

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ASCENSION IN THE BELIEVER'S DAILY LIFE

#### THE ASCENSION: Satan And The Need Of Deliverance.

Standing between the Christian and a successful Christian life are not only his fallen nature with its enmity against God, and his innate lack of ability to do the will of God, but also his implacable foe - Satan.

The Christian has an enemy. To deny his existence, to underrate his power, and to be ignorant of his methods, or to fail to give heed to the Biblical warnings concerning Satan, can only result in spiritual loss.

The activity of Satan and his cunning counterfeits are disclosed in the Scriptures. He often comes as an "*angel of light*," in religious garb, to work with impunity among the children of God (II Corinthians 11:13-15). So skilled is he in subterfuge and forgery that his activity is rarely recognized as evil. His influence is described as a "*snare*" (II Timothy 2:26).

In a piercing exposé of the character and work of Satan, the Bible lists a number of descriptive titles; who he is, a fallen angel of great ability; and what he does, in his endeavor to strike out against God.

Satan is described as the believer's enemy through the title "*Adversary*" (I Peter 5:8). This characterization of our foe is not to be taken lightly. Although it is true that the Christian belongs to God and is under His sovereign protection (Job 1:10), this does not mean the believer is automatically free from all Satanic influences. By a misunderstanding of spiritual truths or through disobedience to God, a believer

may permit such Satanic intervention in his life that he will suffer great spiritual anxiety and loss.

As an Adversary, Satan has a clear-cut goal. He will endeavor in every way possible to keep the believer from any type of spiritual progress, enjoyment, or usefulness. If we cannot be enslaved through physical sins (Luke 4:33), the Adversary too often succeeds by leading us to overemphasize some spiritual truth or practice until it becomes a sin (Acts 5:1-11; II Corinthians 2:10, 11; 11:13-15; I Timothy 3:6, 7). Every earnest Christian stands in great danger of such a spiritual perversion. This demonic activity is more prevalent in our churches today than we could imagine. As an angel of light, his ministry is almost beyond detection. Who would question the motivation of the legalist, the ascetic, the mystic, or the one caught up in unusual spiritual experiences? It would be plainly "unspiritual" to do so!

Our Adversary works in the lives of Christians through temptation (I Thessalonians 3:5). We have been frankly told that we will not be tempted by God (James 1:13). Although one is often tempted through his own fallen nature (James 1:14), these activities may also find their source in the Devil. Who does not face a constant barrage?

The activity of Satan is also described as a work of hindrance (I Thessalonians 2:18). How often the serious Christian has experienced this influence in his life! It must be recognized that the paramount goal of our Adversary is to thwart and inhibit the believer's spiritual progress. The genuine Christian will have hindrances placed in his path by Satan. This was true of the Apostle Paul as the above text indicates.

A third type of activity utilized by our Adversary is that of deception (Revelation 12:9). With a heart that is deceitful

(Jeremiah 17:9), the Christian is unusually vulnerable to this type of attack. In particular, Satan will endeavor to lead the believer into deception concerning spiritual truths and his own spiritual condition. The people of Judah, for example, were slowly led to believe that they were spiritual when they were not. Instead of loving God, they loved only religion. They were deceived. It was their religious deceit which finally brought their judgment and the Babylonian Captivity (Jeremiah 7:1-16; 17:1-10). There are some things for which there is no cure - religiosity is one of these (Jeremiah 2:22; 8:5; 9:6; 11:11, 14; 14:12).

The believer may not listen to his own religious feelings or conscience. If he does, he is opening the door to Satan. How we feel about our spiritual condition is never authoritative: all authority resides in God and is made known through His work in history and His Word. When we confuse the voice of God with our own voice, we open ourselves to demonic deception (Galatians 6:3; II Timothy 3:13; James 1:22, 26; II Peter 2:13).

Satan is also given the title of "*Accuser*" (Revelation 12:10). This designation characterizes one of the most serious and successful activities of our enemy. The Christian is not only accused before God (Job 1:9; Zechariah 3:1), he is led, by Satan, into a state of false self-condemnation.

To accomplish this insidious work the Devil adopts his "*angel of light*" subterfuge, and counterfeits the conviction work of the Holy Spirit. All serious Christians have been suddenly engulfed by an intense awareness of personal guilt. They are made to feel, by Satan, as though they had sinned and were, therefore, out of fellowship with God and under His condemnation.

Under such a demonic attack the Christian is soon rendered helpless. No amount of confession relieves the

"conviction" of sin or the sense of estrangement. His joy disappears, he is thwarted in his attempt to do Christian service and, most serious of all, he is confused when his confession of sin does not result in forgiveness and restored fellowship.

In this situation the Christian who has discernment of the ways of the enemy will take spiritual stock. He will recognize the ambiguity and confusion which has characterized his "conviction." This will indicate to him that he has not been the recipient of the ministry of the Holy Spirit but has been under the accusation of the Devil.

When the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, His ministry is always characterized by clarity. The erring Christian is clearly shown what he has done wrong and what he is to do about it.

In direct contrast, the accusing work of Satan is always one of ambiguity. The Christian never knows what he has done or what he is to do to correct his situation. He is simply made to feel guilty and uneasy.

It is extremely important for the believer to learn this distinction between the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the counterfeiting of the Devil. As long as the believer accepts the accusations of Satan as true, his condition is hopeless. He must recognize what has happened, resist the Devil, and totally reject the accusations by a forthright decision of faith.

The titles of "*Murderer*" and "*Liar*" are also attributed to Satan (John 8:44). His objectives and actions in these areas are self-evident. His endeavors to take life and to pervert truth began in the Garden of Eden (I Timothy 2:14; I John 3:12) and will continue with the human race until the final judgment (I Timothy 4:1). We may not accept the demonic suggestion that our daily lives are without meaning

and that self-destruction is the only "spiritual" alternative left. Nor may the believer allow himself to become the tool of Satan by accepting and repeating the insinuations and distortions of gossip. The Apostle Paul flatly stated that the person who is a gossip had been influenced by Satan (I Timothy 5:13-15). It is important to recognize that of the seven things which God hates - the one who gossips has involved himself in six of these sins (Proverbs 6:16-19)!

The believer has an enemy and is in desperate need of deliverance.

### **THE ASCENSION: Satan And The Provision Of Deliverance.**

The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world as man's Representative to defeat Satan and to deliver His people from all demonic influence. As the last Adam He triumphed victoriously in the very area where the first Adam had completely failed (Romans 5:12-19).

Under Satanic temptation, the Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ not only corrected the demonic half-truths which were suggested to Him but also repulsed the enemy and commanded him to leave His presence (Matthew 4:1-11). It is important to understand that Jesus Christ took refuge in and employed the written Word of God.

In His daily ministry Christ's power over Satan was continually manifested. There was a constant recognition, on the part of demons, of Christ's divine Sonship, and of their total subjection to Him (Mark 3:11; 5:7; Luke 4:33-36).

The Apostle John boldly stated that the reason Jesus Christ came into the world was to destroy the works of Satan (I John 3:8). The writer of Hebrews made a similar statement. He explained how the Incarnation was necessary so

that through His death, Christ could strip the Devil of his power (Hebrews 2:14) and deliver His people from Satan's bondage (Hebrews 2:15).

The Apostle Paul affirmed the atonement of Jesus Christ to be a public exposé of the defeat of Satan in which the Son of God triumphed gloriously (Colossians 2:15). Because of this victory over Satan it must be recognized that although the Christian has an insidious and implacable foe in the Devil - he is a defeated foe!

That which the Lord Jesus Christ obtained by His death He assumed and demonstrated in His Ascension. The Ascension, therefore, is filled with meaning for the believer. Christ has entered Heaven, not only as Intercessor (Hebrews: 4:14; 6:20; 7:25; 8:1; 9:11, 12) and the Head of the Church (Ephesians 1:22), to give gifts to His Church (Ephesians 4:8-11) and to bestow the Holy Spirit upon all believers (Acts 2:33), but also to rule over His enemies.

Jesus Christ was seated at the right hand of God in victory over Satan and all his forces of evil (Ephesians 1:19-23; 2:5, 6; Hebrews 1:13; I Peter 3:22). They were all placed "under His feet."

This deliverance and position of authority over Satan has been legally given to the believer. We have been made to "*sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*" (Ephesians 2:6). Jesus Christ acted on our behalf as our Representative. As a "*joint-heir*" with Christ we share in His victory (Romans 8:17; Ephesians 6:16).

### **THE ASCENSION: Satan And The Provisions Of Deliverance.**

In his salvation, the believer was delivered from the kingdom and power of Satan and brought into the kingdom

of God (Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13). He, therefore, no longer lives under the dominion of the god of this world (Ephesians 2:13; II Corinthians 4:4). He has been set free.

However, it is one thing to be free from Satan in the area of salvation and quite another to maintain that freedom in the area of sanctification. The believer, through divine grace in salvation, now belongs to Jesus Christ. Therefore, he will never again belong to Satan. This does not mean, however, that Satan cannot make the believer's life miserable and ineffectual.

The Christian has been exhorted to resist the Devil (James 4:7; I Peter 5:8). This simply means to refuse to accept, or act in harmony with, the insinuations, accusations, or temptations of the enemy. The Apostle Paul was right in warning us that this takes sobriety, vigilance, and steadfastness I Peter 5:8, 9).

Except for unusual situations, as those described in the book of Job, the only way Satan can influence the Christian is through some aspect of sinfulness. This is what the Apostle Paul was referring to when he warned the Ephesian Christians, "*Neither give place to the Devil*" (Ephesians 4:27). When the believer allows the Devil a "place" or "foothold" in his life, the Devil will exploit that opportunity to the fullest.

There are at least four illustrations in the New Testament of giving opportunity to Satan. Two of these illustrations have to do with the pastoral office and two with the membership in the church.

Concerning these first two illustrations, The Apostle Paul warned Timothy that the pastor may not be a novice and that he must have a good report among those who are not Christians. A novice would be almost certain to become proud, and if one did not have a good report he would not only be open to criticism but would be tempted to be

hypocritical. These, Paul stated, would make the pastor vulnerable to the condemnation and snare of the Devil (I Timothy 3:6, 7). Pride, inconsistency, and hypocrisy have caused the fall of many. They leave the Christian defenseless.

The third illustration has to do with forgiveness among church members. The church at Corinth had disciplined one of its members for immorality and was now exhorted to receive him back, since he had repented. Paul wrote to the church and warned them to forgive the man and to love him. Not to do so would have presented to Satan an "*advantage*" (II Corinthians 2:1-11).

Many Christians and churches have failed to obey this exhortation. Not only have the people displayed a lack of forgiveness but they have added the sin of gossip. To make the situation worse, many repentant believers have not found love upon returning to their church but, instead, a cold stony indifference. Satan had been given the "*advantage.*"

The fourth illustration describes two church members. Ananias and Sapphira pretended to be more spiritual than they were. Their profession did not match their inner walk with God. They had accepted a suggestion of Satan and had put it into practice. Their judgment serves as a warning to all hypocrites (Acts 5:1-11).

Any failure to obey God opens the door to Satanic influence. When the Christian chooses to disobey God, he is acting as did Eve in the Garden. Eve allowed Satan to question the authority of God's Word and accepted his demonic interpretation. Having done this, it was quite easy for her to put the insinuations into practice. When the believer chooses to sin, he is acting, as did Eve, on the premise that the Word of God is not final authority. By failing to obey God we not only destroy our spirituality, but we allow Satan to ensnare us (II Timothy 2:25, 26).

To escape this tragic situation and its inexorable result, we must learn to obey God and "*resist the Devil.*" In response to Satanic questioning of the Word of God and deceptive insinuations concerning the will of God, we must steadfastly affirm the truthfulness of the Word and will of God (I Peter 5:8, 9; Matthew 4:1-11).

In obeying the exhortation to resist the Devil, the Apostle Paul stated that the most important factor was understanding and using the "*shield of faith*" (Ephesians 6:16). This we are to do "above all." The shield is more valuable than any of the other items of the Christian's armor (Ephesians 6:11-18). This "shield" is a symbolic representation of a believer's decision of faith, which will successfully thwart the attacks of Satan. The Apostle Paul stated the same truth (I Peter 5:9).

The faith to which both Peter and Paul were referring is the believer's wholehearted trust in, and commitment to, Jesus Christ and His successful triumph over Satan. This faith is the decision to stand in the value of, and to appropriate the power of, Christ's victory. The Christian has every right to do this since the power of Christ's work has been imputed to him. When we make the decision to obey God fully, to trust in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, and to live accordingly, we will learn what it means to resist the Devil, and we will have the ability to do so. We will have a "*shield of faith.*"

These exhortations are summarized in the book of Revelation in the description of the Overcomers (Revelation 12:11). The secret of their victory over Satan was three-fold. The reference to "*the blood of the Lamb,*" indicates the victorious triumph of Jesus Christ in Whom they trusted. "*The word of their testimony,*" refers to their decisions of faith to appropriate Christ's victory. And, finally, the statement, "*they loved not their lives unto the death,*"

portrays their committal to Jesus Christ even though it meant death.

For too many Christians this description of life is entirely foreign to their own daily existence. The problem is not with the provision of God nor with the Biblical exhortations. The reason many Christians do not experience deliverance or even feel the need of divine help is because of their attitude: they couldn't care less! With that kind of attitude about spiritual things the average Christian will very likely not be bothered by Satanic influences. He has made his own life ineffectual!

In Diagram 13, we see the provision God has made for the Christian's daily walk in resisting the Adversary.

**THE KEY TO SUCCESS: Resist The Devil By Rejecting His Insinuations And Temptations. Refuse, In The Name Of The Lord Jesus Christ, All His Attempts To Enter Your Daily Life. If The Adversary Gains Entrance Through Sin, Repent, Apologize To God, And Take Back The Ground You Have Given To The Devil. Maintain The Armor Provided By God.**

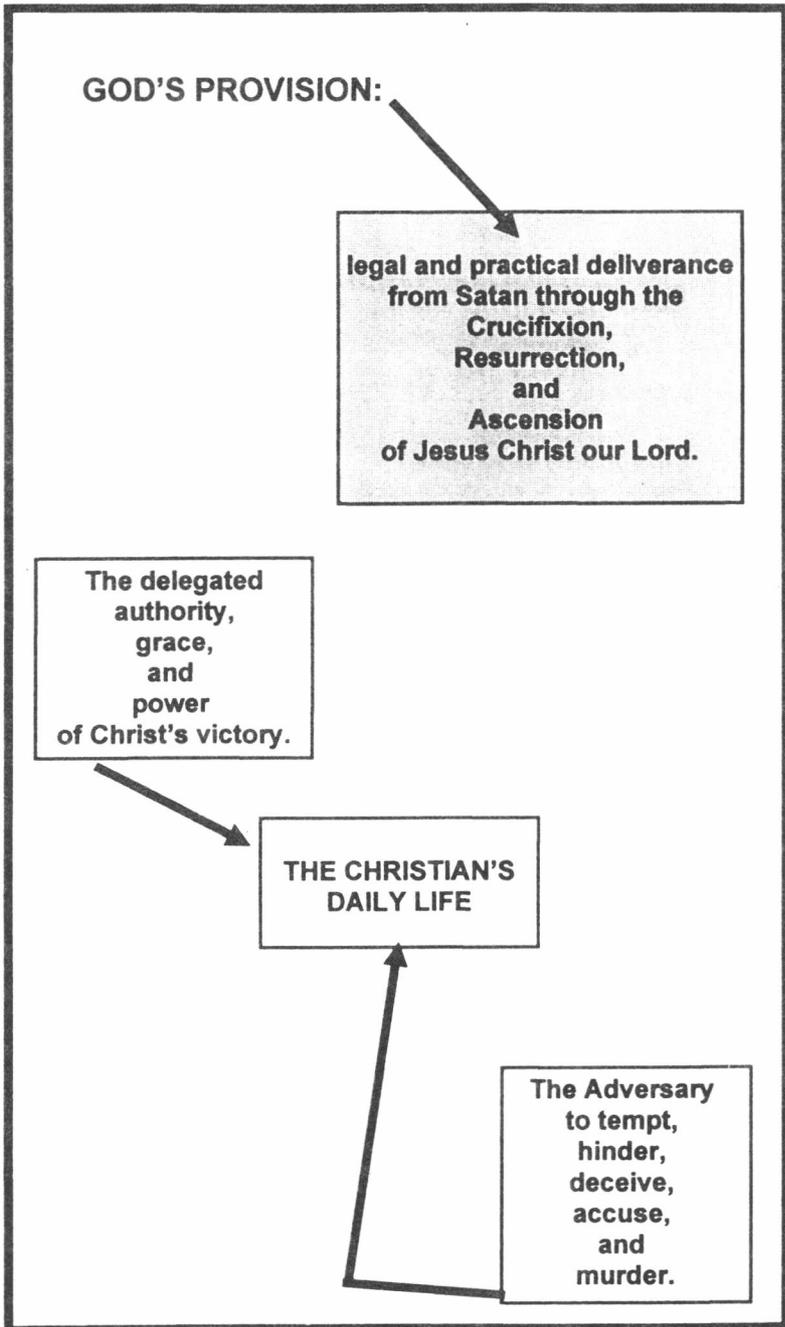


Diagram 13: The Christian's Means to Handle the Adversary - Satan

