

The Devil's Favorite Trick

By Dave Breese

Each of us has questioned why life is often so complicated and frustrating. “Why isn’t it easy to live?” we often ask. “Why do my best plans so frequently produce such a horrible mess?” With these and other questions, we continue to wonder about life and its difficulties.

Wonder no more! Life is difficult because you and I were born on a great battlefield. It is a battlefield between truth and error, between light and darkness, yes, a battlefield between Christ and Satan. The devil is constantly going about seeking what new, pernicious mischief he may involve himself in. He plagues the footsteps of us all and is constantly seeking to do spiritual harm to you and me.

To accomplish this, he has more schemes than most of us can imagine. His bag of tricks is large, indeed. He is a clever, wily foe, scheming all of the time in his battle against your soul and mine.

In that he is up to so many things, we do well to ask about his most effective device. “What is the devil’s favorite trick?” To know the answer to that question is to gain a very real advantage in life.

His devices are many, and we do well to be aware of all of them. He inhabits some people. Demon possession is a very fearful thing of which the Bible speaks much. Christ, again and again during his ministry, delivered distraught souls who were possessed of many devils.

He oppresses many people. Christ warned Peter that the devil desired to sift him as wheat. The Bible indicates that satanic oppression is one of Satan’s methods to inhibit the capability of people, especially Christians. One wonders how much of the **depression of today** and even the well-known mental disorders of our time do not come as a result of the oppression of His Infernal Majesty, the devil.

He also accuses people. He once stood before the throne of God and accused both God and the patriarch Job of many things. He is called “The Accuser of the Brethren” and we can be sure that he points up the sins and shortcomings of many before the divine tribunal.

Beyond all these things, however, he has a favorite in his bag of tricks that he uses more often and more successfully than any other of his fiendishly-clever devices. What is that **favorite trick**? It is this—**he obscures the Gospel**. Concerning this, the Bible gives us a very important warning, saying “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine to them” (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4). Here is a **very serious warning**, which does well to be heeded by every person who lives.

In bringing this warning, the Bible refers to the most precious message in all of the world. It is the message which brings the hope of eternal life and it is called “The Gospel.” The Gospel, which means “the Good News,” is the truth concerning the death, the burial, the resurrection of Jesus Christ and what that event can bring to our lives. The meaning of the Gospel is exactly explained by the Apostle Paul when he said, “I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand; By which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached to you, unless you have believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (I Corinthians 15:1-4).

Here, then, we have the message which tells us of the event by which we are saved, in which the Christian and the Church stand and without which, they will fall.

The Gospel makes the remarkable announcement that salvation is not by works, religion, or lawkeeping, but it depends upon the finished work of Christ on the cross. It is the glorious news that we are saved, not by our own efforts, but by the work of another - Christ who died for us. Salvation is wholly dependent upon the person of Jesus Christ and His atonement for the sins of mankind when He died in our place at Calvary. We Christians rejoice that we can sing:

“Calvary covers it all,
My past with its guilt and stain,
My sin and despair, Jesus took on Him there,
And Calvary covers it all.”

This message of eternal life, because of the work of Jesus Christ, is the source of greatest consternation to the devil. It is Calvary, alone, that makes it possible for the individual to be delivered from the clutches of Satan. It is Calvary that opens the door through which Christ, Himself, can come into the heart of the believer, bringing blessing, eternal life, and every other good thing from the bountiful hand of our Heavenly Father.

We must not be surprised, therefore, that Satan, with his most strenuous efforts, opposes this message and all that it means. Above all else, Satan works to **blind the minds** of unbelieving people so they will not see the deliverance from sin and the power for living which come to them as a result of the Gospel.

He obscures the Gospel in many ways. One of them is that he preaches the doctrine of salvation by works. He says to the heart of the sinner, “Surely, a terrible person like you must realize that you can never make it to heaven without working hard to pay back the price of all of the sins that you have committed.” The natural man is vulnerable to this “logical” message. Being cynical of mind, he finds it very hard to believe that it is possible to get something for nothing. The Gospel, therefore, which announces salvation by grace, can easily **seem too good to be true**. Satan helps this attitude, convincing the unbeliever that works—and not faith—are the basis of salvation. To such, the Bible says, “Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” However Satan may confuse the issue, righteousness without works is the basis of salvation from God.

The devil obscures the Gospel by introducing religion. There is no shortage of religion in the world, as we all know. In our civilization, we have hundreds of thousands of churches, hundreds of denominations, thousands of cults, religion aplenty. Why do you suppose religion is so popular? It is because the devil has made people believe that the practice of religion is the way to heaven, the path to salvation.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The Galatians in Bible times were pressed upon by this message of salvation by religion. To them, the Apostle Paul said, “I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ to another gospel.” These people had turned from the Gospel of the grace of God, and had begun to believe **a perversion of the Gospel** called religion. To them, Paul also wrote, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” In this warning to his beloved Galatians, Paul was referring to religious bondage. Few entrapments are more dangerous than the bondage of religion.

To sweeten this poison pot, the religionists also throw in such additional attractions as baptism, membership, communion, liturgy, devotions and other things, announcing that they are the way of salvation.

As a result, the web of religion has grown large in our time and millions are caught in it. With their eyes filled with the images of candles, metal crosses, robes and tiaras, they have lost sight of the **simplicity** of the Gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Satan also obscures the Gospel by a method, popular in our time, called salvation by social service. Millions today have come to believe that one makes it to heaven by living for others, being sacrificial, helping the poor, volunteering time for the less fortunate, and the like. Commendable as these activities may be, they have obscured the Gospel with many because they have become, for them, the way of salvation.

Millions today live helpful, self-effacing lives on behalf of others, but somewhere in their minds believe that this produces salvation, or at least makes salvation more sure. In pursuit of this delusion, whole groups and denominations have committed themselves to “work for peace and justice in the world,” calling this “the gospel.” Deluded followers, therefore, often succumb to the notion that this assures the path to eternal life. “Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love (the saving love of Jesus Christ), it profits me nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:3).

The call to social action is large in these days. Beware of those who confuse this with salvation. Closer to home, the devil often obscures the Gospel by **ambiguous invitations**. “Come and surrender all to Jesus,” many an audience is often told. “Make a commitment to Christ.” “Repent and turn over a new leaf.” “Pray through, hang on, let go, give your heart to Jesus,” are other invitations which are frequently heard. These invitations are warmly given with great sincerity, but they tend to obscure the Gospel. Saving faith is not personal experience; it is an objective dependence on the finished work, which Christ accomplished on the cross. Salvation is not deep sorrow, the willingness to change, earnest contrition. While one or another of these emotions may attend the convicted sinner, they are not, in themselves, salvation. One is saved by faith, sincere and sole dependence on the shed blood of Jesus Christ, His death on the cross. I am saved, not by my own surrender, but by the surrender of another—Christ, who gave Himself unto death for me. When listening to some, one could almost believe that he is saved by a psychological experience with the personality of Jesus. This is what we call neo-orthodoxy: it is not true Christianity.

Each of us, therefore, needs to be **warned** that the devil will attempt to work his favorite trick upon you and me, obscuring the Gospel. Therefore, again and again, we need to stop and look back at the greatest event in human history, the sacrifice of Christ at Calvary. We need to read and daily remind ourselves that it is the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses sin. It is His death that produces our life; it is His sacrifice, alone, which allows us to be free. Simple, earnest faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ is, in fact, saving faith—nothing else is. You may be reading these very pages with a mind full of religious sympathies, and yet be hopelessly lost. Church membership, faithful service, helping the poor, being religious, all of these things may be commendable, but not one of them constitutes salvation.

One who believes that the basis of salvation is anything, whatsoever, beside faith in the saving act of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, that one has been **blinded by Satan**. Today, you are invited by a loving God to step out of the darkness of sin into the light of the Gospel. In this moment of time, if you will believe on Jesus Christ in the sense of accepting Calvary as the sole basis of your salvation, you will have the gift of God, which is everlasting life. It is this decision, this faith alone, that makes you a Christian. By believing in Jesus Christ, you are saved from the dreadful cancer of sin, and delivered from the clutches of your hateful foe, the devil. Today, you are invited to hear His voice and believe on Jesus Christ to be saved.

From the writings of Dave Breese ♦ <http://christiandestiny.org/>