

SATAN
a
DEFEATED FOE

SATAN a DEFEATED FOE

CHARLES H. SPURGEON



WHITAKER
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SATAN, A DEFEATED FOE

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One

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*And the LORD said unto Satan,
Hast thou considered my servant Job?*

—Job 1:8

How very uncertain are all terrestrial things! How foolish are those believers who lay up their treasure anywhere except in heaven! Job's prosperity promised about as much stability as anything beneath the moon can. Undoubtedly, the man had around him a large household of devoted and attached servants. He had accumulated wealth of a kind that does not suddenly depreciate in value. He had oxen, donkeys, and cattle. He did not have to go to markets or fairs and trade with his goods to procure food and clothing. He carried on the processes of agriculture on a very large scale around his own homestead and probably grew within his own estate everything that his establishment required. His children were numerous enough to promise a long line of descendants. His prosperity needed nothing to make it complete. It had come to its flood tide; what could make it ebb?

Up there, beyond the clouds, where no human eye could see, there was a scene enacted that heralded no good for Job's prosperity. The spirit of evil stood face to face

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with the infinite Spirit of all good. An extraordinary conversation took place between these two beings.

When called to account for his doings, the Evil One boasted that he had gone "*to and fro in the earth, and [walked] up and down on it*" (Job 1:7), insinuating that he had met with no hindrance to his will and that he had found no one to oppose his moving freely and acting at his own pleasure. He had marched everywhere like a king in his own dominions, unhindered and unchallenged.

The great God reminded Satan that there was at least one place among men where he had no foothold and where his power was unrecognized, namely, in the heart of Job. There was one man who stood like an impregnable castle, garrisoned by integrity and held with perfect loyalty as the possession of the King of heaven.

The Evil One defied God Almighty to try the faithfulness of Job by telling Him that the patriarch's integrity was due to his prosperity, and that he served God and shunned evil from sinister motives because he found his conduct profitable to himself. The God of heaven took up the challenge of the Evil One and gave him permission to take away all the mercies that were supposed to be the props of Job's integrity. God allowed him to pull down all the supports and buttresses and see whether the tower would not stand in its own inherent strength without them. In consequence of this, all Job's wealth went in one black day, and not even a child was left to whisper comfort.

A second interview between the Lord and His fallen angel took place. Job was again the subject of conversation. The Great One, again defied by Satan, permitted him even to touch Job in his bone and in his flesh, until the prince became worse than a pauper. He who was rich and happy was poor and wretched, filled with disease from

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head to foot and reduced to scraping himself with a broken piece of pottery to gain a poor relief from his pain.

Let us see in this the changeability of all earthly things. “*He hath founded it upon the seas*” (Psalm 24:2) is David’s description of this world. Since it is founded on the seas, can you be surprised that it changes often? Do not put your trust in anything underneath the stars. Remember that the word *change* is written on the forefront of nature. Therefore, do not say, “My mountain stands firm; it will never be moved.” The glance of the Almighty’s eye can shake your mountain into dust; the touch of His foot can make it melt like wax or go up in smoke.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. (Colossians 3:1–2)

Let your heart and your treasure be “*where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal*” (Matthew 6:20).

The words of Bernard may help to instruct us:

That is the true and chief joy which is not conceived from the creature, but received from the Creator, which (being once possessed thereof) none can take from thee: compared with which all other pleasure is torment, all joy is grief, sweet things are bitter, all glory is baseness, and all delectable things are despicable.

This is not, however, our subject in this chapter. Accept what I have written as merely an introduction to our main discussion. The Lord asked Satan, “*Hast thou considered my servant Job?*” Let us deliberate, first, in what sense the Evil One may be said to consider the people of God.

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Then, let us notice what it is that he considers about them. Finally, let us comfort ourselves by the reflection that One who is far above Satan considers us in a higher sense.

SATAN'S CONSIDERATIONS

First, then, in what sense may Satan be said to "*consider*" the people of God? Certainly not in the usual biblical meaning of the term *consider*, as in these verses: "*O LORD; consider my trouble*" (Psalm 9:13), or "*Consider my meditation*" (Psalm 5:1), or "*Blessed is he that considers the poor*" (Psalm 41:1). Such consideration implies goodwill and a careful inspection of the object of benevolence with regard to a wise distribution of favor.

In that sense, Satan never considers anyone. If he has any benevolence, it must be toward himself. All his considerations of other creatures are of the most malevolent kind. No meteoric flash of good flits across the black midnight of his soul, nor does he consider us as we are told to consider the works of God, that is, in order to derive instruction as to God's wisdom and love and kindness. He does not honor God by what he sees in His works or in His people. It is not in him to "*go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise*" (Proverbs 6:6). Rather, he goes to the Christian and considers his ways and becomes more foolishly God's enemy than he was before.

The consideration that Satan pays to God's saints is this: he regards them with wonder when he considers the difference between them and himself. A traitor, when he knows the thorough villainy and blackness of his own heart, cannot help being astounded when he is forced to believe that another man is faithful. The first resort of a treacherous heart is to believe that all men would be just as treacherous, and are really so at bottom. The traitor thinks that all men are traitors like himself, or would be, if it paid them better than fidelity.

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When Satan looks at the Christian and finds him faithful to God and to His truth, he considers him as we consider a phenomenon—perhaps despising him for his folly, yet marveling at him and wondering how he can act this way. He seems to say, “I, a prince, a peer of God’s parliament, would not submit my will to the Almighty. I thought it better to reign in hell than serve in heaven. I did not keep my proper domain, but fell from my throne. How is it that these stand? What grace is it that keeps these? I was a vessel of gold, and yet I was broken. These are earthen vessels, but I cannot break them! I could not stand in my glory—what can be the matchless grace that upholds them in their poverty, in their obscurity, in their persecution, still faithful to the God who does not bless and exalt them as He did me!”

It may be that he also wonders at their happiness. He feels within himself a seething sea of misery. There is an unfathomable gulf of anguish within his soul. When he looks at believers, he sees them quiet in their souls, full of peace and happiness, often without any outward means by which they are comforted, yet rejoicing and full of glory.

Satan goes up and down through the world and possesses great power. There are many slaves to serve him, yet he does not have the happiness of spirit possessed by yonder humble working woman, obscure, unknown, stretched out on the bed of weakness, having no servants to wait on her. He admires and hates the peace that reigns in the believer’s soul.

His consideration may go further than this. Do you not think that he considers them to detect, if possible, any flaw and fault in them, by way of solace to himself? “They are not pure,” says he, “these blood-bought ones, these elect from before the foundation of the world. They still sin! These adopted children of God, for whom the

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glorious Son bowed His head and breathed His last, even they offend!"

How he must chuckle, with such delight as he is capable of, over the secret sins of God's people. If he can see anything in them inconsistent with their profession, anything that appears to be deceitful and thus like himself, he rejoices. Each sin born in the believer's heart cries to him, "My father! My father!" Then he feels something like the joy of fatherhood as he sees his foul offspring. He looks at the "*old man*" (Ephesians 4:22) in the Christian and admires the tenacity with which it maintains its hold, the force and vehemence with which it struggles for mastery. He gleefully observes the craft and cunning with which every now and then, at set intervals, at convenient opportunities, the old nature puts forth all its force. He considers our sinful flesh and makes it one of the books in which he diligently reads.

One of the fairest prospects the Devil's eye ever rests on is the inconsistency and the impurity that he can discover in the true child of God. In this respect, he had very little to consider in God's true servant, Job.

This is just the starting point of his consideration. I do not doubt that he views the Lord's people, and especially the more prominent leaders among them, as the great barriers to the progress of his kingdom. Just as the engineer, endeavoring to make a railway, keeps his eye very much fixed on the hills and rivers, and especially on the great mountain through which it will take months to laboriously bore a tunnel, so Satan, in looking upon his various plans to carry on his dominion in the world, considers men like Job.

Satan must have thought much about Martin Luther. "I could ride the world over," he probably said, "if it were not for that monk. He stands in my way. That strong-headed

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man hates and attacks my kingdom. If I could get rid of him, I would not mind if fifty thousand smaller saints stood in my way."

He is sure to consider God's servant if there is "*none like him*" (Job 1:8), if he stands out distinct and separate from others. Those of us who are called to the work of the ministry must expect from our position to be selected as the special objects of his consideration. When the magnifying glass is at the eye of that dreadful warrior, he is sure to look out for those who by their uniforms are discovered to be the officers, and he tells his sharpshooters to be very careful to aim at these. "For," he says, "if the standard-bearer falls, then the victory will be more readily gained for our side, and our opponents will be easily put to flight."

If you are more generous than other believers, if you live nearer to God than others, as the birds peck most at the ripest fruit, so may you expect Satan to be most busy against you. Who cares to contend for a province covered with stones and barren rocks, and ice-bound by frozen seas? But in all times there is sure to be a contention after the fertile valleys where the crops are plenteous and where the farmer's toil is well rewarded. Thus, for you who honor God most, Satan will struggle very sternly. He wants to pluck God's jewels from His crown, if he can, and take the Redeemer's precious stones even from the breastplate itself.

In this way, Satan considers God's people. Viewing them as hindrances to his reign, he contrives methods by which he may remove them out of his way or turn them to his own account. Darkness would cover the earth if he could blow out the lights. There would be no fruit to wave like the cedars of Lebanon if he could destroy that handful of corn upon the top of the mountains (Psalm 72:16).

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Hence, his perpetual consideration is to make the faithful fall from among men.

It does not require much wisdom to discern that the great object of Satan in considering God's people is to do them injury. I scarcely think he hopes to destroy the really chosen and blood-bought heirs of life. My notion is that he is too smart for that. He has been foiled so often when he has attacked God's people that he can hardly think he will be able to destroy the elect.

You remember what the soothsayers, who are very closely related to him, said to Haman: "*If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.*" (Esther 6:13). He knows very well that there is a royal seed in the land against whom he fights in vain.

It strikes me that if he could be absolutely certain that any one soul was chosen by God, he would scarcely waste his time in attempting to destroy it, although he might seek to worry and to dishonor it. However, most likely Satan no more knows who God's elect are than we do, for he can only judge as we do, by outward actions, even though he can form a more accurate judgment than we can, by reason of his longer experience and his ability to see persons in private where we cannot intrude. Yet into God's book of secret decrees, his black eye can never peer. "*By their fruits*" (Matthew 7:16) he knows them, and we know them in the same manner.

Since, however, we are often mistaken in our judgment, he, too, may be also. And it seems to me that he therefore makes it his policy to endeavor to destroy us all—not knowing in which case he may succeed. He goes about "*seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5:8), and since he does not know whom he may be permitted to swallow up, he attacks all the people of God with vehemence.

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Someone may ask, “How can one devil do this?” He does not do it by himself. I do not know that many of us have ever been tempted directly by Satan—we may not be notable enough among men to be worth his trouble. But he has a whole host of inferior spirits under his supremacy and control. As the centurion said of himself, so he might have also said of Satan, “[He says to this spirit], *Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it*” (Matthew 8:9). Thus all the servants of God will more or less come under the direct or indirect assaults of the Great Enemy of souls, and these attacks are with the aim of destroying them. For he would, “*if it were possible...deceive the very elect*” (Matthew 24:24).

In situations where he cannot destroy, there is no doubt that Satan’s object is to worry and to bother. He does not like to see God’s people happy. I believe the Devil greatly delights in some ministers, whose tendency in their preaching is to multiply and foster doubts and fears and to present grief and despondency as the primary evidences of being one of God’s family. “Oh, yes,” says the Devil, “preach on. You are doing my work well, for I like to see God’s people mournful. If I can make them stop their singing and go around with miserable faces, I reckon I have done my work very completely.”

My dear friends, let us watch against those deceptive temptations that pretend to make us humble but really aim at making us unbelieving. Our God takes no delight in our suspicions and mistrusting. See how He proves His love in the gift of His dear Son Jesus. Banish, then, all your doubts and worries, and rejoice in unshakeable confidence. God delights to be worshipped with joy.

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come

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*before his presence with thanksgiving, and make
a joyful noise unto him with psalms.*

(Psalm 95:1–2)

*Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, ye righteous: and
shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.*

(Psalm 32:11)

*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say,
Rejoice.*

(Philippians 4:4)

Satan resents hearing God praised by His children. Martin Luther used to say, “Let us sing psalms and spite the Devil.” I have no doubt Martin Luther was pretty nearly right, for that lover of discord hates harmonious, joyous praise.

Beloved friend, the Archenemy wants to make you wretched here if he cannot have you hereafter. In this, no doubt, he is aiming a blow at the honor of God. He is well aware that mournful Christians often dishonor the faithfulness of God by mistrusting it. Thus he thinks if he can worry us until we no longer believe in the constancy and goodness of the Lord, he will have robbed God of His praise. “*Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth Me*” (Psalm 50:23), says God. So Satan swings the ax at the root of our praise so that God may cease to be glorified.

Moreover, if Satan cannot destroy a Christian, how often has he spoiled his usefulness? Many believers have fallen, not so as to break their necks and die prematurely—that is impossible—but they have broken some important bone and have gone limping to their graves! We can recall with grief some men who were once prominent in the church and who were running well, but who suddenly through the stress of temptation fell into sin. Their names were never mentioned in the church again except with bated breath. Everybody thought and prayed that

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they were saved *“as through fire”* (1 Corinthians 3:15), but certainly their former usefulness could hardly return. It is very easy to go backwards in the heavenly pilgrimage, but it is very difficult to retrieve your steps.

You may turn aside and blow out your candle, but you cannot light it again quite as quickly. Beloved in the Lord, watch against the attacks of Satan and stand fast, because you, as a pillar in the house of God, are very dear to the church. We cannot spare you. As a father or as a mother in our midst, we honor you, and we do not wish to mourn and lament or to be grieved by hearing the shouts of our adversaries while they cry, “Aha! This is just what we wanted!”

Alas, there have been many things done in our midst about which we say: *“Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph”* (2 Samuel 1:20).

May God grant us grace as a church to stand against the schemes of Satan and his attacks, that having done his worst, he may gain no advantage over us. After having considered, reconsidered, and carefully counted our towers and bulwarks, may he be compelled to retire because his battering rams cannot jar so much as a stone from our ramparts, and his slings cannot slay one single soldier on the walls.

Before I leave this point, I would like to address a question that is often asked, if only in the minds of believers: “Why is it that God permits this constant and malevolent consideration of His people by the Evil One?”

Undoubtedly, one answer is that God knows what is for His own glory, and that He gives no account of His matters. Having permitted free agency and having allowed for some mysterious reason the existence of evil, it does not seem agreeable with His having done so to destroy Satan.

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Rather, He allows the fiend to have power so that it may be a fair hand-to-hand fight between sin and holiness, between grace and craftiness.

Incidentally, let it also be remembered that the temptations of Satan are of service to the people of God. Fénelon said that they serve as the file that rubs off much of the rust of self-confidence. I may add that they make a horrible sound in the sentinel's ear, which is sure to keep him awake. One astute theologian remarked that there is no temptation in the world as bad as not being tempted at all, for to be tempted will tend to keep us awake. On the other hand, flesh and blood become weak and anemic without temptation. Though our spirits may be willing, yet we may be found falling into slumber. (See Matthew 26:40–41.)

Children do not run away from their father's side when big dogs bark at them. The howling of the Devil may tend to drive us nearer to Christ, may teach us our own weaknesses, may keep us upon our own watchtower, and may be made the means of preservation from other ills. *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Peter 5:8).

May we who are in a prominent position be permitted to affectionately make one earnest request of you: *"Brethren, pray for us"* (1 Thessalonians 5:25), that exposed as we are to the consideration of Satan, we may be guarded by divine power. Let us be made rich by your faithful prayers so that we may be kept even to the end.

SATAN'S INJURIOUS VIEWPOINT

Now then, specifically what does Satan consider with the view toward the injury of God's people?

It cannot be said of him, as it is of God, that he knows us totally. However, since he has now been dealing with

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poor fallen humanity for six thousand years or so, he must have acquired very vast experience in that period of time. Having been all over the earth and having tempted the highest and the lowest, he must know very well what the springs of human action are and how to play upon them.

Satan watches and considers, first of all, our particular infirmities and weak points where we are vulnerable. The Enemy of our souls soon finds out where we are faulty when he looks us up and down, just as I have seen a horse dealer do with a horse. I, a common observer, might think a horse an exceedingly good one as I see it running up and down the road, but the dealer sees what I cannot see and knows how to handle the creature in such a way that he soon discovers any hidden mischief. Satan knows how to look at us and size us up from heel to head, so that he says of this man, "His infirmity is lust"; of that one, "He has a quick temper"; of another, "He is proud"; or of that other, "He is slothful."

His eye of malice is very quick to perceive a weakness, and the hand of enmity soon takes advantage of it. When the Archenemy finds a weak place in the walls of our castles, he takes care where to plant his battering ram and begin his siege. You may conceal your infirmity even from your dearest friend, but you will not conceal it from your worst Enemy. He has lynx eyes and detects in a moment the weak point in your armor. He goes about with a match, and though you may think you have covered all the gunpowder of your heart, he knows how to find a crack to put his match through. Much mischief will he do unless eternal mercy prevents.

He takes care also to consider our state of mind. If the Devil would attack us when our minds are in certain moods, we would be more than a match for him. He knows this and shuns the encounter. Some men are more

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vulnerable to temptation when they are distressed and desponding. The Fiend will then assail them. Others will be more liable to catch fire when they are jubilant and full of joy, so that is when he will strike his spark into the tinder. Certain people, when they are overly vexed and tossed to and fro, can be made to say almost anything. Others, when their souls are like perfectly placid waters, are just then in a condition to be navigated by the Devil's vessel.

As a metalworker knows that one metal is to be worked with at a particular heat and another at a different temperature, and as those who have to deal with chemicals know that at a certain heat one fluid will boil while another reaches the boiling point much earlier, so Satan knows exactly the temperature at which to work on us for his purpose. Small pots boil quickly when they are put on the fire, and so do little men with quick tempers. Larger vessels require more time and heat before they will boil, but when they do, it is a boil indeed, not soon forgotten or abated.

The Enemy, like a veteran fisherman, watches his fish, adapts his bait to his prey, and knows in what seasons and times the fish are most likely to bite. This hunter of souls comes secretly. Often we are overtaken in a fault or caught in a trap through an unwatchful frame of mind. That rare collector of choice sayings, Thomas Spencer, said the following, which is much to the point:

The chameleon, when he lies on the grass to catch flies and grasshoppers, takes upon him the color of the grass, as the polypus does the color of the rock under which he lurks, that the fish may boldly come near him without any suspicion of danger. In like manner, Satan turns himself into that shape that we least fear, and sets before us such objects of temptation as are most agreeable to our natures, so he may the sooner draw us

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into his net; he sails with every wind, and blows us the way that we incline ourselves through the weakness of nature.

Is our knowledge in the matter of faith deficient? He tempts us to error. Is our conscience tender? He tempts us to scrupulosity, and too much preciseness. Has our conscience, like the ecliptic line, some latitude? He tempts us to carnal liberty. Are we bold-spirited? He tempts us to presumption. Are we timorous and distrustful? He tempts us to desperation. Are we of a flexible disposition? He tempts us to inconstancy. Are we stiff? He labors to make obstinate heretics, schismatics, or rebels of us. Are we of an austere temper? He tempts us to cruelty. Are we soft and mild? He tempts us to indulgence and foolish pity. Are we hot in matters of religion? He tempts us to blind zeal and superstition. Are we cold? He tempts us to Laodicean lukewarmness. Thus he lays his traps, that one way or other, he may ensnare us.

Satan also takes care to consider our position among men. There are a few people who are most easily tempted when they are alone. They are then subjected to great heaviness of mind, and they may be driven to most awful crimes. Perhaps most of us are more liable to sin when we are in the company of others. In some company I would never be led into sin, but I could scarcely venture into other groups. Many are so full of levity that those of us who are inclined the same way can scarcely look them in the face without feeling our own besetting sin rising. Others are so somber that if they meet a brother of a similar mind, they are pretty sure between them to invent an evil report of the good land. Satan knows where to overtake you in a place where you lie open to his attacks. He will pounce upon you, swooping like a bird of prey from the

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sky, where he has been watching for the moment to make his descent with the prospect of success.

How, too, he considers our condition in the world! He looks at one man and says, "That man has property; it is of no use my trying these certain deceits with him. But here is another man who is very poor; I will catch him in that net." Then, again, he looks at the poor man and says, "Now, I cannot tempt him to this folly, but I will lead the rich man into it." As the sportsman has one gun for wild fowl and another for deer and game, so Satan has a different temptation for various orders of men. I do not suppose that the Queen's temptation ever will annoy the housekeeper. I do not suppose, on the other hand, that the housekeeper's temptation will ever be very serious to me. Probably you could escape from mine, though I do not think you could. I sometimes imagine I could bear yours, though I question if I could. Satan knows, however, just where to smite each of us. Our position, our capabilities, our education, our standing in society, our calling—all may be doors through which he may attack us.

You who have no calling at all are in special peril. I wonder that the Devil does not swallow you instantly. The most likely man to go to hell is the man who has nothing to do on earth. I say that seriously. I believe that a much worse evil cannot happen to a person than to be placed where he has no work. If I should ever be in such a state, I would get employment at once for fear I would be carried off, body and soul, by the Evil One. Idle people tempt the Devil to tempt them.

Let us have something to do; let us keep our minds occupied. If we do not, we will make room for the Devil. Industry will not make us gracious, but the lack of work may make us vicious. Always have some work to do. As Isaac Watts penned,

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In books, or work, or healthful play,
I would be busy too,
For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.

Books, work, or such recreations as are necessary for health should occupy our time. If I throw myself down in idleness, like an old piece of iron, I must not wonder that I grow rusty with sin.

I am not finished with this subject yet. Satan, when he makes his investigations, notices all the objects of our affection. I do not doubt that when he went around Job's house, he observed it as carefully as thieves do a jeweler's premises when they are planning to break in. They very cunningly take account of every door, window, and lock. They do not fail to look at the house next door, for they may have to reach the treasure through the building that adjoins it.

When the Devil looked around, jotting down in his mind all Job's position, he thought to himself, "There are the camels, the oxen, the donkeys, and the servants—yes, I can use all these very admirably."

"Then," he thought, "there are the three daughters, there are the seven sons, and they all go feasting. I know where to catch them, and if I can just blow the house down when they are feasting, that will afflict the father's mind more severely, for he will say, 'Oh, that they had died when they had been praying, rather than when they had been feasting and drinking wine.'"

"I will also put his wife down in the inventory," said the Devil, "I dare say I will need her," and accordingly it came to that. Nobody could have done what Job's wife did. None of the servants could have said that sentence so stingingly, or—if she meant it very kindly—none could

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have said it with such a fascinating air as Job's own wife. "Bless God and die," as it may be read, or usually, "*Curse God, and die*" (Job 2:9). Satan, you have plowed with Job's heifer, but you have not succeeded. Job's strength lies in God, not in his hair, or you might have shaved him just as Samson was shorn!

Perhaps the Evil One had even inspected Job's personal sensitivities, and so selected that form of bodily affliction that he knew to be most dreaded by his victim. He brought upon him a disease that Job may have seen and shuddered at in poor men outside the city gates.

Beloved, Satan knows quite as much in regard to you. You have a child, and Satan knows that you idolize him. "Ah," he says, "there is a place for my wounding him." Even your marriage partner may be made a quiver in which hell's arrows will be stored until the time may come, and then he or she may prove the bow from which Satan will shoot them. Watch your neighbor and your spouse, because you do not know how Satan may try to gain an advantage over you.

Our habits, our joys, our sorrows, our private moments, our public positions—all may be made weapons of attack by this desperate Foe of the Lord's people. We have snares everywhere, in our beds and at our tables, in our houses and in the street. There are snares and traps in company and pits when we are alone. We may find temptations in the house of God as well as in the world, traps in our elevated position, and deadly poisons in our abasement.

We must not expect to be rid of temptations until we have crossed the Jordan, and then, thank God, we are beyond the gunshot of the Enemy. The last howling of the dog of hell will be heard as we descend into the chilly waters of the black stream, but when we hear the hallelujah of the glorified, we will be finished with the Black Prince forever.

Satan Considers the Saints

HIGHER CONSIDERATIONS

Satan considered, but there was a higher consideration that overrode his consideration.

In times of war, the military strategists and mine specialists of one side will lay out a minefield. It is a very common counteraction for the other side to undermine the first mines. This is just what God does with Satan. Satan is laying mines, and he plans to light the fuse and blow up God's building. But all the while God is undermining him, and he blows up his own mine before he can do any real mischief.

The Devil is surely the greatest of all fools. He has more knowledge but less wisdom than any other creature. He has more subtlety than all the beasts of the field, but it is well called subtlety, not wisdom. It is not true wisdom; it is only another shape of folly.

All the while that Satan was tempting Job, he little knew that he was answering God's purpose, for God was looking on and considering the whole picture and holding the Enemy as a man holds a horse by its bridle. The Lord had considered exactly how far he would let Satan go.

The first time that Satan came against Job, God did not permit him to touch Job's flesh—perhaps that was more than Job could have borne at that time. Have you ever noticed that if you are in good strong bodily health, you can bear losses and crosses, and even bereavements, with something like calmness? Now that was the case with Job. Perhaps if the disease had come first and the rest had followed, it might have been a temptation too heavy for Job. But God, who knows just how far to let the Enemy go, will say to Satan, "Thus far, and no farther."

By degrees Job became accustomed to his poverty; in fact, the trial had lost all of its sting the moment he said,

SATAN, A DEFEATED FOE

"The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away" (Job 1:21). That enemy was slain. It was buried, and this was the funeral oration: *"Blessed be the name of the LORD"* (v. 21).

When the second trial came, the first trial had equipped Job to endure the second. It may be a more severe trial for a man in the possession of great worldly wealth to suddenly be deprived of the bodily power of enjoying it, than to lose everything first and then lose the health necessary for its enjoyment.

Having already lost everything, Job might almost have said, "I thank God that now I have nothing to enjoy, and therefore the loss of the power to enjoy it is not so wearisome. I do not have to say, 'How I wish I could go out in my fields and see to my servants,' because they are all dead. I do not wish to see my children; they are all dead and gone. I am thankful that they are. Better that they are dead than that they should see their poor father sitting on a dunghill like this."

He might have been almost glad if his wife had gone, too, for certainly it was not a particularly merciful blessing when she was spared. Possibly, if he had had all his children around him, it might have been a harder trial than it was. The Lord, who weighs mountains in scales, had meted out his servant's woe.

Did not the Lord also consider how He would sustain his servant under the trial? Beloved, you do not know how blessedly our God poured the secret oil on Job's fire of grace while the Devil was throwing buckets of water on it. He said to Himself, "If Satan does much, I will do more. If he takes away much, I will give more. If he tempts the man to curse, I will fill him so full of love for Me that he will bless Me. I will help him; I will strengthen him; yes, I will uphold him with the right hand of My righteousness." (See Isaiah 41:10.)

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Christian, take the following two thoughts and put them under your tongue as a wafer made with honey. You will never be tempted without express license from the throne where Jesus pleads. On the other hand, when He permits it, He *“will with the temptation also make a way of escape”* (1 Corinthians 10:13) or give you grace to stand under it.

In the next place, the Lord considered how to sanctify Job by this trial. Job was a much better man at the end of the story than he was at the beginning. *“That man was perfect [blameless] and upright”* (Job 1:1) at first, but there was a little pride about him. We are poor creatures to criticize such a man as Job, but still there was in him a sprinkling of self-righteousness, I think, which his friends brought out. Eliphaz and Zophar said such irritating things that poor Job could not help replying in strong terms about himself, terms that were rather too strong. There was a little too much self-justification in his self-defense.

He was not proud, as some of us are, of a very little. He had much to be proud of, at least in the eyes of the world, but yet there was the tendency to be exalted with it. Though the Devil did not know it, perhaps if he had left Job alone, that pride might have developed fruit, and Job might have sinned. However, he was in such a hurry that he would not let the bad seed ripen, but hastened to destroy it. So the trials became the Lord’s tool to bring Job into a more humble and, consequently, a safer and more blessed state of mind.

Moreover, observe how Satan was a lackey to the Almighty! Job all this while was being enabled to earn a greater reward. All his prosperity was not enough. God loved Job so much that He intended to give him twice the property. He intended to give him children again. He meant to make him a more famous man than ever, a man

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whose name would ring down through the ages, a man who would be talked of through all generations. He was not to be the man of Uz, but of the whole world. He was not to be heard of by a handful in one neighborhood, but all men are to hear of Job's patience in the hour of trial.

Who was to do this? Who was to fashion the trumpet of fame through which Job's name would be blown? The Devil went to the forge and worked away with all his might to make Job illustrious! Foolish Devil! He was pil-ing up a pedestal on which God would set his servant Job, so that he may be looked upon with wonder by all ages.

To conclude, Job's afflictions and Job's patience have been a lasting blessing to the church of God, and they have inflicted incredible disgrace upon Satan. If you want to make the Devil angry, throw the story of Job in his face. If you desire to have your own confidence sustained, may God the Holy Spirit lead you into the patience of Job. How many saints have been comforted in their distress by this story of patience! How many have been saved out of the jaws of the lion and from the paw of the bear by the dark experiences of the patriarch of Uz.

Oh, Archfiend, how you are taken in your own net! You threw a stone that fell on your own head. You made a pit for Job, but fell into it yourself. You are taken in your own craftiness. The Lord God has made fools of the wise and driven the diviners mad.

Beloved, let us commit ourselves in faith to the care and keeping of God. Come poverty, come sickness, come death, we will in all things through Jesus Christ's blood be conquerors. By the power of His Spirit, we will overcome at the last.

I pray that we are all trusting in Jesus. May those who have not trusted Him be led to begin right now. And God will have all the praise in us all, forevermore. Amen.