

Is Satan Still Alive and Kicking?

A Reflection on the Nature and Activity of Satan

Reflections Grace, Sin and Transformation 22 August 2017

Genesis 2:16-17 (quoted)

Isaiah 5:20 (quoted)

Romans 7:21 (quoted)

Revelation 12:7-10 (quoted)

Jesus Christ defeated and crushed Satan in His death on the cross — how, then, does Satan still seem to be among us? This is a question that challenges us today. I am not attempting to offer a definitive answer, humble as I am in the ways of God; let me suggest a perspective. Satan is a difficult figure to account for. When we look around, we find rampant evil happening on every side, giving us the impression that he is still on the prowl, and at it in full force.

Satan made his entry right at the beginning of human history. God finished His creation, and everything was good. Adam and Eve were given charge of everything, and enjoyed immense freedom and peace; they communed with God freely. God had, however, forbidden Adam to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; if he did, he would surely die. So we read in Genesis 2:16-17: *"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* Adam may not have grasped what God meant by "evil" and "death." He may have pondered the conversation and concluded that evil and death were matters known only to God, and dismissed the thought — at least, that must have been his mind at the time. Satan always works on our minds by indirection; he works suggestively, rather than directly. It is human nature to play God; we all do it, in varying degrees, at some time or other in our lives. Adam and Eve were no exception, and when the option was put to them, indirectly, by Satan, they fell for the temptation to be like God. Just like the forbidden fruit, the option, though wrong, looked good to them, and they disobeyed God and ate it.

As an aside, scientists might suggest that a chemical in the fruit stimulated the "God spots" in the brains of Adam and Eve, making them suddenly and acutely conscious of darkness and light, honour and shame, right and wrong, good and evil — some might even point to a hallucinogenic alkaloid, such as those found in peyote. But the fact remains that humanity has always been remarkably skilled at confusing evil with good.

That was Adam and Eve's problem then, and it is our problem today. If

evil were not made to appear good, there would be no temptation; it is in their close resemblance that the danger lies. Modern social morality often differs from the righteousness of the Bible. Someone has said: "A wrong deed is right if the majority of people declare it not to be wrong." By this principle we can see our standards shifting from time to time, according to the popular vote. Divorce was once frowned upon by society, and laws against fornication and adultery were strictly enforced; now divorce is widely accepted, fornication is glorified in literature and film, and same-sex marriage has been legalised in many countries. The Bible says: "*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*" (Isaiah 5:20). Jesus has not changed; His standards have not been lowered. He still calls immorality sin, and the Bible tells us He is going to judge it.

The point I am making is that Satan — the devil, fiend, the unclean one, villain, the evil one, demon, the Antichrist, the very spirit of evil, call him what you will — stimulated the evil in man right at the beginning. Man found no way of his own to reverse his situation and return to the state he enjoyed before he lost the trust and grace of God. The Bible, which has withstood the ravages of time, tells us that we possess a nature that wars against us, that seeks to destroy us. Paul said: "*I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me*" (Romans 7:21). Evil is present in us, disguising itself as good, controlling us and deceiving us. Sin is why the atonement was necessary: Christ died on the cross to make us one with Him — dead to sin, and alive to righteousness.

I want to argue that what Christ's atonement has done is to show us the way to conquer evil, sin and Satan. In His sacrificial death, Jesus empowered us to defeat evil. Christ is the only way for us. When we begin to imitate Christ, we begin to conquer the evil in us, little by little; this process will continue until the day of judgement. As we are prepared by the indwelling Holy Spirit to enter the new creation of Jesus, we too will become His new creation, when the initial damage is fully reversed. That is when Satan will be consigned to everlasting fire, from which he will have no escape. We read in Revelation 12:7-10: "*And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.*"

Until such time, beware of the Satan, the evil, in you. He will strike at

every opportunity he gets. Remain in prayer and supplication. May Jesus protect us until we are fully rid of the evil in us.

Amen.

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