

A Badge of Honor

Satan is working to take every soul he can. According to Jesus' parable in Luke 8, Satan tries to keep the seed of the Gospel from being planted and even after it's planted he does what he can to squelch its growth (Luke 8:4-15). Not a one of us who is accountable to God is immune to his insidious efforts.

Beyond this normal, daily temptation are those temptations that the devil places in the path of faithful Christians. Satan fears the Christian who is not afraid of him. In fact, he has always been so disturbed by faithful children of God that he intensifies his efforts against them. Job, of course, is the classic example of this fact, but his life is not our only evidence. The devil did everything he could to take Joseph off the path of righteousness. Through his influence, Satan brought about Joseph's imprisonment in a foreign land and made other efforts to tempt that saintly man of God (Genesis 39-41). The apostle Paul told the Ephesian elders, "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." (Acts 20:22-23). Reading on in the book of Acts we see how those who hated Paul literally chased him around the countryside. Satan was not going to let up because he knew how many souls were being won to Christ and how many Christians were being edified in the faith because of Paul's efforts. The brethren to whom Peter originally wrote were already being tempted and tried (I Peter 1:6-7) when the inspired apostle wrote to them of a "fiery trial which is to try you." (I Peter 4:12). The devil was going to "turn up the heat," as it were.

When Satan takes his efforts to destroy us to another level, we can react in one of three ways. We can give in, we can keep trying to serve God faithfully but complain about our trials every step of the way, or we can see Satan's temptations for the weak efforts that they are and consider them to be a badge of honor that Satan is so worried about us that he has to devote greater time and attention to our lives. The first of these reactions will cause us to fall squarely into Satan's trap (James 1:13-15). The second reaction will indeed hinder us as it will harm our influence and cause us to become discouraged. The third reaction is the only way to go if we are going to continue to be effective in service to God.

Peter called Satan our adversary or enemy (I Peter 5:8). When we serve God faithfully, we become his enemy. He knows how influential a faithful Christian can be. He knows how souls have been saved, lives have changed, churches have grown, faith has been built and societies have been improved because of diligent children of God who actively engage themselves in service to the Lord. Satan doesn't want any of that to happen. He knows what God's people are capable of when they set their hearts and minds on spiritual priorities. He knows that while the daily temptations may slow down a Christian, they will not stop him or her. They will press on with even greater determination to accomplish God's will in this world (Philippians 3:14). Therefore, every attack that we endure that seems more difficult than the one before just attests to the fact that we are disturbing Satan because he hasn't been able to stop us with his prior attempts. Every scar we bear from Satan's attacks is a badge of honor. Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." (Galatians 6:17). This was true of him physically, but in II Corinthians 11:26-28 he wrote of the emotional afflictions he suffered as well. When he wrote at the end of his life that he had "fought a good fight" (II Timothy 4:7), he meant that he had literally been a soldier on the battlefield for the soul. He considered his trials on the behalf of his faith in Christ as opportunities to glorify God (II Corinthians 12:9-10). Each one was a badge of honor.

God will be with us in all of our battles. "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5). When we walk with God we are stronger than Satan, "because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." (I John 4:4). The Lord will not allow Satan's temptations to go beyond that which we are able to endure (I Corinthians 10:13). Keep on going, faithful Christian. Don't lay down your armor but instead keep growing in the faith and be even more active in the Lord's work today than you were yesterday. Let Satan attack and with every attack be thankful that you have Satan on the run and that you are privileged to suffer for your Savior (Philippians 1:29).