

Monday, July 17, 2017 - Satan, Thou Art Pathetic

2 Cor. 2:10-11 - But to whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for what I also have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, for your sakes have I forgiven it in the presence of Christ; that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

The church in Corinth had obeyed Paul and disciplined this sinful man (1 Corinthians 5:5). They had withdrawn fellowship from him. Paul's purpose for this discipline was to save the man and the church.

Since the sinful brother had repented, he should be forgiven and restored to fellowship with the church. The purpose of the discipline was to save the sinful man, not to destroy him. The discipline worked. However, if they did not take the next step of forgiving him, he would be filled with despair.

The discipline of the church was a demonstration of love. Since the sinful brother had repented, the Corinthian church must continue to show their love for him by forgiving him and comforting him. Comfort means they were to strengthen him by encouraging him. The church confirmed their love toward him by greeting him, fellowshiping him, eating with him and being with him.

What the church in Corinth had forgiven, Paul had forgiven. Paul had forgiven the sinner for their sakes and in the presence of God. God commands Christians to be forgiving, as Christ forgave them.

The church disciplined the sinful man. When the sinful man repented, the church forgave him and restored him to fellowship in the church. Had they failed to forgive him, Satan would have seized the opportunity and used it to his advantage. Souls would have been lost because they were unforgiving.

This is a perfect example of how Satan tries to use any device he can muster to fight and defeat Christians. Often he uses other Christians to try and implement his heinous plans.

In our two previous lessons, we have discussed false teachers; those in the denominational world and those who still pretend to be a part of the Lord's church.

Those are not the only methods that Satan employs to destroy the faith and the will of Christians to do God's will! Satan is working all the time to destroy the faith of Christians. Satan's main weapon is deceit. Paul knows how Satan works. Christians must know the methods of Satan.

The lust of the flesh is obvious. All temptations, which have their roots in appetites and desires of the body, are included in this. These appetites of the body are not in

themselves sinful. It's when we allow lust, or our desires to act on and satisfy those appetites that we succumb to the lust of the flesh.

The lust of the eyes is what we see that we want. Covetousness, desiring what others have and willing to set those things up ahead of God's righteousness and obtain these things by unjust means.

Satan's methods also include lying, gossip and anything that causes our mind to go into overdrive causing us to doubt our faith, doubt our brothers and sisters in Christ and doubt the worthwhile nature of the fight we are in against Satan, which will and MUST continue until the day we pass from this earth or until Christ returns.

When you are lied to or lied about, it hurts this thing we call pride. Pride of life, also translated as the vainglory of life ... This is the desire of the human ego itself. The utterly selfish instinct in all human life that insists upon achieving the fulfillment of the person itself, the inherent passion of the soul to do its own will, fulfill its own desires, glorify its own ego, and to occupy the inner control center of life. This is what drives or compels us to sin.

The fifth anniversary of my parent's death is coming up this September and, in recent days, I have thought a great deal about the traits my father taught me in his later years. He was far from perfect but I never knew a man with more integrity. He did not lie, he did not cheat, and he was loyal to Jehovah God. He had pride and it could be hurt but it NEVER caused him to do or teach anything that would betray the Lord. He would also NEVER compromise what was right for the Lord's church, in which he was an elder, due to threats, tantrums or other unchristian traits some would exhibit.

In the 17 years that I have been preaching (full or part time), a deacon, teacher or contributor in any other responsibilities which have been my privilege to participate in the service to the Lord, I have been blessed to have those who don't like me, try to detract from what I'm doing (whether teaching, preaching, etc.). I've had people walk out of my classes, sermons, leave the congregation I preached out, threaten to leave if I became full-time preacher, etc. I say I'm blessed because you know, when that happens, that Satan is concerned about the progress you are making for the sake of God! How do I know? Because what was occurring involved, "preaching the truth in love..." (Eph. 4:15).

In our younger years, this was a difficult thing for my wife, and children to understand about me, "Why is this happening?" Now, years and many experiences later, I can't be prouder to say that my wife and children are some of the strongest, most faithful individuals I have ever known. They understand the cost and hardship that must be paid to inherit eternal life!

Satan is foolish enough to think this is persecution. Satan thinks that this is enough to cause Christians to become frustrated, weary, and unwilling to fight the good

fight. As I have gotten older, it doesn't even come close to having that effect on me. It only serves to strengthen my will, determination and desire to ensure that those who I come in contact with will have the opportunity to hear the pure, unadulterated truth, presented without the ego of one who thinks THE WORDS OF GOD need to be aided by the mouth or mind of the man who presents them.

Heb. 4:12-13 - For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

The word of God is living and active today because it is the word of the one true and living God. The word of God has all the power of God in it. God's word is capable of doing what God wants it to do (Isaiah 55:11). God's word here refers to both his written and spoken word. The word of God is frequently referred to as a sword (Ephesians 6:17). A two edged sword meant the sharpest of swords. To illustrate how sharp the word of God is, he describes it as being able to divide between soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. These terms refer to the inner most part of man, or the deep recesses of his heart. The word of God can reach and discern these. The teaching of the passage is God's word will be true. Those who disbelieve and do not obey God's word will not enter heaven. Those who believe and obey God's word will enter heaven. One can depend upon the God's word. God is faithful in what he has promised. Man has nothing to offer to enhance that.

God sees man as he really is, not as man thinks he is. God sees man not as man's neighbors see him, but as he really is. Nothing can be concealed from God; everything is naked before him. We must reckon with God, or give account to him. Everyone must do this at the judgment whether they want to or not, whether they believe this or not (Hebrews 9:27).

The basic message of 1 Peter concerns suffering. It is obvious that the people to whom it was written were suffering because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Undoubtedly, this persecution took many different forms. We know that some of what they were subjected to involved being falsely charged with evil (1 Pet. 2:11-12). Those who have been wrongly accused of something know that it is not easy to endure. False accusations take a great toll on one emotionally. However, it seems that their suffering involved more than mere talk, for Peter calls it a "fiery trial" that was testing their faith (1 Pet. 4:12).

One of the things Peter sets out to do in this epistle is to instruct God's people on how to handle persecution. They must not react by retaliating (1 Pet. 2:21-25; 3:9), nor should they justify their adversaries by engaging in the things of which they are being accused (1 Pet. 4:15-16). Rather, he says, they must "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Pet. 2:11-16) by living pure lives that do not justify the

slander. Also, he says they should rejoice that they are suffering because they are Christians (1 Pet. 4:13).

Not only is Peter instructing them on how to deal with suffering for the sake of one's affiliation with Jesus, but above all else he teaches them that they must remain faithful to the very faith that is bringing the persecution. This is a high price to pay, and, undoubtedly, a price they had not counted on when they became disciples.

If people are asked to pay a price, they must be convinced that what they are getting is worth the price they are paying. In this way 1 Pet. 1:1-12 fits into the persecution theme of this letter. These words are Peter's effort to convince his readers that the Christian faith is worth holding on to despite their suffering.

What does Peter tell them about Christianity that makes it worth suffering for? He tells them about the future hope they have as Christians (1 Pet. 1:3-4). Then, he tells them that their present trials will serve to prove that their faith is genuine (1 Pet. 1:5-9). Finally, he looks at Christianity from the past (1 Pet. 1:10-12). The prophets and even the angels were greatly interested in the faith they have had the honor of receiving.

Will you be able to stand before God and state your case for fighting His fight or will you be the one who allowed ego, personal grudges and a hateful spirit attempt to inhibit God's work at every turn?