

THE DEVIL

by Allon Maxwell

The words, "devil", or "satan", or sometimes, "evil one", are names given to a being, to whom the Bible attributes personality, power and actions, which make him the enemy of God and God's children.

Sometimes these names are also applied to men and human kingdoms, who carry out the Devil's work.

I do not believe that the Bible reveals at all, who the Devil is or where he came from.

The popular theology which says that the Devil is a fallen angel, with virtually unlimited power, knowledge and authority, able to act independent of God or without God's knowledge, has no basis in Scripture. That theory comes from widespread misunderstanding of several Bible verses.

The often-encountered picture of the Devil as a being with horns, cloven hooves, a tail and carrying a pitchfork, is nothing more than fanciful mythology.

The Bible does, however, tell us how to recognise the Devil's subtle influence and also how to resist and overcome his attempts to ensnare and enslave us.

"Devil" is from the Greek word which means, "slanderer" or "accuser".

"Satan" is from the Greek word which means, "adversary".

The Devil is described as "the father of lies" and "a murderer from the beginning".
[John 8:44](#)

These names and descriptions adequately reflect the Devil's character.

He has "angels", (but not fallen angels from heaven) and "servants", (usually human), who do his work.

He has "children", who are identified by their pleasure in sin, their rejection of the words of Jesus and their hatred for the true children of God.

He works to deceive, destroying faith and trust in God. He can tempt, but only so far as our own inner desires make that possible.

He can enter the human heart and prompt sinful deeds, but only in those who allow their own lust to make them a willing host to receive and nurture the evil thought which leads to the evil deed.

He can snatch away the Gospel seed sown in the stony hearts of those unwilling to receive the Good News about repentance and new life in the Kingdom of God.

He can sow tares amongst the wheat of the kingdom, planting his servants in the church, disguised as servants of righteousness.

Although he can place temptation in our way, the Devil has no power to compel any one to sin against their will. All sin results from an individual free will choice.

No one who sins can ever say, truthfully, "the Devil made me do it".

The Devil does have power to oppress and afflict those who give themselves to sin. For such, even the power of death has been placed in his hands.

However, in this he is merely God's agent, for the ultimate power of sickness and health, wounding and healing, life and death, belongs to God alone.

Under some circumstances, the Devil is portrayed as having access to God, asking and receiving permission to sift, test and afflict God's people. In these cases, however, his power to act is confined strictly within limits set by God Himself.

Although the Devil's aim is to destroy, God's own purpose is to test and refine. He has promised His children that they will never be tempted or tested beyond their strength to overcome.

In these cases, the Christian does well to follow the example of Job, ignoring the Devil's role and turning to God in patient trust until His purpose is accomplished.

In other circumstances, when it is obvious that the struggle is against more than human foes and more than human powers, God's children are assured that, even then, they can stand firm against the Devil and conquer.

Wearing the armour of truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation; praying in the power of the Holy Spirit; and using the Word of God, which is the Spirit's sword; nothing in all creation will be able to separate them from the love of God.

In His wilderness experience, Jesus left His followers an example of how to behave under the temptations arising from the threefold lusts of flesh, eye, and pride of life, when it is obvious that the Devil is present in a real way.

This example encourages the disciple to answer Satan direct, with appropriate words from Scripture which bring the whole counsel of God to bear on the situation.

By this means it becomes possible to reject temptation, filling the mind instead with God's thoughts and words, as a defence against the Devil's wiles.

When the Christian perseveres and stands firm in this way, the Devil will ultimately depart, (and wait for another opportunity).

God's children are forbidden, however, to take any presumptuous action of their own, to revile or rail against the Devil with insulting words, as is the common fashion of some who mistakenly call it "spiritual warfare". It is God's place to rebuke the Devil, not ours.

The final end of the Devil and all who surrender themselves to serve him, is in the lake of fire, which is the second death.