

## 824 *"What Is the Devil Doing Today?"*

*Phil Sanders*

### *God's Answers to Life's Questions*

Most folks today do not know whether there is a devil or not, but the Bible clearly teaches there is such a person and that he causes trouble for those who love the Lord Jesus. Peter warns us in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls about seeking someone to devour." The Bible says in James 4:7-8, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." We should know Satan is a cunning adversary (2 Corinthians 11:14) and "masquerades as an angel of light." We are encouraged not to give place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27). Fortunately, according to the Bible, God gives us a way of escape so we may escape his strategies to take away our souls (1 Cor. 10:13). It helps knowing a little bit about how the devil works.

If I were the devil, I would dumb down the next generation of the church. I would make sure that they would not know much about God or about what the Bible teaches. You see, I know that if they do not know the Bible, they will fall for all kinds of errors. You'll remember what the Lord said through the prophet Hosea in chapter four and verse six: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children." When people do not know God, the whole society suffers for it.

You can see it in our country today that many people live like they never heard of Jesus Christ. Some people only speak of God or Christ when in swear words or to take the Name in vain. These people live ungodly lives full of immorality and selfishness. They see almost nothing as sinful. They live their lives for the moment and for their own pleasure with little thought to the consequences of their choices. Then they wonder why their children are so irresponsible, why their children end up with hard lives and little love for their parents. My friend, when you forget God day after day, how can you expect your children to learn about God or to love Him?

When people quit reading their Bibles and quit going to church, the world becomes their teacher. The world teaches lessons that lead to error and yields a life without a foundation of love and integrity. Recent polls of the American people show that people are moving more and more away from the teaching of Scripture. For instance, in 44 percent of Americans believe that all people will experience the same outcome after death, regardless of their religious beliefs. That sounds loving and tolerant, but the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." Just because someone is religious does not mean he'll go to heaven. The Lord does not accept everyone. One must do the will of the Father, according to Jesus. Surveys show that 55 percent of Americans believe that if a person is good or does enough good things for others during his life, he will earn a place in heaven. However, no one can earn a way into heaven. If anyone is saved at all, he is saved by God's grace. Surveys show that 61 percent of Americans say the Holy Spirit is not a living entity but just a symbol of God's power or presence. But the Bible everywhere speaks of the Holy Spirit as a person who knows the hearts of men and feels and speaks. The Holy Spirit is indeed a real person and is Divine just like the God the Father and Jesus His Son. More than four out of five Americans say that "God helps those who help themselves" is a direct quote from the Bible. But you read the Bible from cover to cover and never find that sentence.

Surveys show that 55 percent of Americans disagree that people who do not consciously accept Jesus Christ will be condemned to hell. But the Lord Jesus said in John 8:24, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." Jesus is not just another moral teacher or prophet. He is the one and only begotten Son of God, and unless we believe in Him as the Christ, the Son of God, we will die in our sins and not be able to go to heaven.

Twenty-three percent of Americans say that after death, some people will be reincarnated in another life form; but the Bible teaches in Hebrews 9:27, "it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." There is no second chance. God gives us this one life to live and demonstrate our faith and commitment to Him. If we live this life like we don't know God, we must face the judgment. There is no returning to this earth after we die; this is a fantasy. When death takes us we must stand before God to be judged for our behavior.

One out of every five Americans says the Bible is simply a religious book written by human beings. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Bible is inspired, God-breathed. The Bible has been proven to be true again and again. Only God could have said many of the things the Bible teaches. For instance, the sanitation laws found in the book of Leviticus reveal basic laws of cleanliness that are thousands of years before man came to understand about germs and the way disease is transmitted from one to another. God loved his people and revealed the way for Israel to protect itself from passing diseases.

There was a time when the Bible had a profound affect on this country. Today God's voice has been silenced in our schools and state universities, much to the harm of this country. Only 15 percent of Americans cite the Bible as the dominant influence on their thinking about truth and morals. Many people will listen to talk show hosts and advice columns in the newspaper to decide right and wrong before they listen to the Bible. But talk show hosts and columnists are just people, and they are fallible and imperfect. The Bible, on the other hand, is Divine and perfectly true. Doesn't it make sense to go to God's book to learn what is true and what is right?

If I were the devil, I would plant doubt in the place of faith. We all need faith in God. People who have strong faith in Jesus Christ speak their conviction in positive and strong terms. The devil would love nothing more than to destroy our faith in Christ. The Bible teaches us what faith is in Heb. 11:1-3: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible." Faith assures us that what we hope for is true; we are convicted that what God says is utterly trustworthy.

The Bible is full of statements of faith in God and His promises. Here are some Scriptures that reassure my faith: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good..." (Romans 8:28). "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands..." (2 Corinthians 5:1). "For I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). "and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).

Such speech encourages my heart to have greater confidence and trust in whatever God says in His Word, the Bible. You can trust your Bible to tell you the truth. Think faith. Speak faith, not doubt. Speak confidence, not fear. Speak hope, not despair. Speak to eternity, not simply to the "here-and-now." Speak with conviction, and do not be afraid of "absolutes." God is, after all, absolutely good, true, and loving. Speak faith. Trust God.

The first thing the devil seeks to do is to create doubt in what you believe. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:1-2, "Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God." The devil would love nothing more than to tamper with God's word just enough to make it say what he wants it to say. The devil wants to deceive you by trashing God's will and giving you his version of the truth.

Satan loves, first, to ask a question that makes you doubt what God says or what God commands in the Bible. He doesn't want you to believe the truth. So, second, it should not surprise us that Satan will eventually contradict what God says. He will, third, make you feel that God has cheated you and not told you how things really are. According to the devil, God is trying to hold you down and keep you from being happy. The truth is that the devil is the one who wants to enslave you with sin and steal your soul. So the devil, fourth, loves to produce an "alternate" truth or an "alternate" lifestyle. He will do everything he can to keep you and me from following God's will.

And last, the devil will put down and persecute anyone who disagrees with his ungodly alternates. If you want to know what "hateful" really is, just cross the devil. The devil is hateful toward anyone who doesn't agree with him. The Lord Jesus said, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." The world hates Christians and the will of God, because the Bible shows the error of their ungodly and worldly ways. While true Christians call to the world out of love to repent of sin, the world responds with scorn and persecution. Our country today punishes anyone brave to call sin "sin." But if we are faithful to God, we must still take notice of the consequences of sin.

If I were the devil, I would want you to be godless. I'd want you to live like God doesn't matter. Psalm 14:1 says that the fool says in his heart there is no God. This "fool" is not so much an atheist as he is someone who just ignores or dismisses God. He lives like there is no teaching from God about right or wrong and never takes into account that he must face God in the judgment. The devil knows that one day we'll have to give an account for our deeds, what we have done in our bodies whether good or bad. If he can convince us that God does not matter, then he knows we will behave that way. He knows that if we dismiss the morals of God, we'll be lost eternally. My friend, that the devil's goal. He wants you to lose your soul.

Jesus never excused away sin; He never covered it up. He never lied about where sinful behavior came from in order to allow people to escape responsibility for it. He loved the sinner but condemned the sin and called for people to repent. In fact, more than anything Jesus and his disciples preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He did not leave people where He found them. He told the woman caught in adultery, "Go, and sin no more." Let's never think that Jesus simply ignored the evil of sin. He hated sin so much that He was willing to die to remove the consequences of it from the people He loved. He died for our sins, so that we could be freed from the enslavement of sin. He helped each of us live higher and nobler lives. Aren't you thankful that Jesus cared so much for us?

If I were the devil, I would hide the broken lives and destroyed homes and show you the pleasures of sin. I'd make sinful behavior "fashionable" and "acceptable." I'd tell you how good you'd feel, how free you'd be, how good you'll look in front of your friends. I'd make you think that all this fun will last forever. Of course, I'd be lying. The devil, after all, is a liar and the father of lies. I'd want you to stay deceived, so I'll make promises to you that sound great but don't last. In getting you to sin I'd remind you that "times have changed" and people don't think the sinful things you're doing are so bad anymore. I'd make every excuse possible to keep you doing what I know will cost you your soul.

If I were the devil, there is one last thing I would do. I'd tell you that you had plenty of time and can make your changes later. You see, the devil knows that if you put off repentance, it will be harder to change later on. The devil will do anything to keep you from leaving the way of sin and coming to the way of Jesus Christ. The main preaching of Jesus and his disciples was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Jesus never condoned or overlooked sin. He hated it so much that he was willing to go to the cross in order to forgive you and me of our sins. Can you imagine how he suffered when he was crucified? What would make a person go to such lengths? Jesus didn't simply dislike sin or wish sin away. He died on the cross to forgive us our sins and to free us from our slavery to sin. He wanted to stop sin altogether.

The blood of Jesus is applied to our souls when we are willing to put our trust in Him, repent of our sins, confess His name before others, and be baptized into Christ. Baptism is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of our sins. It is not optional. The devil would like you to believe you don't have to be baptized, but Jesus said in John 3:5, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." My friend, you can't be saved, unless you are born of water and the Spirit, and that take place in baptism. Won't you be baptized today? Won't you give your life to the Lord in obedience to the gospel?

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