
SATAN IN A RAGE

CHARLES H. SPURGEON (1834-1892)

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SATAN IN A RAGE

“Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”

—Revelation 12:12

Introduction

The great battle in the heavenlies has been fought; our glorious Michael has for ever overthrown the dragon, and cast him down, In the highest regions, the great principle of evil has received a total defeat through the life and death of our Lord Jesus. For human sin atonement has been made, and the great quarrel between God and man has come to a happy end. Everlasting righteousness has been brought in, and the peace of God reigns in heaven. The conflict henceforth rages here below, and in these inferior regions the prince of this world is warring mightily against the cause of God and truth. Much woe does this cause to the sons of men, woe which will never end till his power is altogether taken away.

Observe concerning our arch-enemy that he exercises forethought and care as to the evil enterprise to which he has set his hand. Whatever foolish men may do, the devil *thinks*. Others may be heedless and thoughtless, but he is anxious and full of consideration. He knows that his time or “opportunity” is short, and he looks forward to its

close, for he is no careless waster of time and forgetter of the end. He values his opportunity to maintain his kingdom, to distress the people of God, and to dishonor the name of Christ; and since it is but a short one, he treats it as such.

He infers the brevity of his time from the victory which Jesus has already gained over him. In reading the chapter, we saw how the Man-child Who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron was caught up unto God and to His throne; and then we saw the war in heaven, and how the devil was cast out into the earth and his angels were cast out with him. Then was a loud voice heard on high, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (Rev 12:10). Right well may the old serpent conclude that he will be routed on earth since he has already sustained so dire a defeat that he has fallen from heaven, never to rise again. Because the Man-child Christ Jesus has met him in conflict, met him when as yet all his power was unbroken, and has cast him down from his high places, he is persuaded, and well he may be, that his reign is ended, and that his opportunity is short. He feels about him even now a chain which is lengthened for a while, but which shall be drawn into shorter compass, and fastened down by-and-by, so that he shall roam the earth no longer, but lie as a captive in his prison-house. Fallen as this apostate spirit has become, he has wit enough to look forward to the future. Oh, that men were half as wise, and would remember their latter end. I beg you to notice this fact concerning the evil spirit, that you too

may learn to acquire knowledge, and then use it for practical purposes. Why should it always be that the power of darkness appears to act more wisely than the children of light? For once I would point out a matter in which our worst foe may read us a lesson.

Among men there are some who know a great many important matters but act as if they did not know them: their knowledge is so much waste stored up in the lumber-room of their minds and never brought into the workshop to be used for practical purposes. For instance, we know our mortality, and yet live as if we never meant to die. There is great necessity for many of us to pray, "Lord, 'teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom'" (Psa 90:12). We must know that our time is short, and that our life will soon come to an end, and yet we fail to know it practically, for we are not as earnest as dying men ought to be. In this the arch-enemy is not so foolish as we are, for he so well knows that his time is short that he remembers the fact and is actuated by it.

Note well the direction in which this knowledge operates upon him. It excites his emotions. The deepest emotion of which he is capable is that of anger, for he knows not how to love. Wrath is his very soul, as hatred is his very life. He knows nothing of gentleness, nothing of affection; and therefore the fact that his time is short moves within him his master passion, and he hath great wrath. His evil nature is all on fire, and his excitement is terrible. How much the shortness of our time ought to stir our hearts! With what ardency of love and fervency of zeal ought we to pass the days of our sojourning here!

Knowing that the time of our departure is at hand, and that the season in which we can serve God among the sons of men is very brief, we ought to be excited to flaming zeal and passionate love. We are not half stirred as we ought to be. Devils feel great hatred, how is it that we do not feel great love? Shall they be more eager to destroy than we are to save? Shall they be all alive and shall we be half dead?

Nor is the result of knowing that his time is short merely emotional on the part of the arch-enemy, for in consequence of his great wrath he is moved to make earnest efforts. His energy is excited; he persecutes the woman whose seed he dreads, and he pours floods out of his mouth against her. There is nothing which Satan can do for his evil cause which he does not do. *We* may be half-hearted, but he never is. He is the very image of ceaseless industry and indefatigable earnestness. He will do all that can be done in the time of his permitted range. We may be sure that he will never lose a day. My brethren, you and I, on the other hand, should be moved by the shortness of our opportunity to an equal energy of incessant industry, serving God continually, because “the night cometh, when no man can work” (Joh 9:4). My friend, if you want your children brought to Christ, speak to them, for they will soon be without a father; if you wish your servants to be saved, labor for their conversion, for they will soon be without a mistress; if you desire your brother to be converted, speak to him, for your sisterly love will not much longer avail him. Minister, if you would save your congregation by the Spirit of God, seek to do it at once, for your tongue will soon be silent. Teacher in

the Sunday-school, if you would have your class gathered into the good Shepherd's fold, treasure up every Sabbath's opportunities, for in a short time the place which knows you now shall know you no more forever.

Thus, as of old the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his share, and his axe, and his mattock, so have I bidden you quicken your diligence by the example of the prince of darkness. Shall we not learn wisdom from his subtlety, and zeal from his fury? Shall *he* discern the signs of the times, and therefore bestir himself; and shall we sleep on? Shall evil compass sea and land, and shall the children of God creep about in idleness? God forbid. By the great wrath of the old dragon, I beseech you, my brethren, awake out of your sleep.

The text tells us that the shortness of Satan's opportunity excites his wrath, and we may gather a general rule from this one statement—namely, that *in proportion as the devil's time is shortened, his energy is increased*, and we may take it as an assured fact that when he rages to the uttermost, his opportunities are nearly over. He hath great wrath, knowing that his time is short. I hope there will be something of instruction in this, and somewhat of comfort for all those who are on the right side. May the Holy Ghost make it so.

In the world around us we must not consider that things go altogether amiss when the powers of evil become strong. We should be foolish if we wept in despair because the tares are ripening, for is not the wheat ripening too? True, the dead become more and more corrupt, but if the living become more and

more active, why should we lament? Because blasphemy grows loud, because infidels seek to undermine the foundation of the faith, or because the clouds of superstition grow more dense, we must not therefore conclude that we have fallen upon evil times, the like of which were never seen before. Not so. Oftentimes the development of evil is an indication that there is an equal or a greater development of good; and the climax of ill is frequently its end. Do you not know that in the world of nature the darkest time of the night is that which precedes the dawning of the day? May it not be the same in the spiritual and moral world? Does not the old proverb tell us concerning the year that "as the day lengthens, the cold strengthens"? As the spring comes with lengthened days, the frosts often grow more sharp and hard. Is it not also plain to the simplest mind that the turning of the tide happens when the ebb has reached its utmost. Even so when evil is at its height, it is nearest to its fall. Look for confirmation to the page of history. When the tale of bricks was doubled, Moses came to deliver the oppressed. When Pharaoh would by no means let the people go, and his yoke seemed rivetted upon the neck of Israel, then the right arm of God was made bare, and the Red Sea beheld his vengeance. When despots grow most tyrannical, liberty's hour is coming. When the lie becomes exceeding bold and wears a brazen forehead, then it is that truth confounds her. When Goliath stalks abroad and defies the armies of Israel, then is the stone already in the sling, and the David hard at hand, to lay the giant low. Do not, therefore, dread the advent of greater

opposition, nor the apparent increase in strength of those oppositions which already exist, for it has ever been so in the history of events that the hour of the triumph of evil is the hour of its doom. When Belshazzar profanes the holy vessels, the handwriting blazes on the wall; and when Haman is at the king's banquet of wine seeking the blood of the whole race of the Jews, the gallows are prepared for him upon his own roof.

It shall be seen, even to the last hour of history, that the devil rages the more when his empire is the nearer to its end. At the very last, he shall go about "to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle" (Rev 20:8). They shall come up in great hosts, fierce for the conflict, to "the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Rev 16:14), at Armageddon. It shall then seem as if the light of Israel must be quenched, and the truth of God utterly extinguished; but in that dread hour the Lord shall triumph gloriously, and He shall smite His adversaries to their final overthrow. Then shall the angel standing in the sun invite the vultures and all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven to gather to the grim feast of vengeance, to eat the flesh of horsemen and men of might. Then also shall the devil that deceived them be cast into the lake of fire, "and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev 20:10). Then also shall the shout be heard, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (see Rev 19:6). On the greatest possible scale, the greatness of the dragon's wrath is a sure prophecy of the end of his reign.

Now, what is true on a great scale is true in the smaller one. Missionaries in any country will generally find that the last onslaught of heathenism is the most ferocious. We shall find, whenever the truth comes into contact with falsehood, that when error is driven to its last entrenchments it fights for life, tooth and nail, with all its might; its wrath is great because its time is short. In any village or town in England, or in any other country, whenever the opposition to the gospel reaches its most outrageous pitch, and men seem as if they would murder the preacher of the Word, you may reckon that the power of the opposition is almost over. After the mad fit, active persecution will cease, and there will come a time of calm, and perhaps of general reception of the gospel. When once the bad passions of mankind shall have boiled up, they will cool down again; hath not the Lord promised to restrain it? As the burning heat of the noontide sun lasts not forever, but gradually abates when it has reached the hottest point, so is it with the wrath of man, which the foul fiend so often uses for his base purposes.

The same truth will apply to every individual man. When God begins his great work in a sinner's heart to lead him to Christ, it is no bad sign if the man feels more hatred to God than ever, more dislike to good things than before; nor need we despair if he is driven into greater sin than ever. The ferocity of the temptation indicates the vigor with which Satan contends for any one of his black sheep. He will not lose his subjects if he can help it, and so he puts forth all his strength to keep them under his power, and he is especially vigilant and furious when the power of

grace is about to prevail for their salvation. I will not, however, dwell upon this point, because it is to be the subject of our discourse.

The general fact is further illustrated in the cases of many believers. There are times when in the believer's heart the battle rages horribly, when he hardly knows whether he is a child of God at all and is ready to give up all hope. He cannot pray or praise, for he is so distracted; he cannot read the Scriptures without horrible thoughts. It seems as if he must utterly perish, for no space is given him in which to refresh his heart, and the attacks are so continual and violent. Such dreadful excitements are often followed by years of peace, quiet usefulness, holiness, and communion with God. Satan knows that God is about to set a limit to his vexations of the good man, and so he rages extremely because his opportunity is short. It is very remarkable that some of the greatest of the saints have died in the midst of the most fearful conflicts, from the same reason: the dog howled at them because he knew that they would soon be out of his reach. You would not suppose that Martin Luther, a man so brave and strong that he could defy the Pope and the devil, should on his dying bed be woefully put to it, and yet it was so—his worst struggle was the closing one. He was more than a conqueror, but the fight was severe, as if the devil, that old coward, waited until he had his antagonist down, waited until he was weak and feeble, and then leaped upon him to worry if he could not devour him. Truly Luther had worried the devil, and we do not wonder at the malice of the fiend. Satan knew that he would soon be out of

the reach of his fiery arrows forever, and therefore he must needs have a last shot at him.

It was precisely the case with John Knox, who being observed to sigh deeply was asked the cause of it, and replied, "I have formerly, during my frail life, sustained many tests, and many assaults of Satan; but at present he hath assailed me most fearfully, and put forth all his strength to devour, and make an end of me at once. Often before has he placed my sins before my eyes, often tempted me to despair, often endeavored to ensnare me by the allurements of the world; but these weapons were broken by the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and the enemy failed. Now he has attacked me in another way: the cunning serpent has labored to persuade me that I have merited heaven and eternal blessedness by the faithful discharge of my ministry. But, blessed be God who has enabled me to beat down and quench this fiery dart by suggesting to me such passages of Scripture as these: 'What hast thou that thou didst not receive?...By the grace of God I am what I am...not I, but the grace of God which was with me' (1Co 4:7; 15:10). Upon this, as one vanquished, he left me. Wherefore I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ, Who has been pleased to give me the victory; and I am persuaded the tempter shall not again attack me, but, within a short time, I shall, without any great pain of body or anguish of mind, exchange this mortal and miserable life for a blessed immortality through Jesus Christ."

Do you wonder that the devil was eager to have another knock at one who had given so many knocks to his dominion? Do not therefore be at all surprised

if Satan rages against you, nor marvel if you yourself should seem to be given into his power, but the rather rejoice in this, that his great wrath is the token of the shortness of his time. He wages war with us all the more cruelly because he knows that he will ultimately be defeated. His degraded mind delights in petty malice. If he cannot destroy, he will disturb; if he cannot kill, he will wound. Subtle as he is, he acts right foolishly in pursuing a hopeless object. In his war against any one of the seed of the woman, he knows that he is doomed to defeat, and yet he gnaws at the heel which breaks his head. It is the doom of evil to persevere in its spite after it knows that it is all in vain—to be for ever vanquished by the seed of the living God, and yet for ever to return to the fray. Sisyphus for ever rolling upward a huge stone which returns upon him is a true picture of the devil vainly laboring to remove the truth out of its place. His is indeed “labour in vain” (Psa 127:1).

I thought this morning I would call attention to one particular instance of the fact which is seen in the soul that is coming to Christ, in whom Satan often hath great wrath knowing that his time is short. My object is to comfort those who are awakened and are seeking the Savior. If they are sore beset, I long that they may find peace, and rest, and hope very speedily. When the poor man who was possessed with an evil spirit was being brought to Christ, we read that “as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him” (Luk 9:42). That is the way with the great enemy: when he is about to be cast out, his energy is more displayed than ever, that if possible he may destroy the soul before it has obtained peace with

God. May the sacred Comforter help me while I try to speak encouragingly upon this subject.

1. How Satan Knows When His Time Is Short

I. Our first head shall be, *How does Satan know when his time is short in a soul?* He watches over all souls that are under his power with incessant maliciousness. He goeth about the camp like a sentinel, spying out every man who is likely to be a deserter from his army. In some men's hearts he dwells at ease, like a monarch in his pavilion. Their minds are his favorite mansions; he goes in and out whenever he pleases, and he makes himself wonderfully much at home. He counts the man's nature to be his own inheritance, and he works within him after his own evil pleasure. Alas, the deceived man yields his members "instruments of unrighteousness" (Rom 6:13) and is willingly held in thralldom. In such a case, all the man's faculties are so many chambers for Satan to dwell in, and his emotions are so many fires and forges for Satan to work with. But by-and-by, if divine grace interposes, there comes a change, and Satan, who has lived there twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years, begins to think that he shall not be able to keep this residence of his much longer. He perceives that his time is short, and I suppose he perceives it first by discovering that *he is not quite so welcome as he used to be*. The man loved sin, and found pleasure in it, but now sin is not so sweet as it was; its flavor is dull and insipid. The charms of vice are fading, and its pleasures are growing empty, vain, and void, and this is a token of a great change. Once, whenever a pilgrim sin came that

way, the soul kept open house to entertain it with all hospitality, but now it is not half so eager. Even the home-dwelling habitual lusts do not yield so much content as aforetime, neither is so much provision made for them. The black prince and his court are out of favor, and this is an intimation that he must soon be gone. When sin loses its sweetness, Satan is losing his power. The adversary perceives that he must soon stretch his dragon wings when he sees that the heart is growing weary of him and is breaking away from his fascinations.

He grows more sure of his speedy ejection when *he does not get the accommodation he used to have*. The man was once eager for sin. He went in the pursuit of vice, hunted after it, and put himself in the way of temptation, and then Satan reigned securely; but now he begins to forsake the haunts where sin walks openly, and he abandons the cups of excitement which inflame the soul. You find him going to a place of worship, listening to a sermon, whereas before he frequented the theater, and enjoyed a loose song at the music-hall. The devil does not give up the key. The man does not drink as once he did, nor swear as once he did; nor does he yield himself up with readiness to every temptation. The fish is getting shy of the bait. The awakened man has not decided for Christ, but he is no longer at ease in bondage, no longer the glad slave of iniquity. He is on the wrong road, but he does not *run* in it. On the contrary, he pauses, he heaves a sigh and wishes he could leave the evil road, wishes he knew how to leap a hedge and get into the narrow way. Satan marks all this, and he says to himself, "There is not the preparation made for me

that there used to be, there is little readiness to run on my errands, and therefore I perceive that my time is short.”

He is still more convinced of the shortness of his possession of a man’s heart *when he hears knocking at that heart’s door a hand whose power he has felt*. He knows the kind of knock it is: a gentle, but an irresistible knocking upon the heart. Continual, perpetual, persevering, the knock of one who means to enter; the knock as of one that hath a hole in his hand. He knocketh not as one whose power lies in a blow, but as one whose tears and love are his battery of attack. He hath an energy of compassion, an irresistibleness of gentle love; and as Satan hears his knock, and perceives that the tenant of the house hears it too, and is half inclined to open the door, he is afraid. When the heart relents at the sound of the gospel summons, he trembles more. If the knocking still continues, waking up the tenant in the dead of night, a sound heard amid the noise of traffic and above the laughter of fools, he says, “My time is short.” He knows the hand which broke his head of old, and its knocking is ominous to him.

He knows that in the gentleness of Jesus there is an irresistible energy which must and will prevail, and he therefore counts that his possession of the tenement is precarious when the gospel is felt upon the heart. Between the knocks he hears a voice that saith, “Open to me! Open to me, for my head is wet ‘with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night!’” (Song 5:2), and he knows that this pleading voice bodes the downfall of his power.

Another indication to the enemy that his time is short is *when he knows that the tenant of the house steals away sometimes to court and asks for a warrant of ejectment against him*. You know what I mean—when the man feels that he cannot himself get rid of sin, and cannot in his own strength conquer Satan, and therefore cries, “O God help me, O God for Christ’s sake drive out the old dragon from my soul, I beseech thee.” This is asking for a warrant of ejectment; this is going to the court of heaven and pleading with the great King to issue a summons and send his officer to turn out the intruder, that he may no longer pollute the spirit. “Ah,” saith the evil one, “this is not the place for me much longer; ‘behold, he prayeth’” (Act 9:11). More fierce than the flames of hell to Satan are the prayers of convinced sinners: when they pray he must be gone. He must cry “boot and saddle” when men sound the trumpet of prayer. There is no tarrying in the camp any longer when the advance guard of prayer has come to take possession.

One thing more always makes Satan know that his time is short, and that is *when the Holy Spirit’s power is evidently at work within the mind*. Light has come in, and the sinner sees and knows what he was ignorant of before. Satan hates the light as much as he loves darkness, and like an owl in the daylight he feels that he is out of place. Life comes in, too, by the Holy Ghost. The man *feels*, he becomes sensitive, he becomes penitent; and Satan who loves death and ever abides among the tombs is bound to fly before spiritual life. The Holy Spirit is beginning to work upon the man very graciously, and Satan knows every throb of the Spirit’s power, for it is the death of his

power, and so he saith, "I will go to the place from whence I came out, for this house trembles as if it were shaken with earthquake and affords me no rest." Joyful tidings for a heart long molested by this fierce fiend! Away, thou enemy, thy destruction shall soon come to a perpetual end!

2. How He Displays His Great Wrath

This brings me, secondly, to notice that, inasmuch as the shortness of his tenure excites the rage of Satan, we must next observe *how he displays his great wrath*. His fury rages differently in different persons. On some he displays his great wrath by stirring up outward persecution. The man is not a Christian yet, he is not actually converted yet; but Satan is so afraid that he will be saved that he sets all his dogs upon him directly. The poor soul goes into the workshop, and though he would give his eyes if he could say, "I am a Christian," he cannot quite say so; and yet his workmates begin to pounce upon him as much as if he was in very deed one of the hated followers of Jesus. They scoff at him because he is serious and sober, because he is beginning to think and to be decent, because he begins to listen to the gospel and to care for the best things. Before the Man-child is born, the dragon is longing to devour him. Before the man gets to be a Christian, the prince of the power of the air labors, if possible, to destroy him. The devil will lose nothing through being behind. He begins as soon as ever grace begins. Now, if the grace of God be not in the awakened man and his reformation is only a spasm of remorse, it is very likely that he will be driven back from all attendance

upon the means of grace by the ribald remarks of the ungodly, but if the Lord Jesus Christ has really been knocking at his door, and the Spirit of God has begun to work, this opposition will not answer its purpose. The Lord will find wings for this poor soul that he may flee away from the trial which as yet he is not able to bear. I have sometimes known such opposition even tend to undo Satan's work, and answer quite the opposite purpose. I know one who was much troubled about the truth of Scripture and about the doctrines of the gospel, although he was a sincere searcher into the truth. He commenced to attend this house of prayer, and to listen to the gospel, rather as an enquirer than as a believer. As yet he could not say that he was a Christian, though he half wished he could.

Now, it came to pass that the opposition which he immediately received from the world strengthened his faith in the Bible and became a sort of missing link between him and the truth. The sneers of his comrades acted in this way. He said to himself, "Why should they all attack me on the bare supposition of my being a Christian? If I had been a Muslim or a Jew, they would have regarded me with curiosity and let me alone; but inasmuch as they only suspect me of becoming a Christian, they are all down upon me with contempt and anger. Now," said he, "why is this? Is not this a proof that I am right, and that the Word of God is right, for did it not say that there should be enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman?" The devil did not know what he was doing when he opposed that young man and made a believer of him by that which was meant to drive him

into unbelief. If the men of this world oppose the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ more fiercely than any other, surely it must be that there is something special in it, something opposed to their sinful ways or to their proud hopes, something which is of God. That was the inference which my young friend drew from the treatment he received, and that inference established him in the faith. Thus, you see, Satan often hopes to save his dominion when his time is short by vehement persecution against the awakened sinner.

Much worse, however, is his other method of showing his wrath, namely, by vomiting floods out of his mouth to drown, if possible, our new-born hope. When the hopeful hearer as yet has not really found peace and rest, it will sometimes happen that Satan will try him with doubts, and blasphemies, and temptations such as he never knew before. The tempted one has been amazed and has said to himself, "How is this? Can my desire after Christ be the work of God? I get worse and worse. I never felt so wicked as this till I began to seek a Savior." Yet this is no strange thing, fiery though the trial be. Satan will suggest all the doubts he can upon the inspiration of Scripture, the existence of a God, the deity of Christ, and everything else that is revealed, till the poor heart that is earnestly longing for salvation will scarcely know whether there is anything true at all. The man will be so tumbled up and down in his thoughts that he will hardly know whether he is on his head or his heels. "They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end" (Psa 107:27). The more they read the Bible and the more they attend the means of grace, the more are they tempted

to be skeptical and atheistic. Doubts they never knew before will torment them even while they strive to be devout. The evil tenant has notice to quit, and he makes up his mind to do all the damage within his power, while he is yet within the doors. See how he breaks up precious truths, and dashes down the richest hopes, and all with the detestable design of venting his spite upon the poor soul.

At such time, also, Satan will often arouse all the worst passions of our nature and drive them into unwonted riot. The awakened sinner will be astonished as he finds himself beset with temptations more base and foul than he has ever felt before. He will resist and strive against the assault, but it may be so violent as to stagger him. He can scarcely believe that the flesh is so utterly corrupt. The man who is anxiously seeking to go to heaven seems at such a time as if he were dragged down by seven strong demons to the eternal deeps of perditions. He feels as if he had never known sin before, nor been so completely beneath its power. The satanic troopers sleep as a quiet garrison while the man is under the spell of sin, but when once the heart is likely to be captured by Immanuel's love, the infernal soldiery put on their worst manner and trample down all the thoughts and desires of the soul.

Satan may also attack the seeker in another form, with fierce accusations and judgments. He does not accuse some men, for he is quite sure of them, and they are his very good friends; but when a man is likely to be lost to him, he alters his tone and threatens and condemns. He cries, "What, you be saved! It is impossible! You know what you used to be.

Think of your past life.” Then he rakes up a very hell before the man’s eyes. “You!” saith he, “why even since you have pretended to be a little better and have begun to attend the means of grace, you know you have looked back with a longing eye and hungered for your old pleasures. It is quite out of the question that you should be a servant of Christ! He will not have such a tatterdemalion¹ as you in his house. The great Captain will never march at the head of a regiment which is disgraced by receiving such as you.” Bunyan describes Apollyon as standing across the road and swearing by his infernal den that the pilgrim should go no further; there would he spill his soul. Then he began to fling at him all manner of fiery darts, and among them was this one, “Thou didst faint at first setting out, when thou wast almost choked in the gulf of Despond. Thou wast almost persuaded to go back at the sight of the lions. Thou hast been false already to thy new Lord!”² Think for a moment of the devil chiding us for sin! Oh, that the poor burdened soul could laugh at this hypocritical accuser, for he hates to be despised, and yet he right well deserves it. Laugh at him, O virgin daughter of Zion, for this great wrath of his is because his time is short. Who is he that he should bring an accusation against us? Let him mind himself; he has enough to answer for. When he turns an accuser, it is enough to make the child of God laugh him to scorn. Yet it is not easy to

¹ **tatterdemalion** – ragamuffin; person dressed in ragged clothing.

² From *The Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

laugh when you are in this predicament, for the heart is ready to break with anguish.

Once more. Satan at such times has been known to pour into the poor troubled mind floods of blasphemy. I do not recollect as a child having heard blasphemy. Carefully brought up and kept out of harm's way, I think it could only have been once or twice that I ever heard profane language; and yet, when I was seeking the Lord, I distinctly remember the spot where the most hideous blasphemies that ever passed the human mind rushed through my mind. I clapped my hands to my mouth for fear I should utter one of them. They were none of my inventing; neither had I revived them from my memory. They were the immediate suggestions of Satan himself, who was determined, if possible, to drive me to despair. Read the story of John Bunyan's five years of torture under this particular misery, and you will see how Satan would say to him, "Sell Christ, Sell Christ, Give up Christ," and as he went about his daily business he would have it ringing in his ears: "Sell Christ, Sell Christ." When at last, in a moment of worry, he thought he said, "Let him go if he will": then came the accusation, "Now it is all over with you. Jesus will have nothing to do with you; you have given Him up. You are a Judas; you have sold your Lord." Then when the poor man sought the Lord with tears, and found peace again, some other dreadful insinuation would dog his heels. John Bunyan was too precious a servant of the devil for him to lose him readily, and the enemy had perhaps some idea of what kind of servant of God the converted tinker would become, and what sort of dreams would charm the

hearts of many generations, and so he would not let him go without summoning all the tribes of hell to wreak their vengeance on him if they could not detain him in their service. Yet Bunyan escaped, and so will others in like case. Oh, bondslave of the devil, may you have grace to steal away to Jesus. Hasten away from Satan's power at once, for otherwise he will as long as he has any opportunity manifest his great wrath towards you.

3. How We Are to Meet All This

Thirdly, and briefly, let us think—*How are we to meet all this?* How must Satan be dealt with while he is showing his great wrath because his power is short?

I should say, first, if he is putting himself in this rage, let us get him out all the more quickly. If he would remain quiet, even then we ought to be anxious to be rid of foul company; but if he shows this great rage, let us out with him straight away. In God's name, let the dragon be smitten if he must needs be raving. If there is any opportunity of getting him out, back door or front door, straight away, do not let us loiter or linger even for a single hour. A devil raging, making us blaspheme, and then accusing us, tempting us, and betraying us, is such a dangerous occupant of a heart that he is not to be borne with. Out he must go, and out at once. Better have a den of lions dwelling in our house than the devil within our heart. Lord, turn him out at once by Thine own grace. We decide once for all to wage war with him; we will linger no longer, we dare not. We will procrastinate no more; it is more than our lives are worth. Nay, not tomorrow, but today out must the tyrant go. Nay, not

after we leave this Tabernacle, but *here*, in this very pew, O Lord, drive the old dragon from his throne with all his hellish crew! That is the first advice I give you: let the enemy be cast out at once by grace divine.

And the next thing is, inasmuch as we cannot get him out by our own unaided efforts, let us cry to the strong for strength, Who can drive out this prince of the power of the air. There is life in a look at Jesus Christ; and as soon as that life comes, away goes this prince of darkness as to his domination and reigning power. Oh, soul, there is nothing left for thee but to look to Jesus Christ alone. Worried as thou art, and almost devoured, now is thy time to put thy trust in Jesus, Who is mighty to save. You know the text which speaketh of the shepherds taking out of the lion's mouth two legs and a piece of an ear. The sheep was almost devoured, but still he pulled out from between the lion's jaws the last relics of his prey, and if you seem to be reduced to two legs and a piece of an ear, yet still our glorious Shepherd can pull you out from between the lion's teeth and make you whole again, for He will not lose His sheep even at its last extremity. What canst thou do against Satan? Thou wouldst fain be rid of him; what canst thou do? Do nothing but this: Cry to his Master against him. He is mighty, set the Almighty One upon him. He accuses thee, throw the blood of atonement in his face. Here is a text that will drive him down to his den: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1Jo 1:7). And "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1Ti 1:15). Have done with battling with the wily foe, do

not answer the old deceiver. If he tells thee thou art a blasphemer, own it; if he says thou art utterly lost, own it; and then cast thyself at Jesus's feet, and He will overcome thy foe and set thee free.

One more comfort for you, and it is this—the more he rages, the more must your poor, troubled heart be encouraged to believe that he will soon be gone. I venture to say that nothing will make him go sooner than your full belief that he has to go. Courageous hope is a weapon which he dreads. Tell him he must soon be gone. He has been accusing you, and pouring venom into your ear, and making you believe that it is your own blasphemy, whereas it is not yours but his. Say to him, “Ah, but you will be gone soon. You may rage, but you will have to be gone.” “I have full possession of you,” he says, “soul and body, and I triumph over you.” Say to him, “And would you triumph over me as you do if you did not know that you will soon be driven out?” “Ah,” saith he, “you will be lost, you will be lost.” He howls at you as if ready to devour. Say to him, “If I was sure to be lost, you would not tell me so; you would sing sweet songs in my ears, and lure me to destruction. You have to go, you know you have.” “Oh,” saith he, “it is impossible you should be saved. You will be damned; you will have the hottest place in hell.” “Yes,” say you, “but who sent you to tell me that? You never spoke the truth yet. You are a liar from the beginning, and you are only saying this because you have to go. You know you have to go.” Tell him so, and it is not long before he will depart. Say, “Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; though I fall yet shall I rise again” (see Mic 7:8). Tell him you know his Master. Tell him he

may nibble at your heel, but you recollect One that broke his head. Point to his broken head—he always tries to hide it if he can. Tell him his crown is battered to pieces, and tell him where that deed was done, and by Whose blessed hand; and as you tell him these things, he will shrink back, and you shall find yourself alone with Jesus only. Then will Jesus say to you, “Where is thine accuser?” You will look around and the enemy will be gone, and then your blessed Master will say, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (Joh 8:11). The Lord grant us to get such a riddance of our archenemy, and to get it this very moment, for Christ’s dear sake. Amen.

