

## The Might Of Satan

Andrew Murray:

"Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" Luke 22:31,32.

Nothing makes an enemy more dangerous than the fact that he remains hidden or forgotten. Of the three great enemies of the Christian--the world, the flesh, and the devil--the last is the most dangerous. Not only because it is he who lends the others what power they have, but also because he is not seen and, therefore, little known or feared. The devil has the power of darkness. He darkens the eyes, so that men do not know him. He surrounds himself with darkness, so that he is not observed. Yes, he even has the power to appear as an angel of light.<sup>1</sup> It is by the faith that recognises things unseen that the Christian is to endeavour to know Satan--even as the Scriptures have revealed him.

When the Lord Jesus was living on earth, His great work was to overcome Satan. When He was filled with the Spirit at His baptism, the Spirit brought Him into contact with Satan as head of the world of evil spirits, and He was to combat and overcome him.<sup>2</sup> After that time, the eyes of the Lord were always open to the power and working of Satan. In all sin and misery He saw the revelation of the mighty kingdom of the evil one. He saw the enemy of God and man, not only in the demoniacs, but also in the sick.<sup>3</sup> Jesus saw the work of Satan in Peter's advice to avoid the cross, and in his denial of the Lord. Yet, we would have considered those events to be the natural revelation of Peter's character.<sup>4</sup> In His own suffering--where we rather speak of the sin of man and the permission of God--Jesus perceives the power of darkness. His whole work in living and in dying was to destroy the works of Satan. As likewise, He will utterly destroy Satan himself at His second coming.<sup>5</sup>

His word to Peter, compared with the personal experience of the Lord, gives us a fearful insight into the work of the enemy. "Satan hath desired to have you," says Jesus. "As a roaring lion, he walketh about, seeking whom he may devour," says Peter himself later on (1 Peter 5:8).<sup>6</sup> He does not have unlimited power, but he is always eager to make use of every weak or unguarded moment. "That he might sift you as wheat." What a picture! This world, even the Church of Christ, is the threshing floor of Satan. The corn belongs to God--the chaff is Satan's own. He sifts and sifts continually, and all that falls through with the chaff, he tries to take for himself. And many a Christian falls through in a terrible fashion and, were it not for the intercession of his Lord, would perish forever.<sup>7</sup>

Satan has more than one sieve. The first is generally worldly-mindedness--the love of the world. Many are spiritual in time of poverty, but when they become rich, they again eagerly strive to win the world. Or in the time of conversion and awakening they appear very zealous, but through the cares of the world, they are led astray.<sup>8</sup>

A second sieve is self-love and self-seeking. Whenever anyone does not give himself undividedly to serve his Lord and his neighbour---to love his neighbour in the Lord--it soon appears that he lacks the principal characteristic of a disciple. It will be made clear that many who profess devotion to the service of God utterly fail on this point and must be regarded with the chaff. Lovelessness is the sure sign of the power of Satan.<sup>9</sup>

Still another sieve, a very dangerous one, is self-confidence. Under the name of following the Spirit, one may listen to the thoughts of his own heart. He is zealous for the Lord, but with a carnal zeal, in which the gentleness of the Lamb of God is not seen. Without being observed, the movements of the flesh mingle with the workings of the Spirit. While he boasts that he is overcoming Satan, he is being secretly ensnared by him. <sup>10</sup>

What a serious life here on earth, where God gives Satan permission to set his threshing floor even in the Church. Happy are they who, with deep humility, fear, and trembling, distrust themselves. Our only security is in the intercession and guidance of Him who overcame Satan.<sup>11</sup> Far be it from us to think that we know all the depths of Satan and are a match for all his cunning strategies. As well as in the visible, he works and has power in the region of the spirit--the invisible. Let us fear that while we have known and overcome him in the visible, he might prevail over us in the spiritual. May our only security be the conviction of our frailty and weakness, and our confidence in Him who certainly keeps the humble heart.

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to know our enemy and his wiles. Cause us to see him and his realm, that we may dread all that is of him. And open our eyes to see how You have overcome him, and how in You we are invincible. Teach us what it is to be in You, to mortify all that is of the mere ego and the will of the flesh, and to be strong in weakness and lowliness. And teach us to bring into prayer the conflict of faith against every stronghold of Satan, because we know that You will destroy him under our feet. Amen.