YOUR ADVERSARY THE DEVIL

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INTRODUCTION

On June 22, 1941, BBC News stories led with the caption: “Hitler Invades the Soviet Union.” That invasion prompted Winston Churchill to say: “Adolph Hitler is a bloodthirsty guttersnipe, a monster of wickedness, insatiable in his lust for blood and plunder.” During and since World War II, Hitler personified what the Allied forces were fighting against in Europe. This fact is borne out, among other things, by the title of books, such as Holland at War Against Hitler, by M.R.D. Foot; The Naval War Against Hitler, by Don Macintyre; The Shadow War Against Hitler, by Christof Mauch; and, The War Against Hitler by Albert Nofi. Indeed, Hitler was the enemy, but he was not a lone adversary. He had command of a monolithic martially-minded mass of men who were meticulously obedient to his every marching order.

Between 1933 and 1939, with contempt for the Treaty of Versailles, by subterfuge and political finagling, Hitler mobilized a military machine the likes of which the world had never seen before. By 1939, there were over 4.5 million soldiers, airmen, and sailors in his Wehrmacht. At that point in history, they were equipped with the most modern and powerful weapons of war, which included 3,200 tanks, 1,200 bombers, 800 fighter-aircraft, and about sixty submarines (U-Boats). Once this hard-hitting army began it blitzkrieg (lightening war), in short order it conquered virtually all of Europe and North Africa. However, stymied on its Western Front by Great Britain and on its Eastern Front by Russia, the mightiest German Army ever assembled would soon become acquainted with its greatest foe—the muscle and might of the United States of America. May 8, 1945 marked the end of
World War II in Europe. Hitler, the world’s adversary, was dead. His once powerful army, the Wehrmacht, was defeated. And his kingdom, the Deutsches Reich (German Empire) or Drittes Reich (Third Empire) was no more. As bad as Hitler was, he is not the worst enemy the world has seen.

Just as Hitler was the enemy of the Allies throughout World War II, our text says: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8, emphasis added). Satan is our enemy and will be throughout our lives. Understand this, Satan’s army, the one combating against us, is even fiercer, more diabolical, devious, and destructive than all of the armies that have ever marched, or ever will march, on earth—combined. Weaponry used in our warfare against Satan is unlike anything used in the corporeal realm; “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds” (2 Cor. 10:4).

Hitler had his empire, the so-called “Third Reich.” Satan has his empire, which is called “the domain of darkness” (Col. 1:13, ESV). Whereas the Allies were in a “World War” with Hitler, their mortal enemy, the war in which we are engaged with Satan is one that has consequences which surpass anything in this world, extending even into eternity. Those who lived through World War II know it was often described as a situation of “Total War,” yet that two-word phrase can only truly be used in its fullest sense to describe the ongoing war between “the domain of darkness” and “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:11).

THE ADVERSARY

Peter identifies our “adversary” as the devil (1 Pet. 5:8). John shows that the devil and Satan are one and the same being (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). The context of Matthew 4 also does this, calling him the “devil” (v. 1) and “Satan” (v. 10). “Devil,” “Satan,” and “adversary” are significant words which need to be understood.

According to Vincent, the word “devil” means, “calumniator; slanderer.” Barnes further explains: “This word originally means an adversary, or an accuser; then, any one opposed to us; then, an enemy of any kind.”

Defining the word “satan,” Smith states: “The word itself, the Hebrew, satan, is simply an “adversary.” “The word ‘Satan’ is
Hebrew, meaning originally ‘an accuser, a calumniator,’ and then ‘an enemy.’”

Robertson points out that the Greek word translated “adversary” is the “Old word for opponent in a lawsuit.” Breaking this word down, Vincent says it is, “From anti, against, and dike, a lawsuit. Strictly, an adversary in a lawsuit. Here an adversary in general.” Going into more detail as to the meaning of the word “adversary,” and especially how it is used in 1 Peter 5:8, Gill relates:

Satan is an enemy to mankind in general, but more especially to the seed of the woman, to Christ personal, and to Christ mystical, to all the elect of God: the word here used is a forensic term, and signifies a court adversary, or one that litigates a point in law, or opposes another in an action or suit at law. The Jews have adopted this word into their language, and explain it ... “a law adversary,” or one that has a suit of law depending against another. Satan accuses men of the breach of the law, and pleads that justice might take place, and punishment be inflicted, and which he pursues with great violence and diligence.

Thus, our adversary, the devil, is none other than Satan. He is a lying murderer (Jn. 8:44), a malicious slanderer, and an enemy accuser prosecuting us for our sins in an effort to have us condemned before God in Judgment. Yet, he is the one who tempts and deceives us so that we will violate God’s law; i.e., sin (1 Jn. 3:4). He knows that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23); therefore, he seeks to murder us—just as he did Adam and Eve.

Sadly, many today are believing the same lie Satan told Eve, i.e., “Ye shall not surely die” if you disobey God. It is as though Satan is whispering in the ears of modern man, saying: “Surely, a loving God will not really send you to hell.” Many not only believe that lie, they are spreading it, and variations of it, to others. Satan’s ministers preach on the common theme: “You can continue in sin and God’s grace will take care of it.” Preferring to believe that lie instead of God’s truth (cf. Rom. 6:1), numbers of people are living in such sins as “sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness” (Col. 3:5, ESV). Unless they repent and obey God, they will find that believing a devil’s lie has brought about their spiritual death and the eternal loss of their souls in a devil’s hell (v. 6; cf. Mt. 25:41; Rev. 20:14-15).

Is it any wonder then that Peter tells us to be sober and vigilant. Too many are neither sober nor vigilant when it comes to Satan. Taking
one’s duty seriously and being ever vigilant must be drilled into every soldier. General George Patton gave a speech to an assembly of his troops on June 5, 1944 (one day before “D-Day”), in which he emphasized the importance of their always remaining alert, vigilant. Patton said:

All through your Army careers, you men have [expletive deleted] about what you call “[expletive deleted] drilling.” That, like everything else in this Army, has a definite purpose. That purpose is alertness. Alertness must be bred into every soldier. I don't give a [expletive deleted] for a man who's not always on his toes. You men are veterans or you wouldn't be here. You are ready for what's to come. A man must be alert at all times if he expects to stay alive. If you're not alert, sometime, a German [expletive deleted] is going to sneak up behind you and beat you to death with a sock full of [expletive deleted]!” The men roared in agreement.

Patton's grim expression did not change. “There are four hundred neatly marked graves somewhere in Sicily,” he roared into the microphone, “All because one man went to sleep on the job.” He paused and the men grew silent. “But they are German graves, because we caught the [expletive deleted] asleep before they did” (emphasis added).11

No one should use the profanity and vulgar language that Patton used, but he was 100% correct about the necessity for a soldier to stay alert, vigilant, ever on guard relative to the threats from his enemy. How many Christian soldiers have gone “to sleep on the job” and allowed Satan to capture them? How many “neatly marked graves” stand as a grim testimony to the fact that a soul is lost forever, either because someone did not take sin and Satan seriously or because someone lacked the necessary vigilance.

OUR ADVERSARY’S ARMY

If a person thinks he and Satan are alone, fighting mano a mano, he had better think again. Our adversary the devil commands a formidable army in his warfare against mankind. Even in the war in heaven, mentioned in Revelation 12:7, Satan is not seen fighting alone. We are told in Revelation 12:9, “his angels were cast out with him.”

Repeatedly, Scripture uses plural words, such as “spirits,” “devils” (KJV), and “demons” (ASV) in reference to Satan’s forces. James says the “demons [plural] also believe, and shudder” (Jas. 2:19, ASV,
emphasis added). Paul speaks of the “seducing spirits [plural] and doctrines of demons [plural]” (1 Tim. 4:1, ASV, emphasis added). The word “demons,” plural, is found four times in two verses in 1 Corinthians 10:20-21. A plurality of demons is most certainly indicated in Mark 5:1-20. When Jesus came into the country of the Gadarenes, He encountered a demon possessed man. Addressing the demon, Jesus asked: “What is thy name?” The demon responded, “My name is Legion: for we are many” (v. 9). Dealing with the word “legion” in this verse, more than one commentator has pointed out that, at that time, the number of soldiers in a Roman legion fluctuated, but could be as many as 9000 men. We do not know the size of Satan’s army, but we do know it is numerically strong and trenchant. We also know that its major objective is the defeat and eternal damnation of our souls.

Some may think their struggle with Satan and his army is yet to begin. They are wrong. Satan declared war on man in the Garden of Eden, and that war will continue until Satan and his forces are removed to their final destiny (cf. Rev. 20:10). Right now, at this very moment, “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12). That one passage alone shows that we are fighting evil forces which are organized, multifaceted, and able to attack on several fronts at the same time.

Tactics-wise, Christ, the Captain of our salvation (Heb.2:10), and His soldiers are open, honest, and above board in their operations (Jn. 18:20; 2 Cor. 4:1-3), but that is not true of our foe and his forces. *Nothing* is done openly, honestly, and above board by the deceiving devil and his malevolent minions. “Sleight,” “covert,” and “fatal” are three words which describe the standard operating procedures for the army of darkness. The nature of Satan’s soldiers is revealed by Jesus as He warns: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Mt. 7:15). Using the same kind of language, Paul lamented: “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30).

Agents of Satan pretend to be faithful members of the church, surreptitiously positioning themselves where they can be most destructive to the Lord’s people. About those engaging in such tactics, Paul writes: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transform-
ing themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

“[B]y the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14), these phony “ministers of righteousness” reek havoc in the church. Be on guard, brethren. Paul urges: “I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:17-18, emphasis added).

WE ARE AT WAR RIGHT NOW

Because we are now, at this very hour, in a struggle for our own spiritual survival, as well as battling for the minds, hearts, and souls of others, Paul commands: “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). Timothy was told: “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (2 Tim. 2:3-4). This requires sacrifice, but we must understand that the same applies to us. “[T]he kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Mt. 6:33) must be our first priority, “the affairs of this life” are secondary. Before succumbing to Satan and being entangled in worldly allurements, we must heed John’s exhortation:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (Jn. 2:15-17).

Make no mistake about it, Satan and his forces use “fleshly lusts” because they “war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11).

There is no neutral ground in this war. Jesus declared: “He that is not with me is against me” (Mt. 12:30). No man can serve God and mammon (cf. Lk. 16:13). One is either Satan’s or he is Christ’s. Paul says it this way: “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves
servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Rom 6:16).

Loyally serving God, Paul, as a faithful Christian soldier, always gave first place in his life to Christ and His church. Ever “set for the defence of the gospel” (Phil. 1:17), he never ran from a battle. Likewise, Jude 3 instructs us “to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered.” In order to “lay hold on eternal life,” we must “Fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12) and, in so doing, “war a good warfare” (1 Tim. 1:18). Reflecting upon his “battles scars” that showed, i.e., the ones he had received in his physical body as a result of his many battles for Christ, Paul comments: “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus” (Gal. 6:17). Never compromising, retreating, or wavering, as a valiant soldier of the cross, Paul died, as it were, on the battlefield in the service of his Lord. However, before he died, he wrote:

I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

HEAVEN WILL BE WORTH IT ALL

Death could not make Paul cower. He did not fear it or those who would kill him. Though he may never have heard Jesus utter the words, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mt. 10:28), Paul’s life and death clearly show that is how he viewed matters. Expressing his thoughts about his own life and death, Paul states: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour; yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phil. 1:21-23). Having complete confidence and trust in his Commander and Chief, Paul confesses: “I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12, ASV). For Paul, regarding what awaits beyond the grave, there was no fear of the “unknown.” He knew!

Every seasoned soldier knows that the cause he serves is greater than himself. That is why a good, conscientious soldier is willing to
endure all the fury, pain, hardship and suffering his enemy can bring down upon him and still continue to fight, even unto his death if necessary. Paul provides us with a partial listing of those things Satan and his followers brought to bear upon him as they waged war against the Cause of Christ. He reports:

I ... in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches (2 Cor. 11:23-28).

Why would Paul be willing to endure so much? Why should we?

At some time, Paul was given a glimpse of heaven’s glory. Most agree that Paul is speaking of himself when he says:

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter (2 Cor. 12:2-4).

This experience greatly impressed Paul. So impressed was he that he declared: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18, emphasis). In other words, heaven will be worth it all. That is why Paul could not be intimidated by the forces of evil, and why he would not be discouraged in his service to God. As an encouragement to other soldiers of Christ, Paul pens:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels,
nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35-39).

**CONCLUSION**

Paul should be an example and inspiration to us. He knew his adversary and he knew his adversary’s devices (2 Cor. 2:11). Yet, marching forward, ever advancing the Cause of Christ, he never allowed Satan, or all of hell’s fury, to stop him from spreading the Gospel in his efforts to save souls. Paul would say: “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). Also, when it comes to the raging war with Satan and his maleficent hosts, Paul exhorts: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13). We have the blessed assurance that come what may, Christ will never forsake us (Heb. 13:5), and that if we will remain faithful to Christ we will be “more than conquerors.” “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). Victory is ours (1 Jn. 5:4).

**ENDNOTES**

1 All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.
2 http://news.bbc.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/june/22/newsid_3526000/3526691.stm
6 Smith’s Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Satan.”
9 Vincent, 1:669
10 John Gill, John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible, 1 Peter 5:8 (e-Sword, Version 7.7.7).
11 Charles M. Province, The Famous Patton Speech
http://www.pattonhq.com/speech.html