

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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## Satan's True Motive

*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. (1 Peter 5:8–9, KJV 1900)*

If we take this information back to Genesis 3 and consider the words of the serpent as he worked to entice Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, we begin to get a true sense of Satan's wholly deceitful ways. He hardly states to either of them that his true motive is their destruction, that he may devour them. He sounds like he wants to be their best friend. He implies that God is a stingy being who is working to prevent them from access to something really good for them. Take this passage to Jesus' temptation in the wilderness and, again, consider Satan's words against his motive as Peter reveals it in our study passage. While Satan repeatedly promises things to Jesus that he cannot deliver, he carefully hides his sinister motive.

In fact, considering Satan's inherent limitations, it is quite likely that most of us shall never face him directly and personally, though we face his influence every day, so he has his ways of getting to us, even if not personally.

...as a *roaring lion*. The roaring lion is not the sleeping lion. He is up and about. Perhaps he is looking for food, Peter's implication in the text before us. It is said that a lion's roar may be heard up to five miles away. The Christian who thinks of Satan as a slightly overgrown kitten with bad manners is in grave danger in that he has underestimated the adversary and is therefore unprepared for him. Our adversary is formidable indeed, but he is not undefeatable. Peter warns us against taking him and his wiles lightly. He also teaches us how to face and to overcome our adversary.

*Be sober*.... What does it mean to be sober in the sense of this passage? Is Peter merely thinking of alcoholic liquids? Or does he have a broader, deeper thought in mind? One New Testament dictionary defines the word, "...to be in control of one's thought processes and thus not be in danger of irrational thinking...to be well composed in mind."<sup>1</sup> In what way might a Christian engage in "irrational thinking" from a spiritual perspective? A low view of our adversary's ability might be one

example. Face him, thinking that you can beat him with one arm tied behind your back, and you shall almost surely face defeat. William Jennings Bryan represented the Christian perspective in the Scopes Trial regarding the question of creation versus evolution. He lost the case dreadfully. People who study this trial agree that Bryan underestimated the attorney on the side of evolution. He went into the trial wholly unprepared. He represented the teachings of Scripture on the question, but his prideful arrogance caused him to take the case and his need for diligent preparation too lightly. Bryan's failure should warn each of us as we face this spiritual adversary or one of his influences in our lives. Never underestimate his ability. We need not cower in paralyzed fear when we see evidences of his presence or work, when we hear his roar. But we should take him seriously and "Soberly" prepare to engage him with sound knowledge and preparation. Jesus' encounter with Satan during the wilderness temptation instructs us in our preparation for our encounters with Satan or one of his forces. He was God Incarnate. He could have spoken the word and melted Satan in his tracks. However, in His responses to Satan, Jesus gave us the "Sober-minded" example that we should follow in preparation for our wilderness temptations. Jesus answered and refuted every satanic lie with a quotation of Scripture. While we have an abundance of positive reasons to diligently study Scripture, here we have a powerful negative reason. Only through a working knowledge of Scripture can we withstand and defeat the adversary.

Sadly, many sincere believers have started their faith-walk with good intentions of spending daily time with Scripture, of **studying** their Bible, not just reading it. There is a difference, you know. Do not think that reading a chapter or two in your Bible each day will prepare you for your seasons of wilderness temptation. Reading and studying Scripture are quite different. Not only did Jesus know the words of Scripture, but **He also knew the meaning** of Scripture, so that He could "Rationally" (From the perspective of spiritual rationality) and intelligently answer Satan with the right passage that would stop the voice of the tempter. No doubt, had Jesus merely quoted a verse that had no reference to the enticement of the moment, Satan

<sup>1</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., 352 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996).

would have savaged Jesus with answers. Because Jesus knew the meaning of the Scriptures that He cited, Satan did not once argue with Jesus or try to twist the passage to another supposed meaning.

...*be vigilant.* What is vigilance in this setting? We think of vigilance in terms of intelligent preparedness, as well as faithfulness to one's responsibilities. A soldier standing guard during the night will not leave his post to take a nap. He will "Vigilantly" stay awake and watchful every moment of his watch. If we examine Satan's tactics with Adam and Eve, we learn that the duplicitous serpent is quite skilled at covering his true motives and at sounding appealing and quite reasonable in his "Suggestions." Using the soldier on watch to further the point, a thinking enemy soldier might put on the uniform of the watchman's army, learn the right words and movements to convince the watchman that he is actually an associate returning from an assignment. Satan never approaches us with the ugly reality of his motives or of the outcome of our conduct, should we follow his wiles. He dresses up to look and to talk like "One of us." He is skilled at making the worst of his enticements seem amazingly moral and acceptable. But never doubt his true motives. He intends to devour you, to have you for his dinner tonight.

One of Satan's favorite devices to snare the unsuspecting Christian is to appeal to the believer's pride.

*Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:6 KJVP)*

A novice is someone who is young, either in age or experience in the faith. He has not yet faced sufficient seasoning to be sober and vigilant in his defenses against the adversary. When Satan whispers in the novice's ear, "You know. You are smarter than any of those other folks in your church. When you and they disagree, never doubt that you are right, and, ignorant souls, they can't hold a candle to your bright intelligence and superior knowledge of Scripture. Don't listen to them. Hold firmly for your ideas." The prevalence of sinful pride in our culture should alarm the sober, vigilant believer, for this sinful attitude is promoted as something "...good...pleasant to the eyes, and...to be desired to make *one* wise." (Genesis 3:6) You see, Satan was able to alter Eve's perception. The very thing that was her certain death became desirable to her mind. How often in our day do we hear those who are supposedly "In the know," tell us about the necessity of a good self-image, to feel good about ourselves? A prideful attitude toward self and how good self is, compared to other people, is the foundation upon which Satan succeeded in his snare for Eve.

Scripture repeatedly affirms a mentoring, training program for young ministers, as well as for young believers. To mentor someone means that

you care about them and about their growth, but it also means that you possess knowledge, experience, or both that they do not yet have, but need. In the student, a respect for the wisdom of the mentor is required, such a respect that the student will submit his novice ideas and pride to the wise mentor's teaching. I have been fascinated for years at the context of this mentoring system in Scripture. Second Timothy 2:1-2 affirms this model of training for a young minister. The lesson that follows these verses seems strangely out of place to this context; it deals with the need for Timothy to prepare himself to face "...hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Where is the war? How does this analogy fit the context of passing the faith from one generation to the next? Ah, the Holy Spirit gave Paul the perfect analogy for the task. When a younger person in the faith begins his journey, he will be full of self, of pride, and will more often advance ideas that grow out of that pride in his own knowledge or supposed superior spiritual devotion. He will feel deep conviction that he is right. He will firmly promote and defend his ideas. For the wise mentor in the faith, the battle for the young novice's future is in full motion. And the greatest danger to this young novice is his own pride, his own sense that he cannot be wrong, that he knows better than anyone who went before him. For the novice in the faith to survive, he must lose the battle! His pride most be melted.

"But I'm not a preacher, so why does this apply to me?" The same device that snares the novice preacher is the device that Satan used with Eve. Prepare yourself; it has worked so very well for so very long, Satan shall surely use it with you. He knows how to cultivate your pride and make you think that you are growing in spirituality all the while. I heard about a man many years ago who was foolishly engaging another believer in an argument about humility. In frustration at not being able to convince the other person, he said, "Why, I'm the humblest man that I've ever known." Would a truly humble man think himself to be more humble than anyone else? This man's foolish words serve to warn each of us that our pride in self is Satan's favorite device, and he well knows how to twist it so that we think ourselves superior in the faith, even as we do his bidding. The lion who roars also knows how to whisper. However, roar or whisper, his objective is always the same. He intends to try in every way possible to devour you, not help you in your Christian walk. But he will convince you that he is the best Christian you've ever met as he entices you through your pride to buy his ideas and attitudes. Are you prepared?

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Worship service each Sunday  
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10:30 A. M.  
Pastor