

SATAN HAS YOUR NUMBER!

Today's Text: (1) Job, Chaps 1-2 (2) 1 Pet. 5: 6-9

Extracts:

1. Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth and from walking back and forth on it." [Job 1: 6-7]
2. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour [1 Pet. 5: 8]

*You may have noticed that your e-mail box is filled everyday with incoming mail, a greater proportion of which is **unsolicited**. Popularly called "junk mail," your box size can easily be used up unless you take pains to clear it as often as possible. As you install one filter after another, the senders have a way of creating new addresses each day to beat your traps. If you analyse the contents of such mail, the majority has to do with marketing of pornographic literature or products. Telemarketers [those who sell their products, services or ideas by phone, fax or Internet] have become such a nuisance that the United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) have had to step in under the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA) to enforce a National Do-Not-Call List. Under the law, a telemarketer who still contacts a consumer on the List is liable to punishment. But has that stopped the menace?*

*The mail under discussion is unsolicited. In other words, you did not give them your address or phone number. They obtained it by themselves! They harass and pursue you, no matter how hard, fast or far that you run. Satan is like that to believers! First, you cannot hide from him. He knows where you live and what you are doing. Since he is not everywhere at the same time, he has his evil angels helping him to compile dossier on you which he can use to deceive you or accuse you before the Lord [**Zech. 2: 1-2; Rev. 12: 10**]. He may not always succeed in harming you, just as it is not every sickness that attacks your body that can infect you. Your body's ability to fight off the attack depends on your immune system. However, even when you are in good standing with God, Satan can still get you. Do you know why? It is because he has your number! Find out more on the subject in today's lesson, based on the story of Job.*

1. Why Satan wants your number

Satan answers numerous names, such as Lucifer [Is. 14: 12] or the devil, the great dragon or the old serpent [Rev. 12: 9]. He was created by God as an “anointed cherub” and set “on the holy mountain of God” where he “walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.” When he was created, he was perfect in his ways “till iniquity was found” in him [Ezek. 28: 14-15]. What was that iniquity? His heart “was lifted up” because of his beauty [v. 17]. He became too proud to bow to the authority of God. He rebelled against God along with some angels. As a result, there was war in heaven. God’s forces, led by archangel Michael, won and threw Satan and his evil angels down to our earth [Rev. 12: 7-9]. He was still ambitious to carry the fight back to heaven and exalt his “throne above the stars of God,” but he had no chance against his Creator [Is. 14: 13-15]. The Pre-Incarnate Christ watched this battle in heaven before He took human form as Jesus. That is why Jesus Christ was to tell His disciples later, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” [Lk 10: 18].

Unfortunately, when God grants people certain gifts, He does not withdraw them even when they use them against Him [Rom. 11: 29]. For example, most atheists are very brilliant people. Why did God not withdraw their brilliance when they started saying that God does not exist? In like manner, even after Satan’s fall, he has kept his privileges, such as “prince of this world” [Jn 12: 31], and “the prince of the power of the air” [Eph. 2: 2]. He shows up before God when the “sons of God” present themselves before Him [Job 1: 6] or as “the accuser of our brethren” [Rev. 12: 10; Ezek. 2: 1-2]. He even contended with Michael over the body of Moses [Jude 9]! Therefore, Satan is a very influential spiritual being.

When Satan showed up in the Garden of Eden, in the form of the serpent, his plan was to undo God’s plan for the man that He had made in His image and likeness. He succeeded for a time when he got Adam and Eve to disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit. However, God also used the occasion to lay the salvation ministry of Christ, the seed of the woman that was going to bruise Satan’s head [Gen. 3: 15]. Having failed to stop Jesus from successfully carrying out His redemptive ministry, Satan has now taken the battle to His followers “who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” [Rev. 12: 17]. Happily, he can be overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of your testimony [v. 11]. That is why Satan wants your number!

2. Suffering should not be for good people!

As believers, we are under the assuring impression that no weapons fashioned against us shall prosper [Is. 54: 17]. After all, “the angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him and delivers them” [Ps. 34: 7]. Within that context, we can understand it when believers suffer under the following circumstances:

a) *When believers backslide*

There is an *iron law* between obedience and blessings, disobedience and curses [Deut. 28]. That is why we reap what we sow [Gal. 6: 7], and “he who digs a pit will fall into it, and whoever breaks through a wall will be bitten by a serpent” [Eccl. 10: 8]. When David, the man after God’s own heart committed adultery and murder, he was visited by incest, murder and rebellion within his family. When Jesus saved the life of a woman caught in adultery, who was to be stoned to death in accordance with the law of Moses, Jesus told her, “go and sin no more” [Jn 8: 11]. Therefore, believers who have not completely given their lives to Christ may find themselves outside of the shadow of the wings of the Lord. Jesus says that He would vomit lukewarm believers out of His mouth [Rev. 3: 15-16].

b) *Suffering as a training opportunity*

When you are expecting something big in the future, you will not mind to suffer now. For example, no matter the financial hardship and other difficulties, students remain in school for so many years because they know that one day, they will become successful professionals and earn big money. A woman carries a pregnancy for nine months, bearing all the hardships, including in some cases, giving up a lucrative job for a season, because she knows that there is joy at the end. In such circumstances, the affected people could appreciate suffering, largely because they *knew in advance* why they had to suffer.

In like manner, God may be preparing us for higher responsibility in His vineyard for which we need to pass through a wilderness experience. For example, it took thirteen years for Joseph’s dream to be fulfilled. During that long time, his brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt. His master’s wife wrongly accused him of attempted rape for which he was unjustly imprisoned in Pharaoh’s prison. It was there that he met the butler who ultimately mentioned him to Pharaoh *at God’s appropriate time* for Joseph to become the governor of Egypt!

There is another kind of suffering that we cannot understand. You have examined your relationship with God and confessed your sins, known or hidden. You have the joy of the Lord. You have been blessed materially and spiritually. Everything you touch prospers. You worship God with all your heart. Everybody around you sees your fruits of joy, love, peace, patience, perseverance, etc. They can say most assuredly that you are a man/woman of God. Then, all of a sudden, everything falls apart around you without any warning-no dreams, no prophecy, no vision, *nothing!* How do you explain this kind of suffering?

When a blind man was brought before Jesus, His disciples asked Him, “Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus replied, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, *but that the works of God should be revealed in*

him” [Jn 9: 2-3]. In other words, we can be pawns (wager) that God can use for His purpose. In our case study today, we shall see how Job became a pawn in the contest between God and Satan.

3. How Satan got Job’s number!

a) *Job the man*

Job was said to be “blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil” [Job 1: 1]. Understandably, he was blessed. He had 7 sons and 3 daughters. He had thousands of sheep, camels, oxen and donkeys and “a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East” [vv. 2-3]. He was careful to use his material blessings to glorify God by always offering burnt offerings and prayers on behalf of his children who partied from one brother’s house to the other.

Which believer today would not envy that kind of blessings? Which of you would not spend everyday in the church to thank and praise God for such blessings?

b) *Gone with the wind in one day!*

Without any warning, Job’s life was thrown upside down in just one day. Here is the sequence of events [vv. 14-19]:

- Sabeans had killed all his servants (except the one who brought the report), raided his flocks, and carried all away;
- There was a rainstorm. Lightning struck and killed all the sheep and their shepherds, except the one who brought the report;
- The Chaldeans had carried away all the camels. All the servants were dead except the news bearer;
- The rainstorm was worse than we had imagined. Where Job’s 7 sons and 3 daughters were feasting, the storm (we call it the hurricane in the Caribbean) struck the house which fell on the children. They were all dead.

Let us try to empathise with Job, that is, look at the situation from his point of view. Yesterday, in fact, this morning, he had joy and stability in his life. He sang God’s praises around his large estate. His neighbours pointed to him as a role model in true worship. Now, in the evening, he is left only with his wife and three servants. All their lovely children are dead. Their enormous wealth is gone. What would you do if you were in his place?

As for me, I know that I would be too stunned to comprehend what my servants were reporting. They could just be pulling my legs, to test if I in

deed practised the faith that I was known to preach in my community. However, I would be bleeding inwardly, with my thoughts racing from one thing to another. I would be asking questions: *why? Why me?* Meanwhile, I could hear my wife crying uncontrollably in the now ghostly house, surrounded by her family, friends and those who had benefited from our largesse all these years.

But do you know what Job did? He went into mourning mood, by tearing his robe and shaving his head. Then, he fell to the ground and worshipped God saying, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away: *blessed be the name of the Lord.*” Job refused to blame God for the disaster [**Job 1: 20-21**].

c) *But that was a small thing!*

Just as he was recovering from that crisis, Job suddenly found himself struck with painful boils “from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head” [**Job 2: 7**]. This time, his wife could not take it. She screamed at her husband, “Do you still hold fast to your integrity? *Curse God and die!*” [**v. 9**]. Job struck back at her, “You speak as one of the *foolish* women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” [**vv. 9-10**]. Still, Job’s faith in God remained unshaken.

d) *Let us take a breath!*

We shall take up his friends’ condolence visit next week. Meanwhile, let us try to understand what has just happened. Remember, Job was not aware of the bet that God had made with Satan in the spiritual realm over Job’s faithfulness. During the first meeting, when Satan came along with the other sons of God [these are likely to be angels or spirits], God asked Satan where he had been. He told God that he had been “going to and fro on the earth and from walking back and forth on it” [**Job 1: 6**]. First, that statement confirms that Satan is not omnipresent, that is, he is not everywhere *at the same time* like God. Therefore, as he goes from one part of the world to another, he is taking reports from his fallen angels and demons that network for him. When he got to Uz, Job’s place, Satan received the report on Job as follows: “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge *around him, around his household and around all that he has on every side?* You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will *surely curse You to Your face!*” [**vv. 6-11**].

That first time, God permitted Satan to have power over Job’s belongings, “only do not lay a hand on his person” [**v. 12**]. When Satan could not get

Job to lose faith in God, he challenged God during the second visit to allow him to afflict his body, that that would make Job curse God. This, God also granted Satan with the proviso, “but spare his life” [Job 2: 1-6]. Again, Satan failed because Job continued to trust God.

4. Conclusions: Lessons

We need to note the following important lessons:

- Satan is always on the move all over the earth, as a roaring lion looking for whom to devour [1 Pet. 5: 8]. He knows that his time is short and he is always in a hurry. His methods are varied and crude, as he strives to steal, kill or destroy [Jn 10: 10]. See how much damage he did in Job’s household in only one day. Can you imagine what he will do in the house of the unrighteous?
- Satan is envious of those of us that God has blessed. You can see it in the way he accused Job before God, trying to convince God that Job was only faithful because of the blessings that he had received from God. Therefore, Satan will not hesitate to take our blessings away from us but for God’s protection over our *lives, family and possessions*.
- *Satan can only get as far as God allows him!* He had no authority to take Job’s life even though he could afflict him with boils. Job’s wife was not touched at all.
- It follows that our personal relationship with God and His purposes for our lives will determine what leverage He grants to Satan over our estate. *The closer we are to God, the more difficult it is for Satan to touch us to the point of death.*

Satan has your number. He will *always* try to call you, but don’t ever encourage him!