***Follow Christ

RV153-02***

We are studying "The Tribulation Personalities." This is segment number seven in Revelation 11:19 through Revelation 12:6.

The Lord Jesus Christ, while He was here in His ministry on earth, took the trouble to place a very special emphasis upon the fact that Satan is a liar. In John 8:44, we have His words to this effect, when He said, "You" (speaking to the Pharisees, and to the Jews who were not willing to accept His claim of Messianic leadership – His role as the Savior God). He said to these unbelievers, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and he does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him." Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Satan attracts a following in the human race by spreading disinformation which appeals, on the one hand, to the old sin nature desires in people; and, on the other hand, to their arrogant human viewpoint reasoning. In spiritual matters, it is very easy for Satan to deceive people, because people today have so little knowledge of doctrinal truth by which to be able to spot his lies. The Jews, in the time of Jesus, who had rejected His Messianic claims, were listening to their father, Satan, while claiming to be the children of God, espousing divine viewpoint. That's how absolutely clever Satan is, and how deceived people can be.

Therefore, the Jews believed the lies of Satan about Jesus, and actually called the Lord a liar relative to His Messianic claims, and in the things that he was teaching them. Satan's most successful deceit technique is the half-truth, which camouflages a lie, and makes it palatable to swallow. Don't forget that that's how the devil works. He does not come up with outright audacious lies. He comes with what seems to be true; what seems to be reasonable; and, what seems to be accepted by most people. Then, at a critical point, he gives a twist to what he is saying, and he gets you hooked on a deceit. There is a lot of information coming to us these days from the demonic world. Any information which comes from the demonic world has some truth which acts as the bait to cover the hook of a lie with which to catch people. Just remember that Satan too is a fisher of men.

**Allegorical Interpretation**

It is only natural, therefore, that the Bible, which proclaims God's true truth and exposes Satan, should be the object of Satanic distortion. Through the sincere Christian named Origen, Satan was able in the third century A.D., to substitute the allegorical method of interpreting Scripture from the literal method, which had been used by the prophets of old and of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The allegorical, or symbolic, method of interpretation looks for the real meaning of any passage of Scripture beneath the literal words.

I once heard a lady preacher give a very forceful and emotional sermon on the real meaning of the five stones that David picked up at the brook, with which to face Goliath, and the Stones with which he was able to conquer this giant. The giant, of course, was not a real giant standing out there, something like 9 or 10 feet tall, with enormous physical power; armor; and, weapons. It just became the things that oppose you in your life – the things that give you difficulties in life. She had the insight to see beneath the simple story of Goliath, and realized that Goliath was all those temptations and all those destructive things. Then the five stones were not just five little pebbles. They were actually something totally different. They were the virtues by which you can topple this giant that is attacking you in your life. This was how you can meet this temptation. And she went through and named five different virtues by which you can destroy the giants which are seeking to bring you down in your life. By the time she got through, I forgot the story of David and Goliath (all the whole Bible literal story), because I was all into this very esoteric, under-the-words interpretation.

That's what Origin did, and he did that because he wanted to insert the teachings of the Greek philosophers into Christianity, and make them part of the Word of God. While the philosophers indeed had some basic truths which they had arrived at by human reasoning, that was the bait. It was covering a hook of a great deal of lies and deceits and misconceptions that the philosophers had arrived at as well. Origen was a lover of philosophy. Philosophy means wisdom. Philosophy means your beliefs and your guiding motivations – what propels you in life.

When I was a Boy Scout in my teenage years, one of the principles I learned from the Boy Scout manual was: "Eat to live. Don't live to eat." Now, that's a philosophy. Some of you have one part of that philosophy. Some of you have accepted the other part of that philosophy, but it is a philosophy of life: "Eat to live. Don't live to eat."

Another philosophical expression, which many people are devoted to, is: "Get all you can in life; and, can all you get." That's a summary of the motivation of a philosophical outlook. That's how you live.

So, this is what the philosophers were talking about. They were trying to explain life: why things were the way they were; and, how people should live. And indeed, they came across some basic truths. But they got a lot of misconceptions which, incidentally, ended up like purgatory, for example, as doctrines in Roman Catholicism.

So, Origen's purpose, in this allegorical symbolic interpretation of the meaning of the words of Scripture, was to incorporate Greek philosophy into Christian truth. Unfortunately, this is the very thing which the apostle Paul warned Christians not to do. In Colossians 2:8, Paul says, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." Paul said, "Don't let anyone make a sucker out of you. Don't let anyone make a fool out of you with these ponderous, great, philosophical, deep-thinking concepts of the educated, intelligent men of the world who, nevertheless, are men, and what they create is in the tradition of men. They are creating their own concepts. And these concepts are according to the elementary principles of the world, meaning that they are the product of the sin nature. They are not according to the true wisdom of Christ.

So, Paul says, "The pontificating of mere human viewpoint reasoning as eternal truths by the opinion-makers of society should be rejected. Don't fall for that." The philosophers under Satan's guidance are always looking for true truth, but they are accepting Satan's lies. They are always looking for what is true, but accepting Satan's lies.

This was true in New Testament times. The apostle Paul saw where this was leading and where this would go, and that's why he tried to warn people about that. He did that in Acts 17:16, where he was standing in Athens, and he was met on the hill where the debates were carried out with the philosophers of that time.

In Acts 17:16, the Word says, "Now, while Paul was waiting for them at Athens (his associates), his spirit was being provoked within him as he was beholding the city full of idols." So, he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing gentiles, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be present: "And also some of the Epicureans and stoic philosophers were conversing with him. And some were saying, 'What would this idle babbler wish to say?' Others were saying, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,' because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.' And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus (up on Mars Hill), saying, 'May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming, for you are bringing some strange things to our ears. We want to know, therefore, what these things mean.' Now, all the Athenians, and the strangers visiting there, used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new."

These philosophers were looking for the truth. They never had it. They never felt that they had found it. They never felt comfortable that they had reached true truth. So, they were always listening, and always finding something else. The first thing that they would say when they would shake your hand and greet you was, "Tell me something I don't know. Give me something new."

Drop down to Acts 17:31. Paul proceeds to speak to them. He gives his testimony, and then he says, "'But He (speaking of God the Father), has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a man (Jesus Christ) whom He has appointed, having furnish proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.' Now, when they heard the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer. Others said, 'We shall hear you again concerning this.' So, Paul went out from their midst."

One of the absolute conclusions of the Greek philosophers was that when you die, you never come back to life again. Dead is dead, and they had nothing but contempt for anybody who could be so naive as to claim that a human body, once dead, could be raised back to life. So, they were willing to listen to Paul until he said that. Then they recognized that he was just about the biggest ignoramus they had ever heard. And they sneered at him, and they patted him on the head, and said, "That's good, sonny. We'll listen to you again some other time."

But you'll notice, in verse 33, that Paul did what you and I should do when people sneer at our true truth testimony concerning the Word of God: Paul walked away from them. You don't stand there arguing; pleading; and, eating your heart out, trying to get idiots to believe what the Spirit of God has not opened their minds for them to be able to have the capacity to understand and to receive.

In 2 Timothy 3:7, this same concept is reiterated – trying to find the truth by human reasoning, and never arriving at it. Paul sums it up with this expression: "Always learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." That was Greek philosophy. That is why the apostle Paul says, "Don't get yourself trapped into trying to make Greek philosophy part of Christian doctrine. Unfortunately, Origen, a godly, sincere, dedicated Christian man, who himself died as the result of physical sufferings imposed upon him by one of the persecutions of the Roman emperors, did not understand this Scripture, or he would have thrown out all that he had learned about Greek philosophy, and never brought into the Christian community the devastating principle of interpreting the Bible by bypassing the literal meaning, and trying to find the hidden meaning.

Now, there is such a thing as philosophy – an outlook on life (a true philosophy). There is such a thing, but that is always subject to the thinking of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have that indicated for us in 2 Corinthians 10:5, where Paul says, "We are destroying speculations (philosophical, human reasonings), and every lofty things (every human arrogance of thought) raised up against the knowledge of God." For example, the arrogance of evolution against the knowledge of God given in Scripture, that God has created all the universe and all life forms. But what is the arrogance of man and his human reasoning? He comes up with the philosophy that matter is eternal, and it has evolved by itself on its own, by blind chance, over vast periods of years, into all the complicated life forms and the universe that we see. That is so dumb and so crazy on the surface, that you cannot believe that educated men would seriously say a thing like that. But when you don't want a God who can tell you what to do, then you have to come up with a humanistic explanation for what in the world around you.

But remember that, early on in the book of Romans, the Word of God says, "What you see in the world around you is what God is going to use to condemn you to the lake of fire. You should have known from looking around you that there has to be somebody out there who is responsible for this. And if he is capable of doing this, and if He is capable of making creatures like ourselves, so elevated above animals, how much more elevated must He be above us? And we better find out about Him, and we better find out what He thinks, and what authority He exercises over us, and what our future is beyond this world. That's the line of an intelligent, thinking person. And when you get the Bible, you have the answer to all of those philosophical questions.

So, Paul, in 2 Corinthians 10:5 says, "We are destroying these speculations, and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and are taking every thought kept it to the obedience of Christ." Whatever you and I believe is to be subject to what the Bible teaches. If the Bible teaches something that condemns what men think, and the way people act, and what people do, then we have to say, "People are wrong, and the Bible is true, and we must subject our conduct in our society and in our personal lives to the principles of Scripture."

We may also add 1 Corinthians 3:18-19: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age (he's got a philosophy that's the answer), let him become foolish, that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God, for it is written, 'He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness.' And again, the Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless."

You can imagine how absolutely amused God is, as men pontificate so confidently from their sin natures, expressing their philosophies of life with their arrogance, and with the principles of conduct that evolve from these philosophies that are not centered in Christ.

The allegorical method of interpretation enabled Origen to do whatever he wanted with what the Bible taught. And that same method is followed today by the great denominations, which inherited that method from the Roman Catholic Church at the time of the Reformation. The result is that the Bible is twisted and distorted so that it is completely covered by the delusions of men. And the worst area that this has been imposed upon is the prophetic Scriptures. So, where history is moving is completely clouded by this allegorical method. The result of this confusion on God's plans for the future, particularly in relationship to the Jewish people, has led to the enormous anti-Semitism that the Jews have suffered over the centuries, and suffer to this day.

Satan's allegorical method of interpreting the Bible enabled him to teach the lie that God has cast aside the nation Israel because they rejected Jesus Christ the Messiah, and has replaced the Jews with Christians of the church as His special people. You must understand that you people sitting here are the minorities of the minorities. Christians do not believe what you are hearing. The vast denominations do not believe what you are hearing. The great denominations today would laugh and scoff at you when you talk about Jesus Christ coming back to this earth and taking over all the gentile nations of the world, and setting up a throne in Jerusalem as the capital city of the world from which He will govern all nations, and the Jewish people (of all things) will be the basis of that worldwide kingdom.

They will laugh in your face, and say, "That's the way it was supposed to be. That's what God told Abraham, as well as what He said in subsequent covenants to David – that that's the way it was going to be. However, once the Jew rejected Christ, they lost it all. God said, 'That's it. I'm through with you.' He cast them out, and He brought in a new people called Christians, the body of Christ, the church, which has replaced the Jew, and has become the new Israel."

You won't find any of that in Scripture. You won't find Christians called the new Israel. You won't find any such explanation. These are theological conclusions which were arrived at by the symbolic allegorical method of interpreting Scripture. When you read the Bible literally, you get a totally different picture.

This lie, that Satan has successfully been able to impose upon Christianity through the allegorical method of Origen, has no future for the Jews, and the Abrahamic covenant is dead. Therefore, in prophetic Scripture, the conclusion was reached that there will be no earthly 1,000-year, Jewish kingdom under King Jesus, even though the Old Testament repeatedly declares that, and Revelation 20 is very explicit about it.

The amillennialists and the postmillennialists proclaim that there would only be the heavenly kingdom (no earthly kingdom), as with Christ's throne and His reign in heaven only. So, Satan has removed the Jews from being God's special people under His special care, and under His special plan. All non-premillennial Protestant Christianity has enabled people now to feel free to persecute the Jews, and they have done it for centuries. After all, if the Jew is no longer under the protective care of God, and under the explicit principle of the Abrahamic covenant (that those who were to persecute the Jews would be persecuted by God, and those who honored the Jews would be honored by God) – if that no longer holds, who cares what a Hitler or anybody else does to the Jewish people? And that is exactly the position of the Jew today as the result of Christianity itself, with its false method of interpreting the Word of God.

Had the Christian church continued with the literal method of interpreting the Scripture, which was its pattern for the first 200 years, there would have been no ground for Satan to deceive the Christian world today about God's plans for the Jewish people in the future. They would not have proceeded upon the destructive course in which Christians have been placed to this day.

John in his vision, here in Revelation 12, sees the consequences of Satan's lie that God has permanently rejected the Jews, and has rescinded the Abrahamic Covenant promises. The woman, Israel, has seen as being in great suffering, as the Jews have been over the centuries, and as they will yet be even more intensely in the tribulation period. The focus of Satan's hatred toward the Jewish people is the Lord Jesus Christ, who will fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant, and thus bring about Satan's complete destruction. John sees Satan symbolically as a dragon who is the power behind the gentile nations of the world which persecute the Jews. In the Old Testament, this bestial dragon was often portrayed as the enemy of the Jewish people. He sees that this dragon is red, probably signifying the propensity for bloodshed that Satan has – bloodshed in the form of murder, human sacrifices, and war.

The world that Satan rules during the tribulation period is the result of empires which have preceded the empire of the antichrist. Therefore, he has therefore seven heads which are crowned. These seven previous empires were Egypt; Assyria; Babylon; Media-Persia; Greece, and Rome, and each one built upon the previous culture. The seventh expression of Satan's world rule is in the tribulation, and that is portrayed in the form of a ten-nation confederacy, which is symbolized by ten horns on the dragon.

**Stars**

In Revelation 12:4 we read, "And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven." This word "tail" refers to the tail of the dragon. It's part of his anatomy, and it signifies here that the dragon Satan is exercising some kind of influence. And what he sweeps away is a third of the stars of heaven. John sees the dragon creating an enormous influence in heaven. What he does with his tail is he sweeps away one-third of the stars of heaven. This is the word "star" as it's normally used for what we see in the heavens. The question is: are these literal stars here, or do we again have stars as a symbol, since this is a passage which is portraying real truth (realities), but under the form of symbols? The woman out there that John sees is not really a woman, but a woman that stands for something – the nation of Israel. And the dragon that he sees is not really an animal dragon per se, but a dragon that stands for something, namely Satan. All of this is explained in Scripture, either here or in some other part of the Bible.

We do have a use of the word "star" as something more than just the luminaries in heaven. For example, in Job 38:7, we have one example to give us a clue: "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Here is a description of God's creative work. As God is proceeding with the magnificence of His creation, somebody starts singing. There are some rational creatures who are observing the creative work of God. It is magnificent work, and it is so awesome that somebody breaks out in praise. Well, who's out there at this time? Only the angels of God. The morning stars singing together indicate rational creatures who are able to sing, and it ties them in the next phrase to being the sons of God who are shouting for joy. So, here you have an example of the word "stars" being used to convey the concept of angelic beings.

You remember that Satan's original name was "Lucifer." That means "star of the morning," so that even Lucifer basically has the name of a star. In Jude 13, apostates who are under the control of demon angels are described as wandering stars. Jude 13: "Wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam, wandering stars for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever." "Wandering stars" here refer to apostates who are following demonic spirits, and who are described as wandering stars.

**Demons**

So, we have good reason to conclude that the reference here of Satan's tail bringing down one-third of the stars of heaven is actually referring to angelic beings. Of all the billions of angels that God originally created, one-third of them were swept into Satan's conspiracy in rebellion against God. These angelic conspirators became the demons. They worship Satan, the creature, instead of God, their Creator. These demon angels enable Satan to keep in touch with what is going on earth, because he is not omniscient. It is because the demons are all around human beings.

If you are not aware of it, you should be aware of the fact that when you walk out of here, you will not only have riding on your shoulder a guardian angel who is helping you to make it through your day and your stupidities, but you are also going to be tailed by the vile beasts of the deep (of the abyss) – the worshipers and followers of Satan, who are going to watch for every opportunity to influence your thinking, and to move you into destruction. For those who are unbelievers, those demon angels don't walk. They attach themselves within your body, and they take a free ride. Since you are a Christian, and God the Holy Spirit occupies your body, a demon angel cannot enter, but you can be demonized just like any unbeliever. All you have to do is stay out of that inner circle of temporal fellowship. All you have to do is get sloppy about examining your life, and seeing where you stepped out of line with the Word of God. So, now you've become a snarling, contentious, fighting, self-centered, sensual beast instead of a prince or princess in the royal family of God.

Don't forget that the demons know how to deal with you. If you're an uncouth type, they will deal with you like that. If you're a sophisticated, cultured type, they will deal with you like that. But they will bring you down into some sin and into some evil one way or another. That's all they spend their day doing – following you around (following the people of God), because you are the people that potentially are the greatest hindrance to the cause of Satan.

So, Satan has these agents assisting him. In Revelation 12:7-9, here in this very context, you will see a reference to Satan's angelic followers, who at this point in the tribulation are going to be cast permanently out of heaven with Satan. They are deceiving the world. They're operating on this earth. They were thrown out originally when they joined Satan in his failed coup d'état, and now these angelic beings assist him. So, when he speaks about his tail bringing stars of the heavens down (a symbol which is used elsewhere in the Bible for angelic beings), then in this context, we have this final great war with Michael, and the angels loyal to God, and Satan and the angels loyal to him, now the devil and all demons can walk into the throne room of God. Sometimes God tells them, "Come on up here. I want to examine you. I want you to report to me." They do that. But at this point in time, Satan will be excluded from the presence of God.

As we find in 1 John, he goes up there because he constantly (day and night) sends his agents up there saying, "Did you see what so-and-so did, that Christian of yours, God? Now, why don't you cast him into the lake of fire like you're going to do me?" Every time, God the judge says, "I've covered that sin. I've told you that before. He is my child. All of his sins have been paid for by the death of Christ. He is not guilty. I will deal with him in terms of his problem of temporal fellowship, but you have no claim upon him. Day and night Satan is constantly accusing.

Well, in this context, he and his demons are finally cast out, and he is thrown down to the earth. That's when the Bible says that he starts getting his little hand calculator, ... and he starts figuring up, and it hits him right between the eyes that he has three-and-a-half years left to go, because he's thrown out at the middle of the tribulation. He realizes that what he has tried over the centuries to do, in frustrating the plan of God: to destroy the Savior; to destroy the Jewish nation; to keep people from believing in Christ; and, to frustrate and to hinder Christians from doing their job, has all crashed down in failure. He is now very close to being caught up by the scruff of the neck, and being thrown into the abyss for the 1,000-year period of the reign of Christ. Probably one of the first duties that will be assigned to you and me, as Christians, will be to catch one of his demons by the scruff of the neck, and throw the dirty rascals and bums out into the abyss along with Satan.

Ultimately, they're all going into a special place that God prepared immediately after the rebellion in heaven. Matthew 25:41 says, "And then he will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, you accursed ones, prepared for the devil" (Satan). In the Greek Bible, it looks very much like it does in the English "histemi." This word conveys the idea of the posture of somebody anticipating and watching – somebody with his arms folded, or his hands on his hips, scrutinizing very closely. In the Greek language, it's in the perfect tense, which means that it began in the past, and then kept going and continued on. Well, it began in the Garden of Eden when Satan heard Genesis 3:15 pronounced – that God was going to eventually send a child through the woman who would bring Satan down, and totally incapacitate him, and destroy all of his plans.

So, this picture here is of Satan personally standing before the woman (referring to the nation of Israel) through whom Christ was to be born, and specifically here referring eventually to the virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus: "Who was about to give birth." The word for "give birth" is "tikto." This simply means the normal process of childbirth. This is in the aorist tense, which means that it was done at a certain point in time; namely, that point in Bethlehem. It is active voice. It was done by the woman herself. Mary actually bore the baby Jesus. There's no symbolic meaning to this. It is in the infinitive mood. That tells us that this is declaring to us God's purpose, which was for the Messiah Savior to be born through the Jewish people, specifically through the virgin Mary on this occasion.

Satan is standing there. He remembers the threat to him in Genesis 3:15. He stands and watches (over the centuries) every pregnant Jewish woman. He particularly focuses in on those women who are in the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the royal line (the tribe of Judah), and the family line of David. Those are the women, any one of whom are qualified to bear the Savior. His demons were constantly on guard. He himself was constantly roaming the world over the centuries, watching the birth process, and keeping track of the pregnancies of these particular women.

His purpose was very explicit. His purpose was: as soon as the child was born, he wanted to devour it. The Greek word is "katesthio." "Katesthio" means to simply "swallow down," or just to wolf it down. "To devour" is a good translation. He was there waiting at any moment to kill the child. He wanted to eat him up in terms of killing him. And the child was of course, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, Satan has for centuries stood guard before the Jewish people, watching for the birth of the promised Messiah. Every pregnant Jewish woman got his scrutiny if she was qualified to bear the Messiah. The execution of God's judgment, pronounced against Satan, depended on the birth of the God-man Jesus Christ through the line of Israel. This Jewish child was to be the promised seed of the woman who would, on the cross, deliver the mortal blow to Satan that was promised to Genesis 3:15.

So, Satan tried to prevent the birth of Christ. Failing that, he tried to kill Him before he could get to the cross. The Bible tells us that Jesus came very specifically to destroy the power that the devil has over mankind. In Hebrews 2:14, this is specifically pointed out to us: "Since then, the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself (that is, Jesus), likewise also partook of the same, that through death (His death on the cross), He might render powerless him who had the power of death; that is, the devil." One of the greatest things that human beings fear is death. They are very bold when they're young, and they're very indifferent when they're young. But as they get older, and the prospect of death comes nearer, and becomes more realistic, they begin to wonder what is on the other side. And fear begins to eat away at the human heart of the person who is outside the family of God, and does not understand what is going to take place. They realize that what is before them is a possible nightmare and horror, which indeed is exactly what is before those who are not in the family of God through faith in Christ.

So, Satan has used the club of death to put fear into the hearts of people. Jesus Christ came once and for all to break the power of Satan over people in relationship to death. Satan was able to put people to death physically, and to bring them spiritually into eternal death – separation from God.

1 John 3:8 says, "The one who practices sin is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The son of God appeared for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil. People who sin are people who follow the philosophy of Satan. Jesus Christ came to destroy that philosophy.

So, in the Bible, the apostle Paul refers to Jesus Christ as the last Adam. The last Adam, Jesus Christ, on the hill of Calvary, was successful in taking back dominion over the earth, which was lost to Satan by the first Adam in the Garden of Eden. The Lord Jesus Christ will, from His throne in Jerusalem, then rule over all the nations of the earth, and this will be 1,000-year period of time that will be the golden age of humanity. Psalm 2:9 talks about that.

Satan goes, even to this point at this very time, that he is doomed to the lake of fire. So, what he's doing now is devoting himself to preventing people from gaining a knowledge of Bible doctrine. Is it any wonder that churches do everything under the sun except teach people the Word? As he confused (through Origen) the method of interpretation from literal meaning of words to esoteric (an everybody's-opinion kind of interpretation), so he has sought to keep people from teaching doctrine. That is the one thing that Satan does not like.

If you are in some area of activity of Christian ministry where you are explaining the Word of God to people, I want to tell you that you have his attention. You are a high priority target. He will do whatever he can, including your physical death, to silence you. Satan does not take kindly those who teach doctrine. Therefore, you better be smart enough to be very serious about praying for your personal protection from his hand, and from his attack.

If you are a person who is a supporter; if you finance; if you reinforce; if you participate in making the Word of God known; and, if you proclaim it as God gives you opportunity, you're in big trouble, because the devil is going to shred your life. He's going to bring you down. He's going to discourage you. He's going to silence you.

**Keep your Eyes on Christ**

So, what's your problem? First of all, keep your eyes off of people; keep your eyes off the circumstances of your life; and keep your eyes off of things. That's his method. He gets you hung up on some person who is a problem (an irritant) to you. He gets you in some circumstance of your life; some tragedy; or, some problem that is coming into your life, and he gets you to focus on that. Pretty soon, you don't have time to serve the Lord. He gets you preoccupied with developing the good life. You're hustling out there; you're working; you're accumulating things; you've got your insurance; you're making ready for your future; and, you're taking care of your things. You're so focused on that that we can't see you out here in band practice. We can't see you out here in Christian Service Brigade activity. We can't see you out here helping us put a festival together. We can't see you out here giving us a hand in getting some of these property repairs completed, that we so urgently need, because you don't have time.

**Deny Yourself**

Who do you think has told you that? Do you realize when Jesus said, "If you really want to be my follower, and maximize your eternity and rewards, the first thing you do is you deny yourself." You just say, "OK, I have plans, but what I'd like to know, Father, is: what are Your plans? I like it the way our prison guard, Jack Smith, in the Kentucky State Prison puts it. He wakes up in the morning; he gets up; he sits on the edge of his bed; he looks up; and, he says, "Sir (speaking to his Father), I am your servant, and I am prepared for the orders of the day." He's an ex-Marine, so he talks and thinks like a Marine: "I'm prepared for the order of the day."

He says, "I'm blown out of the water at what He does." He called me twice this week. He can't contain himself. He says, "This just goes on and on and on." He says, "Are you sure you're telling those people at Berean Church to start confessing their sins, and to stay inside of temporal fellowship? Do they understand what happens when they learn and metabolized doctrine into their souls: the winners that God makes them; and, the opportunities for treasures in heaven through accomplishing divine good service through the people they meet?

The result is that here's a man whose life as a preacher went on for decades as a nothing. As he likes to describe it, he was a real bad type of a character. And all of a sudden, he picks up a Berean in the prison library. Who knows how it ever got there? And what should it be on but the inner and outer circles, and how to stay in temporal fellowship as a Christian, so that God the Holy Spirit (the power dynamic system that God had provided first for His Son's humanity, which is now available to us) can suddenly work. He said, "When that happened, everything broke loose. For the first time, I understand what life is all about. I started learning how to tell God when I was out of line; how to confess sin; and, how to wait for His direction, and He has never failed me since. That's true.

Satan, who is doomed to the lake of fire is going to do everything he can to keep you out of that inner circle. He's going to bring you down. He's going to get you occupied with yourself.

**Take up your Cross**

Jesus said a second thing when He said, "Do you want to be My disciple, and really be a winner in eternity? Take up your cross. Take up your mission." His cross to be the Savior of the world, and to bear the sins of the world. What is your mission? You know, some of you could die on us out of this congregation, and we wouldn't even miss you. It would be weeks before we would discover you were gone unless somebody told us. Some of you – we can't live without you. Why? Because you know what your mission is as a servant of the most high God, and you get out there and do it. You wake up, and you're not preoccupied with all this stuff of myself and ambition. You are preoccupied with the fact that: "I'm going to be gone in a few years. The rapture may be here in a very short time, in all likelihood. Then it's all going to be over, and then what am I going to have?

I'm going to have the times when I set myself aside, and I said, "Here is my mission; here are my skills; here are my abilities; here are my spiritual gifts. And I got my eyes off of circumstances and people and things, and on the Lord, and I really invested.

**Follow Christ**

The third that Jesus said in that passage was, "Follow Me." The only way you're going to follow Him is when you know doctrine. Then you know the name of the game. You know the rules. You know the path. This is not complicated. It's very simple. Some of you know it well. You live by it all the time, and it is evident in your lives.

Satan knows that he is doomed. He's going to do his best to keep you from being an agent of the propagation of doctrine. He's going to keep the truth hidden from every grace salvation to rewards from Holy Spirit-directed Christian service from as many people as he can keep that information from. You, as the ambassador of the living God, who are called to convey that information, cannot afford to let yourself be neutralized by your stupidity. Don't get involved with other people's problems. Don't become part of their situation. Don't become a part of the problem yourself. Don't become enmeshed in how many things you can accumulate. Your good life is going to be gone pretty soon. I'm going to promise you that. And don't bemoan your circumstances. As a good soldier of Jesus Christ, you take your hits, and you go on.

In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, the apostle Paul says, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." The name of the game for Satan is to blind people to the truth of the Word of God. If he makes you a spiritual casualty, those people won't have a chance. You are the channel, and you are the information.

Satan has not been successful in devouring the woman's child. He was completely unsuccessful, even though he did his best. He's a loser. You shouldn't want to listen to him, and play the game of his society, which is filled with losers. And we'll tell you about political losers in the next session. If you want to play that game, just go ahead and do it, and you will have all eternity to regret it. Instead, you can be the one who is countering the blindness on people's eyes, and your undermining Satan's attempts to keep people away from the truth.

You get problems in your own life, it's because you have not applied the truth of Scripture. And when people have problems in their lives, they have to have the information, or they succumb. Do your job. Be His ambassador.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1990

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