



## Satan An Accuser of the Brethren

[Sermon delivered Sabbath afternoon, September 26.]

“And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.” [Zechariah 3:1-3](#).

Here we find a representation of the people of God of today. As Joshua stood before the Angel, “clothed with filthy garments,” so we stand in the presence of Christ, clothed in garments of unrighteousness. Christ, the angel before whom Joshua stood, is now interceding for us before his Father, as he is here represented as interceding for Joshua and his people who were in deep affliction; and Satan now, as then, stands by to resist his efforts.

Ever since his fall, it has been the work of Satan to oppose Christ’s efforts to redeem the race. In the Bible he is called an accuser of the brethren. It is said that he accuses them before God day and night. Every time he leads them into temptation, he rejoices; because he well knows that their power of resistance will thus become weakened, and that he can then the more easily lead them to commit other sins. And when they have taken step after step in the wrong direction, he turns and begins to accuse them of the very sins which he has led them to commit. He thus causes them to become discouraged, and to lose confidence in themselves and in the Lord; and after they have separated from God, dishonored his name, and broken his law, he claims them as his captives, and contests the right of Christ to take them from him. Pointing to their sins, as he did to the filthy garments of Joshua, he says: “They profess to be thy children; but they do not obey thee. See the traces of sin upon them. They are my property.”

This is the argument that he employs concerning God's people in all ages. He pleads their sinfulness as the reason why Christ's restraining power should not hold him back from exercising his cruelty upon them to its fullest extent. But to the accuser of his people the Saviour says, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Have I not thrust my own hand into the fire to gather this brand from the burning?"

So long as the people of God preserve their fidelity to him, so long as they cling by living faith to Jesus, they are under the protection of heavenly angels, and Satan will not be permitted to exercise his hellish arts upon them to their destruction. But those who separate themselves from Christ by sin are in great peril. If they continue to disregard the requirements of God, they know not how soon he may give them over to Satan, and permit him to do to them according to his will. There is, therefore, the greatest necessity of keeping the soul free from defilement, and the eye single to the glory of God; of thinking soberly and watching unto prayer continually.

Satan is now more earnestly engaged in playing the game of life for souls than at any previous time; and unless we are constantly on our guard, he will establish in our hearts, pride, love of self, love of the world, and many other evil traits. He will also use every possible device to unsettle our faith in God and in the truths of his word. If we have not a deep experience in the things of God, if we have not a thorough knowledge of his word, we shall be beguiled to our ruin by the errors and sophistries of the enemy. False doctrines will sap the foundations of many, because they have not learned to discern truth from error. Our only safeguard against the wiles of Satan is to diligently study the Scriptures; to have an intelligent understanding of the reasons of our faith; and to faithfully perform every known duty. The indulgence of one known sin will cause weakness and darkness, and subject us to fierce temptation.

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Joshua is represented as pleading with the Angel. Are we engaged in the same work? Are our supplications ascending to God in living faith? Are we opening the door of the heart to Jesus, and closing every means of entrance to Satan? Are we daily obtaining clearer light and greater strength, that we may stand in Christ's righteousness? Are we emptying our hearts of all selfishness, and cleansing them, preparatory to receiving the latter rain from heaven?

Now is the time when we are to confess and forsake our sins that they may go beforehand to judgment and be blotted out. Now is the time to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” It is dangerous to delay this work. Satan is even now seeking by disasters upon sea and land to seal the fate of as many as possible. What is the defense of the people of God at this time? It is a living connection with heaven. If we would dwell in safety from the noisome pestilence, if we would be preserved from dangers seen and unseen, we must hide in God; we must secure the protecting care of Jesus and holy angels. In these days of peril, the Lord would have us walk before him in humility. Instead of trying to cover our sins, he would have us confess them, as Joshua confessed the sins of ancient Israel. We profess to be the depositaries of God’s law. We profess to be building up “the old waste places,” and to be raising up “the foundations of many generations.” If this great and solemn work has indeed been committed to us, how important that we depart from all iniquity!

We may be followed with testimony after testimony of reproof; but if we do not overcome the disposition in us to do evil, if we do not respond to the light, we shall be in a state of condemnation before God. If, on the other hand, we live up to all the light that shines upon us, that light will continue to increase, and we shall have a clean record in heaven. The third angel’s message is to lighten the earth with its glory; but only those who have withstood temptation in the strength of the Mighty One will be permitted to act a part in proclaiming it when it shall have swelled into the loud cry.

As the intercession of Joshua was accepted, the command was given to those that stood by, “Take away the filthy garments from him.” And unto Joshua the Angel said, “Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.” “So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments.” Even so will all those who come to Jesus in penitence and faith receive the robe of Christ’s righteousness.

[156] As we approach the perils of the last days, the temptations of the enemy become stronger and more determined. Satan has come down in great power, knowing that his time is short; and he is working “with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.” The

warning comes to us through God's word, that, if it were possible, he would deceive the very elect.

Wonderful events are soon to open before the world. The end of all things is at hand. The time of trouble is about to come upon the people of God. Then it is that the decree will go forth forbidding those who keep the Sabbath of the Lord to buy or sell, and threatening them with punishment, and even death, if they do not observe the first day of the week as the Sabbath.

“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great Prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” By this we see the importance of having our names written in the book of life. All whose names are registered there will be delivered from Satan's power, and Christ will command that their filthy garments be removed, and that they be clothed with his righteousness. “And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”

In the time of trouble, Satan stirs up the wicked, and they encircle the people of God to destroy them. But he does not know that “pardon” has been written opposite their names in the books of heaven. He does not know that the command has been given, “Take away the filthy garments” from them, clothe them with “change of raiment,” and set “a fair mitre” upon their heads.

The promise made to Joshua is made to all the remnant people of God: “If thou wilt walk in my ways [not in your own ways], and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.” Who are these that stand by? They are the angels of God. Could our eyes be opened, as were those of the servant of Elisha at Dothan, we should see evil angels all around us, urging their presence upon us, and watching for an opportunity to tempt and overthrow us; we should also see holy angels guarding us, and with their light and power pressing back the evil angels.

If we could only see the many dangers from which we are daily preserved by the holy angels, instead of complaining of our trials and misfortunes, we would talk continually of the mercies of God. How

precious in the sight of God are his people! If Satan had his way, whenever an effort is made to bring souls into the truth, both the minister and those who come to hear would be made to suffer in body and in mind. But angels of God are commissioned to accompany his servants, and to protect them and their hearers. Satan pleads for the privilege of separating these angels from them, that he may compass their destruction; but Jesus forbids it. If it were not for the constant guardianship of these angels, we would not be able to live on the earth and present the truth.

[157] There have been times since the third angel's message was first proclaimed, when angels in the form of human beings have appeared to men, and conversed with them as they did with Abraham of old. When the complaints of Satan are entered against the servants of God, angels are often sent down to investigate their course, sometimes conversing with men unbeknown to them. They sometimes question those in error, until they tell all that is in their hearts, and then these angels bear their report back to heaven, relating things just as they exist.

Jacob, in his vision of the ladder whose base rested upon the earth, and whose topmost round reached to the highest heaven, saw the God of heaven standing above this ladder of glorious brightness, and angels of God constantly ascending and descending upon it. This fitly represents the love and care of God for his children, and the constant communication there is between earth and heaven. It is also intended to impress us with the importance of walking circumspectly before God. Oh that I could say something to impress you with the offensive character of sin in God's sight!

There are many today who profess to serve God, but who are not doing so in reality. But when Christ comes it will be known who are the chosen of God. "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. For, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

The exhortation of the prophet is, "Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of

the Lord come upon you.” “Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger.”

In view of what is soon to come upon the earth, I entreat you, brethren and sisters, to walk before God in all meekness and lowliness of mind, remembering the care that Jesus has for you. All the meek of the earth are exhorted to seek him. Those who have wrought his judgments are to seek him. Let self break in pieces before God. It is hard to do this; but we are warned to fall upon the rock and be broken, else it will fall upon us, and grind us to powder. It is to the humble in heart that Jesus speaks; his everlasting arms encircle them, and he will not leave them to perish by the hands of the wicked.

All heaven is interested in the salvation of the human race; what are you doing for yourselves, brethren? While from the light of the cross of Calvary you obtain a view of the great love of God for man, do not build yourselves up in self-esteem; but in humility of soul stand before God as prisoners of hope. Why not be in earnest in your efforts for eternal life? Why not manifest a perseverance and an intensity of desire proportionate to the value of the object of which you are in pursuit? Instead of doing this, many now engage in the work of God at will, and let it alone at pleasure. They thus invite Satan to come in and take possession of their hearts.

What is it to be a Christian? It is to be Christ-like; it is to do the works of Christ. Some fail on one point, some on another. Some are naturally impatient. Satan understands their weakness, and manages to overcome them again and again. But let none be discouraged by this. Whenever little annoyances and trials arise, ask God in silent prayer to give you strength and grace to bear them patiently. There is a power in silence; do not speak a word until you have sent up your petition to the God of heaven. If you will always do this, you will soon overcome your hasty temper, and you will have a little heaven here to go to heaven in. [158]

God wants his people to cleanse their hands and purify their hearts. Will it make them unhappy to do this? Will it bring unhappiness into their families if they are kind and patient, courteous and forbearing? Far from it. The kindness they manifest toward their families will be reflected upon themselves. This is the work that

should be carried forward in the home. If the members of a family are not prepared to dwell in peace here, they are not prepared to dwell in the family that shall gather around the great white throne. Sin always brings darkness and bondage; but right-doing will bring peace and holy joy.

The work of overcoming is a great work. Shall we take hold of it with energy and perseverance? Unless we do, our “filthy garments” will not be taken from us. We need never expect that these will be torn from us violently; we must first show a desire to rid ourselves of them. We must seek to separate sin from us, relying upon the merits of the blood of Christ; and then in the day of affliction, when the enemy presses us, we shall walk among the angels. They will be like a wall of fire about us; and we shall one day walk with them in the city of God.

When tempted to sin, let us remember that Jesus is pleading for us in the heavenly sanctuary. When we put away our sins and come to him in faith, he takes our names in his lips and presents them to his Father, saying, “I have graven them upon the palms of my hands; I know them by name.” And the command goes forth to the angels to protect them. Then in the day of fierce trial he will say, “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.” What are the chambers in which they are to hide? They are the protection of Christ and holy angels. The people of God are not at this time all in one place. They are in different companies, and in all parts of the earth; and they will be tried singly, not in groups. Every one must stand the test for himself.

There has never been a time when the people of God have had greater need to claim his promises than now. Let the hand of faith pass through the darkness, and grasp the arm of infinite power. While we speak of the necessity of separating from sin, remember that Christ came to our world to save sinners, and that “he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.” It is our privilege to believe that his blood is able to cleanse us from every spot and stain of sin. We must not limit the power of the Holy One of Israel. He wants us to come to him just as we are, sinful and polluted. His blood is efficacious. I entreat you not to grieve his Spirit by continuing in sin. If you fall under temptation, do not

become discouraged. This promise comes ringing down along the line to our time: “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” I feel that for this one promise a continual song of thanksgiving ought to go forth from the lips of mortals. Let us gather up these precious jewels of promise, and when Satan accuses us of our great sinfulness, and tempts us to doubt the power of God to save, let us repeat the words of Christ, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”