nigh thee,...because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation." – 1 Tim. 4:1; Psa. 91:7-9.

This gives us a clue to the security of the saints. Their strength will lie in great part in that they are *taking heed* to the warnings of the Apostle respecting the present time, and hence know how to beware of the wiles of the Adversary. The "very elect" will be so in harmony with the Lord and so filled with the spirit of his Word, and so blessed by the exercise of their privileges as under-reapers in this harvest, and so disposed to lay down their lives for the truth and in its service, that none of these snares and delusions of the Adversary, promising life and health, will be special attractions for them. On the contrary, knowing what to expect, and looking forward with joy to the finishing of their course in *death* and thus passing "beyond the veil," they will be wholly out of sympathy with the snares which the Adversary will present. Nevertheless, as the Apostle intimates, there will be in this time also some of the Lord's people who will require the sympathy and assistance of others, respecting whom he says that we should seek to pull them out of the fire, – away from the influence and snares of the Adversary. – Jude 22,23.

The Apostle Peter's counsel respecting the way in which the Lord's people should meet the Adversary implies that they will all somehow or other be enabled to recognize him. He says, "Whom resist, stedfast in the faith." These words imply that in order to resist we must have the faith – the faith that has confidence in God; the faith that has led to a consecration on the Lord's altar, even unto death; the faith that would not take back the sacrifice under any consideration, but which delights to see it consuming, and which rejoices, hoping thereby to share in the glory that shall follow. – Jude 3; Rom. 8:17,18.
