

A BATTLE WITH DEMONS

"For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life" (2 Cor. 1:6.)

Sometimes God permits certain saints to pass through fierce conflicts, either as a warning, or for an encouragement to those who are weak. We had just closed a three months' campaign in South Africa, most fruitful period in a ministry of over forty years. Many raw heathen had been saved, native Christians and evangelists deepened and revived, but especially the dear missionaries refired and reanointed. To God be all the praise.

Of course, such victories enraged all hell. Before leaving Capetown, where we had our last and greatest outpouring, we were urged to preach our sermon on "Demonology". Many of the Christian workers appreciated the message as an eye-opener to the activity of demons. Wife requests me to cease preaching this sermon, for on several occasions Satan and his co-horts have tried to kill me. But I answer, "Hallelujah! I am immortal till my work is done!"

As we near the end of time, these evil spirits, especially the suicide demons, (Matt. 17:14-18.) become bolder and more daring. Doubtless it was this demon that came so near killing Paul in the language of our text—Pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life. No marvel then if we meet the "fury of the oppressor", especially when we do his kingdom damage. One writer says that in the last days we will have "an atmosphere peopled with evil spirits, and heavy with the depression of hell. These evil spirits will do their utmost to injure, mislead, confuse, and depress the children of the Lord. Our bodies will be affected; it will press in on our minds and becloud our souls. All kinds of strange feelings and new and peculiar trials will come to us. A surprising lack of desire and energy Godward, a spiritual deadness, a mental heaviness, lethargy of soul, an alarming desire for forbidden things and a peculiar delight and fascination in any of the world's pleasures we dare taste. It will be difficult to preach the Word in liberty and power; it will be difficult to give attention to the Word when it is preached; it will be very difficult to get down to real earnest and continued prayer. This is the atmosphere in which we must battle as the days darken around us. Oh! let us be strong in the Lord! Satan will no doubt bring a mysterious power to bear on our minds and wills, which will make it exceedingly difficult to walk closely with God, and very easy to live in the flesh. We will be amazed at the power he can use against us."

Fallen angels are cruel and crafty and do not like to have their subtle workings exposed, and woe unto the warrior who dares to grapple with them. God alone must protect such an one: Even now while I write, I can feel the hate and rage of these never-tiring, never-ceasing enemies.

Well, after this message at Capetown, I was conscious for days, not only of God's peculiar presence, but also of the sullen wrath of Satan. We had been sailing about eight days and while crossing the Equator where it is very hot, I was on the upper rear deck pacing back and forth in prayer. No one was near, the lights were off, and I could hear the voluptuous music and dancing on the deck below. The heat was so intense that at times I thought I would go wild. (Many do go insane because of the heat in South Africa. In fact, a man jumped overboard on a previous

sailing.) My old trouble—pressure on the brain—the result of a sunstroke years ago in Egypt, returned.

Satan and his allies must have been watching for this opportunity, for, as I drew near the railing of the ship, a very strong, unseen hand seemed to push me and a sudden impression came to—leap over and end all this suffering! No one will see, or ever know what happened! Better do this than live and run the risk of dying in disgrace like some others! All of this flashed before me like lightning. I was shocked! I stopped short and shrank back in horror! Oh, the powers of darkness that for a moment almost made me blind (Matt. 12:22). I did not cease praying, but I confess I did not again approach so near the sides of the ship. What? Could I not trust God? Yes, but not the devil. The Psalmist prayed, Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.

I shudder even now as I keenly remember the awful presence of demons, that for a second seemed to create an atmosphere of doubt and recklessness as to the reality of a future state. And this is the very thing that envelopes one just before he commits a dark deed that sometimes leads to suicide.

Yes, I was saved and sanctified, but if the devil had the audacity to tempt Jesus to cast Himself down from the pinnacle, will he not suggest to us unreasonable things? Remember this, there is a vast difference between demon possession and demon depression. Saints are not possessed but are often depressed by demons. Remember again, that of all the seven types of demons, the suicide demon associates himself principally with rivers, revolvers and high precipices. From this strange experience with the Prince of Darkness I gather four lessons for others.

1st. *Be sure you are in Divine Order.* This will give confidence in the midst of battle. To feel you are in the right place, where God and Providence placed you is worth a great deal. Be sure then that your plans are not tainted with self interest and unsanctified ambition. If you can vouch that your inner intention is pure and you desire only one thing—The Glory of God, this will bring great rest of soul and silence the artillery of hell.

2nd. *Be constantly in the spirit of prayer.* When this is the case, Satan cannot slip up on you and find you off your guard. Though he may fiercely attack you yet you can quickly hide in God and rightfully expect His protection. It is when you are careless and prayerless that temptation enters the half open door. Wesley speaks of "Ejaculatory prayer". That is short, concise prayers. Here is a short, yet very comprehensive one I frequently pray: Have mercy on me, dear Lord! Rebuke Satan and cause me to do the best thing for Thy glory and souls, I ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

3rd. *Be filled with the Spirit.* This is a sure guarantee against being overcome. When an "unclean spirit" finds the heart "swept, garnished" and pre-occupied by the Holy Ghost, he is a defeated foe. "The Prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me". Millionaires and others who murder their consciences, then commit suicide, would never do it were they Spirit-filled. They did not plan the rash deed, but Satan slipped up on them and found them unprepared, then they could do anything.

Brother, these are "perilous times", and you should insist on this infilling, in self-defense if nothing more. We knew a preacher well who, when shaving yielded to a sudden impulse, cut his throat and died because he failed to confess to

an attempted crime twenty years before. He had become embittered, hence was unfortified for Satan's attack. I beseech you, beloved, do not trifle, do not cover up, do not back down from light!

Poor Judas! We read, "Then entered Satan into him", and thus he was prepared to do the awful deed. He was restrained and unable to do so until now. Satan may have marked you, dear reader, as a victim and may even now be watching for an opportunity to push you into doing something horrible.

"O, wouldst Thou, Lord, thy servant guard,

'Gainst every known or secret foe;

A mind for all assaults prepared,

A sober vigilance bestow.

Ever apprised of danger nigh,

And when to fight and when to fly."

Your only guarantee, then, is to be baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost. Make all haste to definitely seek Him now! Receive Him now!! And retain Him forever!!!

4th. *Do not accuse Satan harshly.* Remember he is a fallen archangel and next to God Almighty in wisdom and power. All he lost in the fall was his holiness and beauty—not his power or velocity of flight. If given permission he could now, with one flap of his wing, destroy the largest army on earth (2 Kings 19:35). He is the Prince of the power of the air and no doubt is responsible for the storms and cyclones that do such havoc. He rules "principalities, powers and spiritual wickedness in high places". Even Michael, an unfallen archangel of a lower rank, "durst not bring a railing accusation" against a fallen Prince of a higher rank, but must say, "The Lord rebuke thee!" Hence, we finite creatures must **not presume** to call him hard names and denounce him in our own strength.

I was called to pray for the wife of a Salvation Army officer in Capetown. She was a lovely Christian character, but was now in midnight darkness and in danger of losing her mind. And why? Because a short time before she "defied Satan to do his worst", and as a result she had gotten into despair. It was with great difficulty that we fought our way back to the face of God through dense darkness and legions of devils who withstood every step.

But thank God, we need not fight in our own strength. Two thirds of the angels did not fall, and "greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world". We are told to "Resist the devil and he will flee from you", "Neither give place to the devil", "Resist him steadfast in the faith", "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall quench all the fiery darts of the wicked".

"Jesus the name high over all

In hell, or earth, or sky;

Angels and men before it fall

And devils fear and fly.

"Jesus the prisoners fetters breaks

And bruises Satan's head;

Power into strengthless souls he speaks

And life into the dead.

"O that the world might taste and see

The riches of His grace;

The arms of love that compass me

Would all mankind embrace."

—E. E. Shelhamer, in *Good Tidings*.

"Many people in ordinary circumstances are millionaires of cheerfulness. They make their neighborhood brighter, and a better place to live in by their presence; they raise the value of every lot for blocks around them."—*Good Tidings*.