

Is It Better to Be Behind on the Path?: Experiencing the Path of Christian Spirituality in Different Millennia

Part III: Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices

By [Rev. Joel Kletzing](#)

In "The Epistle Dedicatory" there is a notification of the four prime things to be aware of in order to be safe in the present and happy in eternity, namely Christ, the Scriptures, our own hearts and Satan's devices.¹ Satan is driven by malice and envy and will employ any and all means available to bring humans to eternal misery along with himself. He is adept at using the beauty of the world to incite sin. Adding to the level of danger he poses is his ability to read human inclinations and conditions. Like Evagrius, Brooks identifies Satan's hatred as the force behind all killing in the world. It is therefore important to be aware of Satan's workings so that one can be guarded against them (Ephesians 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:26). In listing twelve devices used by Satan along with the remedies believers can employ, when one reads Evagrius on very similar topics it is striking how much more Brooks' arguments are laced with Scripture and how much less he employs allegory in his interpretation.

The first device presented is that Satan entices with bait but hides the hook well. He presents pleasure but conceals the wrath which is attached to sin such as when Adam and Eve realized the stark consequences of eating the attractive forbidden fruit.² Among the remedies are the following: abhor that which is evil (Romans 12:9); realize the bittersweet nature of sin – that the sweet disappears quickly and what lingers is shame and sorrow and terror (Brooks said, "Many eat that on earth what they digest in hell"³); realize sin will remove one from God's favor and that it has an addictive bewitching power which enslaves and leads to death.⁴

The second device is that Satan paints "sin with virtues colors." He makes pride appear as neatness or cleanliness, covetousness as good business, drunkenness as good fellowship, riotousness as liberality, etc. It is helpful to think of how these dressed up vices will appear on the day of judgment and how

¹ *Precious Remedies*, unnumbered pages in front matter.

² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-7.

bitter they will be to the soul at that time. Remember also that those sins which appear attractive cost Jesus His blood.⁵

Satan downplays sin as if it poses no real threat to the soul. Yet instances must be remembered from Scripture which teach the seriousness of sin – such as eating the fruit in Eden, gathering sticks on the Sabbath, or touching the ark of the covenant to steady it. Keep in mind also how giving way to seemingly trivial sins opens the door to more destructive practices. How could one claim to be a friend of God yet at the same time insist on rights to engage in seemingly little offenses which caused Christ such great pain and agony? Would you be a close friend if you collaborated with God's arch enemy?⁶

Other devices highlighted are Satan's tactic of presenting to our minds the sins of great and godly people in the hopes that sinners will justify their own indiscretions, being in such good company. Or Satan may present God to the soul as entirely merciful, implying that there is no reason to be cautious about sin since it can be covered so freely and easily. Repentance also is portrayed by Satan as a simple matter.⁷ Yet if repentance is so simple, one might ask why hell is so populated.⁸ Biblical examples abound in the text confronting such deceitful and murderous reasoning. Powerful statements are included which restore proper perspective countering Satan's lies. Says Brooks,

Every sin strikes at the honor of God, the being of God, the glory of God, the heart of Christ, the joy of the Spirit, and the peace of a man's conscience, and therefore a soul truly repentant strikes at all, hates all, conflicts with all, and will labor to draw strength from a crucified Christ to crucify all sins.⁹

Sin cannot be dressed up. The servant called evil in Matthew 25:18 did not use his single talent in debauchery, but neither did he use it to please his lord. As Matthew 25:41-45 details the separation of goats and sheep at the final judgment, it is not said that the goats stole from the sheep, but that they did not help or serve them. The reality of the sinfulness of sin must settle into the soul until it produces grief and brokenness in repentance. True repentance includes not just loathing sin but self as well. Not only would it be natural to loathe deadly poison but also the container that smells of it. "Those who do not burn now in zeal against sin must before long burn in hell for sin."¹⁰

Satan may spotlight vain lives as trouble free and blessed. Yet one must realize that apparent blessing does not necessarily equate real blessing. The wicked

⁵ Ibid., pp. 7-9.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 11-14.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 17, 22, 29.

⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

⁹ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 33-34.

may appear free of misery but may be operating under God's curse. Nothing makes God angrier than those who would regard God's mercy as authorization to sin. "This is wickedness at the height – for a man to be very bad, because God is very good."¹¹ To be outside of God's discipline is truly a miserable position, so wicked men lack more than they enjoy. It is a tragedy to have outward security but no share in Christ.¹² St. Augustine said, "Many are miserable by loving hurtful things – but they are more miserable by having them."¹³ Looking ahead to how those who lived comfortable lives will fare on judgment day, Bernard said, "Then shall a good conscience be more worth than all the world's goods."¹⁴

Satan will attempt to magnify the suffering of saints and make them appear unbearable. Yet by God's grace afflictions work for the good of believers. In a later section Brooks assures that God uses lesser troubles to deliver His people from greater troubles.¹⁵ The Christian soldier "may suffer death – but never conquest."¹⁶ Throughout the treatment of each device the remedies include meditation on certain pertinent Scriptures.

There is a section devoted to Satan's devices to distract souls from holy services. The devil presents the world in such an attractive light that he wins over the soul's affections. Brooks includes much Biblically-grounded reasoning to prove that the goods of this world cannot satisfy a soul. One of the remedies he prescribes would be to become better acquainted with truly glorious things through cultivating one's union and communion with Christ. As a taste for the heavenly is developed, hunger for earthly things will fade.¹⁷ "A man may have enough of the world to sink him, but he can never have enough to satisfy him."¹⁸

Satan will attempt to dissuade a believer from activities such as prayer, fellowship with the saints, the pursuit of holiness and other holy duties by stressing the difficulty involved versus the ease of neglecting them. The prize that a neglectful person risks forfeiting is Jesus disclosing Himself to those practicing these disciplines. He is goodness and beauty and strength and glory – a lot to miss.¹⁹

There are those who would criticize Puritans for their well-developed doctrine of justification by faith as if that doctrine sowed seeds of spiritual laziness through promoting an easy solution of simply praying a prayer for salvation with no continuing commitments required of such once-praying folks. Brooks identifies

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 46-48.

¹² Ibid., pp. 48-50.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 51-52.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 56-61.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp 81, 88-89.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 99.

the logic which promotes laziness in spiritual disciplines as a device of Satan. Satan, he declares, would persuade Christians to conclude that since Christ's work on the cross was complete, only ease and celebration are the remaining duties for His followers. On the contrary, Christ's work should inspire and not deter service. Many Scriptures call the Christian to sacrificial duty. Salvation includes being purified and doing good works (Titus 2:12-14).²⁰

Recognizing that Satan invokes the practices of wider society as peer pressure in the hopes of directing Christians away from Christian disciplines, Brooks answers, "it is better to go to heaven alone than to hell with company."²¹ If Satan perceives over time that the vain thoughts with which he bombards the soul are actually by grace producing greater diligence and steadfastness, he may begin to let up. Take comfort in realizing that as long as there is no cherishing of the vain thoughts authored by Satan, their mere occurrence in the mind is not a sin. The appropriate response is to simply ask God to cleanse the mind and remove all that is vain. Close attention must be paid to scrutinizing and weighing thoughts. They can be just as spiritually deadly as inward, unnoticed bleeding is to the body. Once again, the remedies for Satan's attacks include vigorous application to being filled with the fullness of God so as to leave no room for idle thoughts.²² For all the duties Brooks promotes, he reminds the reader that all good deeds cannot grant fitting support on the day of trial. Only Christ is the answer to our weakness. Satan would issue temptation to rest on faithful performance of prayer, hearing God's Word, reading, communion of the saints, etc, but the best service a believer can render is imperfect.²³ This warning is similar to Evagrius' warning against vainglory in religious practices.

Satan may attempt to fill the mind and heart with condemnation because feelings of closeness to Jesus are not what they once were. However, "comfort is not of the being – but of the well-being, of a Christian."²⁴ The Spirit does not make a feast in the soul every day.²⁵ Satan would impress upon a weak soul that the presence of habitual sin means all is lost and there is no real participation in salvation. Yet the Bible indicates that backsliding does happen and that God promises to help (Hosea 14:4; Jeremiah 3:12, 14). Believers are assured of being freed from the dominion of sin, the damnation of sin, the love of sin, but not from the indwelling presence of any one particular sin.²⁶ Not all who fall into sin are outside of Christ. A sheep can fall often into a slough the same as a pig can.²⁷

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 104-106.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 116-118.

²² Ibid., pp. 120-123.

²³ Ibid., pp. 124-125.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 156.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 158.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 160-161.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 163.

When Satan attempts to convince a believer he is disqualified from receiving mercy because of unworthiness, realize that unworthiness actually creates more of a reason to seek Christ and that the Scriptures never present a level of worthiness as a prerequisite for benefiting from the work of the Savior. In fact, none but unworthy souls have ever come to Christ.²⁸ Relentlessly, Satan may insist that one does not have the proper preparation to approach Christ and be received. Yet many in Scripture had no apparent preparation to receive Christ (e.g., Zacchaeus or Lydia). The Scriptures nowhere stipulate necessary preparation before approaching Christ.²⁹

Rev. Joel Kletzing is a Congregational pastor in a small town in central Pennsylvania. He is married to Nancy and has two sons. He has been educated in Baptist, Episcopal, Lutheran and Reformed settings and has come to greater appreciation of the Puritans over the last decade.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine*

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 205, 218-219.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 220-222.