

## Works Of Evil

Have you ever noticed how uncomfortable some people become when you talk about God the Father and/or especially Jesus – in the context of salvation? People will use the Lord's name in vain as an exclamation, but if you try to bring Him into a conversation, everyone goes quiet or they become embarrassed and change the subject. Some people even become angry. People will talk about anything except politics and religion, but especially religion. They don't want to talk about Jesus because He makes them feel uncomfortable. Just hearing His name can make people squirm. His name reminds them that they are sinners, and as sinners, they will have to look at themselves and take responsibility for their actions, words and evil thoughts. Nobody likes being reminded that we are all sinners; our hearts are basically evil and we need to depend on a Saviour to save us from our sins. Most people don't even like the word 'sin'. Another reason for their discomfort is this; if they have an unclean spirit lurking within, the spirit feels uneasy at the name of Jesus.

Have you ever tried to speak to a backslidden Christian about God? They will use all the excuses they can think of, to blame the Lord or the church for their present state, but they will not take responsibility for their own rebelliousness. We all need to be aware that Christians can lose their salvation if they turn away from God; so we must maintain our daily walk with Him. Read about this in Colossians 1:22 & 23; 'Yet now has Christ the Messiah, reconciled you to God the Father, in the body of His flesh through death; in order to present you holy, faultless and irreproachable in His Presence. And this He will do, provided that you continue to stay in the faith, well-grounded and steadfast, not moving away from the hope, which has been preached to every person under heaven'.

By this scripture, we can see that the Christians who move away from God, can lose their salvation and end up in hell. Not all who say "Lord, Lord" will go to heaven [Matthew 7:21]. Unbelief, the rebellious hearts of men along with the 'wiles' of God's enemy - the evil one who is the devil - stop many people coming into the Kingdom of God. Jesus said people love to do the works of the evil one. The evil one lies, deceives, cheats and will sometimes actually steal the word of God out of people's hearts. Read the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:3 to 23 but especially verse 19. 'The evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart'.

We will look at the scriptures about the works of evil so we can understand how these can keep some people out of heaven, and then we will look at how people can find their way into heaven. Jesus said the enemy is the father of lies; see John 8:44; "You are of your father the devil, and it is your will to practice the lusts of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks what is natural to him, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

The devil cannot force you to do anything. All he can do is lie to you, deceive you, tempt you and discourage you. It is your will to do what is right or wrong. It is your choice to stand up against temptation to sin or give in to it. With the Lord's help He can keep you from falling into sin so you can stand before the Lord, faultless and justified [Jude 24], but you have to have the courage to take a stand for righteousness. Jesus said it is your will, whether to listen to the father of lies or not. You are responsible for your own thoughts, actions, speech and behaviour. Don't give attention to deception, and don't turn away from the faith. The devil cannot snatch the word of God out of your heart if you maintain your close relationship with God by praying, reading the Bible, worshipping Him, attending church, listening to Christian music and fellowshiping regularly with Christians. These actions are all a matter of your own will.

Revelation 13:14 says the evil one deceives those who inhabit the earth; and in Revelation 20:2 it says the evil one deceives the whole earth. 1 Timothy 4:1 says ...'some will turn away from the faith, giving attention to seducing spirits and doctrines that demons teach'.

Matthew 24:24 says false prophets will arise to deceive and lead astray even Christians if they can. Then there are the wicked men in 2 Timothy 3:13 who 'will go on from bad to worse deceiving and leading astray others and being deceived themselves'. In 2 Timothy 4:3 & 4; They will 'choose to

satisfy their own liking and to foster the errors they hold, and will turn aside after hearing the truth and wander off into myths'. As we have just read, the evil one deceives everyone on the earth and he does this by sometimes using wicked men and women (the children of the evil one); but it is your own will and choice to believe or ignore these people. Don't accept 'bad seeds'. Don't listen to lies and myths. The enemy himself can sow bad 'seed' called darnel. See in Matthew 13:37 to 39. 'He Who sows good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed means the children of the Kingdom; the darnel is the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed it is the devil'.

To avoid being deceived by evil, read Ephesians 6:11 to 17. 'Put on the whole armour of God so that you may be able to stand up against all the wiles (strategies, deceits) of the devil. For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood but against the powers of darkness in heavenly places. Therefore put on God's complete armour, so that you may be able to stand your ground on the evil day and having done all, to stand firmly in your place. Stand therefore; having tightened the Girdle of Truth around your loins and having put on the Breastplate of Righteousness; and having shod your feet in the preparation of the Gospel of Peace. Lift up over all the Shield of Faith upon which you can quench all the flaming missiles of the wicked one; and take the Helmet of Salvation and the Sword of the Spirit which is the word of God'.

One more 'weapon' we can use to add to this collection of defensive armour is found in Isaiah 61:3. It's called the Garment of Praise for the spirit of heaviness. A spirit of heaviness is known in our day as depression. Depression cannot stay around if you are determined to fight it by praising and thanking the Lord for extended periods of time. The heaviness will lift off your head and if you do battle every day, eventually the evil spirit that causes the depression will leave entirely. The scripture says it is a spirit of heaviness; or a spirit that causes the heaviness/depression. If the scriptures say it is a spirit, then it is a spirit, and since the Lord would never cause depression, then logically, it is an evil spirit. Remember; you are not battling with flesh and blood, but an evil force. It is also your will to choose whether or not to use the 'armour' God has given you. You can give in to depression or you can fight it. It is hard, but if you persevere, you will be set free. But first you need to subject yourself to God; that is to give yourself over to God the Father, through His Son Jesus; then you will have the power and authority to resist the devil. See James 4:7; 'Be subject to God. Resist the devil – stand firm against him – and he will flee from you'.

See that? He will flee from you. This is not a maybe, a perhaps or might if you're lucky. The scripture says that the devil will flee, run away, leave the scene or take flight. At the name of Jesus, demons will flee. At the name of Jesus, depression will flee. If you are subject to God, and therefore born of God, then you can claim the victory over depression. 1 John 5:4 says; 'Whatever is born of God is victorious over the world; and this is the victory that conquers the world: your faith'.

First Corinthians 10:12 & 13 says; 'Let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall into sin. For no temptation [as enticing to sin] has overtaken you, that is not common to man [no temptation has come to you that is beyond human resistance]. But God is faithful and He can be trusted not to let you be tempted beyond your ability to resist. But with the temptation He will provide the way out so that you may be strong [to resist sin]'. Jesus was tempted to sin three times, but he never once gave in. He was able to resist temptation by quoting the word of God [Matthew 4:1; Mark 1:3; Luke 4:2] and we need to have the word in our hearts so we can also resist temptation.

We have written these things for your information; solely to deal with the subject of deception and the wiles of the devil. We are not to gloat about the God-given authority over the devil. Luke 10:19 & 20; 'I have given you authority and power to trample upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power the enemy possesses and nothing shall in any way harm you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are enrolled in heaven'.

Nor are we permitted to call the devil names. Jude 9 says; 'When the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, argued about the body of Moses, he dared not bring an abusive condemnation against him, but simply said, "The Lord rebuke you".'

When you read Matthew, Mark and Luke, you will see that Jesus dealt with the devil when it was necessary, and occasionally Jesus and the Apostles taught about the devil in order to teach us. They did not bring him into every conversation as do many Christians today, nor did they blame him for their own bad behaviour as do Christians today. When high profile Christians fall into sin they always blame the devil for their own sin, which is incorrect. Sin is their choice and all the devil could do is tempt them, but they chose to do the sinning. Jesus said sin is our choice.

Early Christians also did not blame the devil for their 'fiery trials' as Christians do today, but accepted the trials as being a chastisement from the Lord; not an attack from the devil. Christians need to learn the difference. The devil is there alright; he lies, deceives, cheats, steals, destroys, causes contention, tempts and seduces but he cannot harm you; that is what the scripture says. Did you know that? The devil cannot harm you, so if you are going through a difficult trial, scripturally, it is the divine chastisement from the Lord! Leave the evil one in the realm where he should be left: under the blood of Jesus. Resist him, ignore him, have victory over him but don't give him ground. It is God Who is in control, not the devil. (Read the text on this website titled 'God is in control'.)

You can't blame the devil if the Lord chastises you for sin, in order to cleanse and purify you. The Lord may use the devil, but the devil can't touch you without the Lord's expressed permission. It is completely wrong to think the devil can attack a Christian who is walking in line with God's will and purpose. You have nothing to fear from the devil because the Lord has given us power over all the power the enemy possesses! Read Luke 10:19 & 20 again and also 1 Peter 1:6 & 7; 1 Peter 4:12; Hebrews 12:5 to 12 and Titus 2:14. Through Jesus death and resurrection, we have already won the victory in this battle, Folks. All you need to do is lay hold of that fact and apply it to your lives.

Christians: You know that if you talk about the Lord, you invite the presence of the Lord. The same applies to evil. When you talk about the devil, you are inviting his evil presence into your conversation, into your home, into your lives and you are giving him unnecessary ground. He loves the attention! You are giving him an opening to use your mouth to destroy! We will repeat that: When you use your mouth to talk about the devil, you are giving him an opening to use your mouth to destroy! Why does he use your mouth to destroy? Because he never encourages or edifies does he? He brings contention, listens to and acts on everything you say. He ruins relationships between Christians. He wrecks marriages. Have you ever had a sudden furious argument with your spouse and wondered "Where did that come from?" Or have you been listening to your children playing happily and all of a sudden they start fighting for no apparent reason? Have you had a close friendship with a fellow Christian, when for some inexplicable reason they take offence, or you are suddenly 'put off' them by something trivial? Who do you think causes these scenarios? The devil of course, but how does he get into your homes and lives? When you repeatedly talk about him you are inviting him into your homes and lives, in exactly the same way, that if you talk about the Lord, you are inviting Him into your conversation, homes and lives. That makes sense doesn't it? Why invite the devil in to do those nasty things? It is written, we have the mind of Christ, so why let evil butt into the mind of Christ? The more mature the Christian, the less they will bring the devil into their conversation because they have the mind of Christ and they put the devil where he belongs: underfoot. The immature babes in Christ are the ones who allow the devil to use them, who gloat about their power over evil and who talk about him all the time. Don't even mention him because he's not worth mentioning. Don't open your life to him and don't open your mouth for him. Above all; do not ever use your Christian mouth to do the devil's dirty work.

If you want peace and harmony in your home, don't invite him in. If you want to encourage, don't talk about him. If you want to edify, don't talk about him. If you want to be delivered from evil, don't talk about him. Talk habitually about the Lord and think on good things and your speech will be sweet and not destructive. Destructive words from a Christian can cause deep hurt and could make a weak Christian fall away from God and out of heaven. Be careful your words don't cause someone to stumble. Don't let the devil use you. Make a conscious effort not to allow yourself to talk about the devil unless you have a purpose for doing so; such as casting out an evil spirit, or teaching about the evil one just as we have done here. It is written: Greater is He Who is in you, than he that is in the world. [1 John 1:4]

Apart from the devil's deception and lies, let's look at some other issues that keep people away from God. One popular 'wile' is to deceive people into believing nonsense about the universe instead of believing in Jesus. Read a strong warning written by Apostle Paul in Colossians 2:8. "See to it that no one carries you off as spoil or makes you yourselves captive by his so-called philosophy, intellectualism, vain deceit, idle fancies and plain nonsense, following human tradition, just crude notions following the rudimentary and elemental teachings of the universe and disregarding the teachings of Christ the Messiah." Does what you believe line up with the Bible? Does it glorify God? If it doesn't glorify God, then it would be better not to touch it.

The works of the flesh are clear, but they can be influenced by the evil one; we can be tempted, and because the hearts of mankind are carnal, we sometimes choose to give into that temptation. Let's have a look at the works of the flesh as they are outlined in Galatians 5:19 to 21; 'Now the works of the flesh are clear and obvious: they are immorality, impurity, indecency, idolatry, witchcraft, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissensions, party spirit, sects, peculiar opinions, heresies, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like. I warn you beforehand, that those who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God'. Mark 7:21 & 22 tells us more; 'From within, that is out of the hearts of men, come base and wicked thoughts, sexual immorality, stealing, murder, adultery, greed, dangerous wickedness, deceit, unrestrained conduct, envy, slander, maliciousness, abusiveness, pride, foolishness, lack of common sense, recklessness, thoughtlessness. All these evil desires come from within, and they make the man unclean'.

There are a lot of sins mentioned here. If you are a Christian and take part in any of these things, the scripture says you will not 'inherit the Kingdom of God' which means you will not enter heaven. Tough isn't it? But that is what the word of God says. It would be better if we didn't allow such carnality to permeate our Christian walk. We all need to examine ourselves and ask the Lord to cleanse the sin out of our lives.

Amen and God bless you.

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