

Galatians 5:7-12 – The Insidious Nature of the Devil

GreekLexicon, TSK, Gaebelin, Handfuls, Reinecker, Henry, Trapp, Robertson, Poole, Geneva, JFB, Eclectic, Family, Clarke, Calvin, Bezuyen
Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: The Devil is a sneaky snake, isn't he?
He started off with deceiving Adam and Eve in an insidious way.

He rarely directly calls people to sin.

That is his modus operandi!

And he did so by trying to deceive the Galatians.

In their case, **he never urged them to deny salvation was by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, but he introduced the “and” factor:** Salvation was by Christ **AND** you!

How insidious! And some loved the idea as it stroked their egos.

You will hear today more about this Sneaky Snake's methodology.

Our headings are:

Satan Is Effective

You Are More Effective in Christ

Our goals are: **That you will resist the temptation of the Devil to try to make you feel self-important and make you steal credit from Christ, and that you will realize Christ gives you guaranteed strength and ability to resist the Devil and his lies.**

The Devil is Effective

7 You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

1. Now Apostle Paul commended the Galatians for starting the “race” of their Christian life well.

The Apostle Paul used another sports allegory, as sports was common in the Greek and Roman world.

After they were baptized, the Galatians served the Lord faithfully. They lived the Gospel. They worshipped. They evangelized. They had zeal for spiritual things.

2. But the Galatians stumbled as they were hindered; something was thrown on their path as they ran.

Satan, working through the Judaizers, threw false doctrine as they ran so they stumbled.

“**Hindered**” was a military term used to describe someone breaking up a road to prevent safe passage, or jumping in front of a runner. So it pointed to some **illegal interference.**

The Judaizers were blocking God's people from progressing in their lives. They were the Devil's people.

3. But why did Apostle Paul ask, "Who hindered you?" when he knew the Judaizers had done it?

He wanted the Galatians to acknowledge the Judaizers were guilty of lying to them and acknowledge they were guilty of allowing themselves to be deceived.

The Galatians were like a sport fan thinking because he does certain superstitious acts, he is able to contribute to a team winning – like wearing the same shirt during a game...or tapping on a table so many times before a penalty kick.

It contributes nothing...but he wants to take some credit for it.

8 This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you.

4. But the root of the Galatians' stumbling was actually the Devil...

The Lord had called the Galatians to himself, but the Devil came and made a 2nd call through his people.

God declared one was justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, and eternal salvation was written on their hearts. But the Devil's people said it was grace AND works – circumcision being one of those essential works.

The Devil has people, lots of people, to help him in his work.

9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

5. The result of the Devil and his people was that the Galatians Christians became polluted.

As yeast slowly permeates the whole dough (hence it is described as insidious) the people were left in mortal danger by this false doctrine. This was Jesus' language.

Matthew 16:6 Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."

So even though the Galatians had many good doctrines, a really bad one as this, as yeast, affected their whole lives. That meant their whole church was affected. (Leaven was not unbelief...but false doctrines!) Imagine the turmoil this brought between the members of the church and its leadership.

6. Lessons:

a. It is not automatic that your Christian life will run smoothly.

You have to make sure you have eyes to recognize dangers.

You have to be trained in the Word.

You have to surround yourself with good teachers.

You have to have good friends who will hold you accountable.

The Devil will bring obstacles against you if you are living with knowledge and zeal for the Lord.

The Devil doesn't have your welfare in his mind.

He is doing this to build his kingdom.

He wants more company in hell with him at the end of the world.

He likes to dig up the road so you have to take a detour. But press on!

Philippians 3:14 *I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

b. The Devil, through his people, will more likely bring subtle obstacles...which may not seem like obstacles at all...against you, if you are living with zeal and knowledge for the Lord.

(People aren't good – not without Christ. Don't be fooled by “nice” people.)

Those detours those people force you to follow may look like shallow waters, but they run deep and will drown you.

Let's make women pastors.

Let's make worship customer-friendly.

Let's die with dignity.

Let's respect women's choices.

Let's welcome everyone as members or the church will die.

Let's hide away from the world.”

c. When you fall into a false doctrine, it affects not only you, but your whole family and the whole church.

Example: David Jeremiah, a famous TV preacher said that after Christ returns there will be people remaining behind who will have a difficult life but they will still hear the Gospel. Lies...lies from hell.

He makes people think they will have another shot at being saved. This removes their need to repent now. After Jesus returns there will be judgment-nothing more.

d. The churches must be prepared to run out those who are introducing false doctrines in the church in order to preserve the purity of the church and protect the praise of Christ.

You Are More Effective in Christ

10 I have confidence in you, **in the Lord**, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall **bear his judgment**, whoever he is.

1. Apostle Paul was confident the Galatians would be able to withstand the attacks from Satan and his henchmen because *they were in the Lord*.

The Galatians were to remember they were **standing in the Lord**.

It is true the Devil has a lot of power and influence and he has lots of people on his payroll, but God does not allow evil to triumph forever.

2. Apostle Paul, to further incentivize the Galatians to hold their ground against the Devil and his people, described the judgment that was coming on the attempted deceivers of God's people.

Judgment is sure! Remember what God did to Achan?

Joshua 7:25 And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones.

How would judgment come? It would come through the **censures of the church** and **eternity in hell**.

"Being in Christ" was not a fake kind of confidence others might give when they say "There, everything is going to be okay" even though there is no assurance everything is going to be okay.

God himself was going to stop these liars, the deceivers and robbers of God's glory. **This is reflected in the Imprecatory Psalms**. This is why Israel sang them and taught their children to sing them.

11 And I, brethren, **if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution?** Then the **offense of the cross has ceased**.

3. There was a time when Apostle Paul was accused of preaching circumcision was essential for salvation, like when he asked that Timothy be circumcised (*not for religious reasons but simply so he would have access to Jewish people*), but he wasn't preaching the necessity of circumcision for salvation.

He, in fact, was being persecuted for the opposite- for not preaching circumcision was necessary for salvation. But the false accusations did not stop.

See Acts. **To further prove he was not preaching circumcision for salvation, he noted that people were strongly offended by the necessity and exclusivity of the cross for salvation.** It was a huge stumbling block to the Jews.

1 Corinthians 1:23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,

The Judaizers preferred to gain God's affections by holding feasts, being circumcised, having ceremonies, and holding special days.

(This was Apostle Paul's personal note reminding the Galatians if they believed in salvation by grace alone, they would face opposition. So they had to hold their ground.)

12 I could wish that those who trouble you would even **cut themselves off!**

4. Finally, Apostle Paul's desired (made a strong wish) that all those who insisted on being circumcised to be saved, might go one step further and be fully castrated.

(You will notice the play on words: They want you to be circumcised -foreskins cut off- but I desire that God would cut them off completely!)

He wanted this to happen so these people would not have any children. This was not wrong! He was so concerned about this wickedness, he prayed for the destruction of the wicked, just like others prayed in much of the Bible and the Psalms. But he did not personally take revenge.

5. Lessons:

a. Because you are in Christ and are strengthened by Christ, you don't have to fall for the insidious deceit of the Devil and his people. Don't be scared of them! Don't give in. Christ makes you strong.

b. Those who stand up against God's church and try to undermine and destroy it, will themselves be destroyed. (And you must assume there will always be those who will attack the church – attack the elders, the pastors, and the doctrines.) **But the Lord is all-powerful!** That is God's Word. Find assurance in the destruction of God's enemies.

c. Desire and pray for the destruction of God's enemies – those tools of Satan.

d. Call out those agents of Satan who are undermining the church. Those who are promoting healthy eating, working hard, and living clean lives, in place of

preaching that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, are evil. **They are substituting good things for essential things.** That's Satan's insidious way, not Christ's.

e. Have zeal for the kingdom of the Lord. If you don't have it, look back at the cross and ask God for his Holy Spirit to rekindle that zeal in you.

Conclusion:

Indeed, Satan is effective. He is able to work with his fellow demons and he has a great contingent of willing hands on earth ready to do his bidding. Together they can do a lot of damage.

But there is another side! **While the Devil is powerful, you who are resting in Christ and are being replenished in Christ.** So don't fear. Instead...

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

1. Rest in the Lord! You can't contribute to your salvation.

2. Resist those who are who are luring you to "self-aggrandizement."

3. Rejoice in the Lord. You couldn't save yourself, but he could, and did. Don't be afraid.

4. Remind those who are trapped in trying to "cooperate" with the Lord for salvation to stop it.

Finally: Every religion tells you that you can do something to save yourself. The Bible says if you try to do things to save yourself you will go to hell. If you don't want to go to hell, call on God to save you. He has the ability because Jesus died on the cross for sinners and he offers Christ's works as your works for free.