

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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The Lord's Prayer: The Sixth Petition (Part II)

The Great German reformer Martin Luther said he feared his own deceitful heart more than the pope and cardinals who were out to get him. Likewise the esteemed church father Augustine prayed, "LIBERA ME, DOMINE, A MEIPSO," or, "Lord, deliver me from myself." Along similar lines was the advice he gave to his students, "CAVEAS TEIPSUM" Or "Beware of yourself." The old Puritan divine Thomas Watson wrote, "Beware of the bosom traitor, the flesh. The heart of a man is the Trojan horse, out of which comes a whole army of lusts."¹ Thomas Brooks, another of the Puritan giants, penned these words of wisdom, "Christ, the Scripture, your own heart, and Satan's devices, are the four prime things that should be first and most studied and searched. If any cast off the study of these, they cannot be safe here, nor happy hereafter. It is my work as a Christian, but much more as I am a Watchman, to do my best to discover the fullness of Christ, the emptiness of the creature, and the snares of the great deceiver; which I have from the Lord."² The word "Satan" means "The Adversary," a title given the Devil that describes his general activity in the universe since he fell, and in particular, his relationship to the godly seed of the woman (cf. 1 Peter 5:8: "Your opponent [adversary] the devil..."). Spurgeon once said, "There is something very comforting in the thought that the devil is an adversary...I would sooner have him as an adversary than as a friend."³ The ESV and many other translations render the phrase in the Lord's Prayer, "deliver us from evil," while the NIV reads, "deliver us from the evil one." The word "evil" is PONEROUS. Because this is in the ablative case, the gender could be masculine (thus, the rendering "evil one") or neuter (simply the generic "evil"). "However", as D.A. Carson points out, "a reference to Satan is far more likely here for two reasons: (1) 'deliver us' can take either the preposition *ek* (from) or *apo* (from), the former always introducing things from which to be delivered, the latter being used predominantly of persons, and (2) Matthew's first mention of temptation (4:1-11) is unambiguously connected with the Devil. Thus, the Lord's model prayer ends with a petition that, while implicitly recognizing our own helplessness before the Devil whom Jesus alone could vanquish (4:1-11), delights to trust the heavenly Father for deliverance from the Devil's strength and wiles."⁴ The word "Satan" describes the Adversary who is the prosecuting counsel against men; the word Devil, DIABOLOS, describes the one who is *par excellence*, the slanderer. And the two ideas are not so very different, because it is not so very far a cry from stating the case against a man to fabricating a case against a man.⁵

I. THE ATTACKS OF THE EVIL ONE

We are told in John 8:44 that the Devil is a murderer and has been since the beginning. The Apostle Paul speaks of Satan's schemes using military terminology to describe the Devil's activities (II Corinthians 2:11).⁶

A. He attacks Believers

1. This is to be observed in God's declaration: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed" (Genesis 3:15).
2. This is also evident from the names which are given him in light of this, such as *the enemy* (Matthew 13:39), *the tempter* (Matthew 4:3), *the wicked one* (Matthew 13:19), and *the adversary* (I Peter 5:8).
3. It is conveyed by the description of his work among believers: "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8), His works are called "the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:16), and buffeting (2 Corinthians 12:7), shooting of fiery darts (Ephesians 6:16), and beguiling (2 Corinthians 11:3).
4. Then there are the exhortations to arm ourselves against him and to resist him. "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11); "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about" (1 Peter 5:8); "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

II. HE MASQUERADES AS AN ANGEL OF LIGHT

“For even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light”(II Corinthians 11:14). Paul goes on to say that Satan’s servants also appears to be other than they really are. “To suppose that Satan uses only bad or what we might call really wicked men, such as Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, or Benito Mussolini, is incorrect. To be sure, he uses them and those like them, but he also uses men the world calls good, who may even be highly moral and whose lives seem as good as those of some who call themselves Christians. Indeed, ‘good men’ may make better tools in the hands of Satan than bad ones.”⁷Paul tells Timothy that people do not realize that they are pawns of the Devil- and are taken captive by him to do his will (I Timothy 2:26). Elsewhere Paul writes of Satan as, “the god of this world who has blinded the minds of unbelievers” (II Corinthians 4:4). Christians can easily be misled if they rely on their feelings and mere subjectivity as God’s way of leading them. Dave Swavely warns, “Many people erroneously think that God speaks to us, or reveals his will to us, through what they call ‘impressions’, ‘promptings,’ ‘burdens’, or the still small voice of God.’ The biggest problem with such an approach to guidance is that God does not speak in any way other than through His Word, as we have discussed. But it is also fascinating to see how expressions that are not even biblical can become integral part of the vocabulary of Christian culture. No doubt, it would surprise some to learn that none of these terms I just mentioned are even used that way in Scripture. You can comb your concordance for the words impression, prompting, and burden and you will never find them used in the context of God’s guidance or decision making!”⁸

Another of the ways that Satan has been sowing deception is seen in the way that many churches have sought to attract seekers by accommodating their services to the likes or dislikes of the existing culture. The late John Leith clearly saw the Satanic influence in all of this. “Theology becomes self-destructive when its primary goal is accommodation to the culture. This has been well illustrated in the history of theology in America. James Turner, in his book *Without God, Without Creed*, has documented how an overzealous effort to accommodate the culture outside the circle of faith actually contributed in America to the rise of unbelief. The crucial ingredient, then, in the mix that produced an enduring unbelief was the choices of believers. More precisely, unbelief resulted from the decisions that influential church leaders- lay writers, theologians, ministers- made about how to confront the modern pressures up on religious belief. Not all of their selections resulted from long thought and careful reflection; part of our humanity, after all, is that we have much in common with lemmings. But they were choices. And choices, taken together, boiled down to a decision to deal with modernity by embracing it- to defuse modern threats to the traditional bases of belief by bringing God into line with modernity. In tailoring belief more closely to human understanding and aspiration, however, many religions leaders made a fatal slip. They were not wrong to think that any significant faith would have to express itself in moral practice. But they often forgot that their God’s purposes were not supposed to be mans. They were not mistaken in believing that any resilient belief must ground itself in human thought and experience. But they frequently forgot the tension that, by definition, must exist between an incomprehensible God and the human effort to know Him. They forgot, in short, that their God was as any God had to be to command belief over the long term- radically other than man. Put slightly differently, unbelief emerged because church leaders too often forgot the transcendence essential to any worthwhile God. They committed religion functionally to making the world better in human terms and intellectually to modes of knowing God fitted only for understanding this world. Karl Barth rightly observed, I think, that Christian believers do not face today any temptation to doubt or unbelief that they have not always faced. The peculiarities of our age ought not to be an excuse for our failures to proclaim the gospel as Christians have believed and confessed it through the centuries.”⁹

III. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE EVIL ONE

Satan’s goals will be reached by accomplishing several well-chosen objectives in the Christians life. Richard Mayhue identifies Satan’s four major objectives for the Christian. If he can accomplish one or more, he is moving toward his goals. It is important for you to understand these objectives, because Satan’s attacks against you will be in one of these four broad areas.

A. Satan Will Attempt to Distort or Deny the Truth of God’s Word

That’s how Satan tripped up Peter in Matthew 16. Jesus had earlier called Satan’s bluff however, and the Devil failed in his attempt on Christ (Matthew 4.)

B. Satan Will Try to Discredit the Testimony of God’s People

It succeeded with Ananias and Sapphira, and he’ll try it on Christian leaders today (I Timothy 3).

C. By Depressing or Destroying the Believer’s Enthusiasm for God’s Work, Satan Will Assault Our Souls

The roaring lion of hell tried this on both Paul (II Corinthians 12:7-10) and Peter (Luke 22:31-34).

- D. If Satan Can Dilute the Effectiveness of God's Church, He Will be Moving Toward His Goals
Both David (I Chronicles 21:1-8) and Judas (Luke 22:3-6) knew the pain inflicted with this type of attack.¹⁰

CONCLUSION: I close up by again pointing you to the wisdom of the Puritans – this time it is John Owen, considered by many to be the greatest theological mind of the 17th century. “Consider the end of any temptation; this is Satan’s end and sin’s end, - that is, the dishonor of God and the ruin of our souls. Consider what hath been the *issue* of any former temptations that thou hast had. Have they not defiled thy conscience, disquieted thy peace, weakened thee in thy obedience, clouded the face of God? Though thou wast not prevailed on to the outward evil or utmost issue of thy temptations, yet hast thou not been foiled? Hath not thy soul been sullied and grievously perplexed with it? Yea, didst thou ever in thy life come fairly off, without sensible loss, from any temptation almost that thou hadst to deal withal; and wouldst thou willingly be entangled again? If thou art at liberty, take heed; enter no more, if it be possible, lest a worse thing happen to thee.”¹¹

ENDNOTES

¹ Thomas Watson, *The Lords Prayer* (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1982), p. 326.

² *The Works of Thomas Brooks I* (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1980), p. 3.

³ As cited by Jay Adams, *Winning the War Within: A Biblical Strategy for Spiritual Warfare* (Timeless Text, 1996.), p.16.

⁴ D.A. Carson, *Matthew: Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Zondervan, 1984), p. 174.

⁵ Wm. Barclay, *The Beatitudes & The Lord's Prayer for Everyman* (Harper &Row, 1963), p. 252.

⁶ The word NOEMA signifies the function of the intellective faculty (NOUS). Its meaning varies between mind, understanding, thought, purpose, and design. Here, in the plural, it bears a sinister connotation: devices, wiles, or plots, i.e. evil schemings. Elsewhere in this epistle, Paul uses it of the mind or understanding of man: 3:14, 4:4. And 11:3, and once of every thought or purpose: 10:5. Its only other occurrence in the New Testament is in Philippians 4:7. Cf. Philip Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Eerdmans, 1962), p. 72.

⁷ Harold Lindsell, *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil* (Canon Press, 1973), p. 31.

⁸ Dave Swavely, *Decisions, Decisions: How (and How Not) to Make Them* (P&R, 2003), p. 71. Long ago the old Dutch puritan Wilhelmus a Brakel wrote along the same line, “Under a sweet pretense, he will even allure him to things which are contrary to the commandment of God (which is nothing but fanaticism), the person thinking that all that comes to mind is from God. There are then no limits to what he can entice a man. He may also cause one’s conscience to be very sensitive, so that a person perceives himself as offending in everything he does, causing him to go his way in much spiritual anxiety. Or he may cause him to disown his spiritual state, holding before him that such a life cannot coexist with grace.” *The Christians Reasonable Service IV* (rpt. Soli Deo Gloria, 1995), p.237.

⁹ John H. Leith, *Crisis to the Church: The Plight of Theological Education* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), p.41.

¹⁰ Richard Mayhue, *Unmasking Satan* (Victor Books, 1988), p.23.

¹¹ *The Works of John Owen VI* (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1972), p.114.