

Our Cunning Foe

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While our foe in the great spiritual warfare of life fully utilizes men and women who yield themselves to his service, our real battle is not with them, but with him who dominates their thinking and their behavior. The Bible identifies this archenemy of Christ and His people as “the devil” (Eph. 6:11) and “Satan” (Mat. 16:23; 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; et al.). *Satan* means “adversary,” “accuser,” or “enemy” and he is indeed such to all who are striving to serve the Christ. Paul described him as “the prince of the powers of the air” (Eph. 2:2), even as he described his agents against whom we wage war as “principalities,” “powers,” “the world-rulers of this darkness,” and “the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

The Lord twice called Satan the “prince of this world” (John 14:30; 16:11). He almost completely leads, influences, and dominates the world. It is in this world that the Lord's soldiers fight the spiritual battles with men and their institutions under Satan's control, even as we receive our orders from the Lord Jesus. Thus our real warfare is in the “background” with Satan’s emissaries serving their invisible reprobate prince in the spirit realm. He is described as one who inhabits and pervades the very atmosphere of our earth. Let none think he is not an actual person just because he is a spirit being. God presently allows him to live in “the air,” but he will eventually be brought down to his final eternal abode of Hell, the lake that burns with fire and brimstone,” prepared for him, his angels, and all of his servants (Mat. 3:11; 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

We are warned about the “wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). *Wiles* is from a word meaning “a deliberate planning or system.” The devil is crafty, subtle, and deliberate in strategically seeking out our most vulnerable points. He is a master of deception and subterfuge. Jesus called him “a liar and the father thereof” (John 8:44). Although his end is certain, he stalks his prey, lurks in the shadows, and awaits his opportunity to devour whomever he may (1 Pet. 5:8). We must not be ignorant of his devices lest he gain an advantage over us (2 Cor. 2:11). He cleverly lays his snares that he may bring men into the captivity of his will (2 Tim. 2:26). He constantly seeks a weakness that he may tempt us (1 Cor. 7:5). His deceptive powers are so formidable that he at times can pass himself off as “an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14). It is plain from the foregoing that he not only engages in open combat, but that he excels in guerrilla and espionage tactics.

It should be evident from the Scriptural descriptions noted above that we need strength and power beyond that of mere human ingenuity to wage war with this horrible and formidable enemy. The Lord has graciously provided us with adequate armament and weaponry (Eph. 6:10-18). It is up to us to utilize these tools through daily Bible study, prayer, and self-discipline. We make a costly, yea fatal, mistake if we underestimate Satan and try to fight him in our own strength alone. Those who do so will find themselves helpless before him.

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