

SATAN CAN NEVER BE ON YOUR SIDE!

Today's Text: 1 Peter 5

Extracts:

The elders who are among you...shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;...Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world* [1 Pet. 5:1-9]

Adewuyi Adegoke, a pastor at a Methodist Church in Ekiti State in the western part of Nigeria, was reportedly kidnapped.¹ His purported kidnappers contacted his church members to demand N3 million ransom (about US\$9,000) which had to be paid not later than Thursday, 13 June, 2019 or else their pastor would be killed. Police detectives, however, intercepted the pastor's accomplice, named Sunday, who came to pick up the ransom at the designated point. He led them to the hotel where the pastor was hiding. Detectives reportedly tracked the suspects through the mobile phone that Sunday had been using to contact the church members. Amba Asuquo, the state's Commissioner of Police, confirmed that the command was investigating the incident, but refused to disclose the identities of the suspects. "Yes, there is something close to that, but we are still investigating and will come out with the details later," he told reporters. When asked if the pastor was among the suspects in custody, Asuquo said: "I know. We have some suspects in custody in connection with the incident, but I cannot reveal their identities to you now."

What could have led the young pastor to allegedly plan to steal from his congregation? When believers fall into that kind of trap, you will hear them say, "Satan made me do it." That excuse is not new! When Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden, she blamed the snake (Satan) for deceiving her, and her husband, Adam, blamed his wife [Gen. 3: 12-13]. In today's study, Apostle Peter warns believers to be vigilant because Satan is their adversary, seeking whom to devour. Let us find out more on the matter.

¹ Story based on AMIN CRIME GUARD NEWS by TONY146 COMMENTS, JUNE 13, 2019, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/06/ekiti-pastor-kidnaps-self-demands-n3m-ransom-from-congregation-nabbed/>

1. **Background: Who made you do it?**

A popular saying states that success has a hundred fathers but failure is an orphan. Also, when we achieve something spectacular, we beat our chest, claiming, “I made it.” However, when we fail, like a student in an examination, we claim, “they gave me!” When we fall into temptation or sin, do we accept responsibility? Most of us love to blame others for our weaknesses, faults or failures, but blame shifting is not repentance!² Who made you do it? It could be one or all of the following:

1) *Self-inflicted*

We are lured into sin by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life [**1 Jn 2: 16**]. For example, David was walking on the roof of his palace one evening when he saw an attractive woman having a bath. That was what lured him to have an adulterous affair with Bathsheba [**2 Sam. 11: 1-4**]. We steal, kill and destroy when we are confronted with such-like temptations.

Look at the seven abominations that God hates [**Prov. 6: 16-19**]:

- A proud look
- A lying tongue
- Hands that shed innocent blood
- A heart that devises wicked plans
- Feet that are swift in running to evil
- A false witness who speaks lies; and
- One who sows discord among brethren.

They all look self-inflicted. Therefore, it is not every sin that we can blame on others or Satan. When Jonah discovered that running away from God was futile, he told the owners of the ship that was being tossed to destruction by a tempest, “Take me up and cast me forth into the sea; so that the sea be calm unto you, *for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you*” [**Jon. 1: 12**].

2) *Evil Counsel*

The Psalmist says that the ungodly walks in the counsel of the ungodly, stands in the path of sinners and sits in the seat of the scornful [**Ps. 1: 1-2**]. Most sins take more than one party to commit. For example, bribery, fornication and adultery take more than one consenting party. In the case of the young pastor in our opening story above, he used others in his planned kidnap. When the case comes for trial, he could even flatly deny knowing anything about it! The chief priests who were anxious to get at Jesus gladly accepted to pay Judas Iscariot 30 pieces of silver to show them where to get Him [**Matt. 26: 14-15**].

² http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume_3/PDFs/Blameshiftingisnotrepentance.pdf

But it was Satan that had already put the matter into the heart of Judas [Jn 13: 2]. Even Peter's denial of Jesus was caused by Satan. Jesus told Peter in advance, "Satan has asked for you that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail, and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren" [Lk 22: 31-32]. Therefore, even when we may seem alone in our sinful adventures, Satan's complicity is not far-fetched.

3) *By Satan?*

Peter wrote, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour [1 Pet. 5:8]. How did Satan become the believer's adversary? Originally, he was "an anointed cherub... perfect in all [his] ways ... till iniquity was found in [him]" [Ezek. 28: 12-17]. War broke out in heaven between God's forces (led by archangel Michael) and Satan and his angels [Rev. 12: 7-9]. Satan and his forces were defeated and cast to the earth. They overcame him "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" [vv. 10-11]. Since then, Satan has gone to make war with those "who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" [vv. 16-17].

Right from the garden of Eden through John's time in the island of Patmos till today, Satan has been active in the lives of believers. He has transformed himself into an angel of light, looking whom he may devour [2 Cor. 11: 14-15]. Therefore, he will never give up. That is why Peter urged believers to "resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world" [1 Pet. 5: 9].

In almost all cases, Satan has a hand in luring us into temptation but we lend a heavy hand. For example, it was Satan who stood up against Israel and moved David to take a census of Israel [1 Chron. 21: 1]. So, *even in cases where we are driven by human greed, Satan is always there as a motivator and encourager-in-chief. Satan can never be on your side.*

2. Lessons for us

Peter gives us very useful guidelines that will enable us to resist Satan when he attacks us. The following should be noted:

1) *Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God*

We are to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt us in due time [1 Pet. 5: 6]. As church elders, we are to shepherd the flock of God among us, serving as overseers- willingly, *not for dishonest gain but eagerly, not as lords over those entrusted to us, but as examples to the flock*

[**vv. 2-3**]. Likewise, the younger people are to submit themselves to their elders, be submissive also to one another and be clothed with humility for God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble [**5**].

In reiterating the qualifications of overseers (bishops), Paul said, among other top qualities, that they must desire a good work, blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous [**1 Tim. 3: 1-3**].

One way to demonstrate humility is transparency. When we are wrong, we should accept responsibility and apologise. Otherwise, we lose the war. Take the case of Aaron who made the molten calf in deference to the people's clamour, and he led them to worship it. But, when Moses came back and chastised him for acquiescing to such sinful act, he roped in his accomplices by pleading, "Let not the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they are set on mischief" [**Ex. 32:1-5, 21-23**]. Many church leaders do exactly the same thing today!

2) *Be sober be vigilant*

Since our adversary, Satan, is like a roaring lion always looking for whom to devour, we must resist him, steadfast in the faith, realizing that your experience is not unique but suffered by fellow people of faith in the world [**1 Pet. 5:6-9**]. Like a vehicle driver, you bear the primary responsibility for safe driving every day you are on the road. Your alertness is what matters. Take the case of Joseph when his master's wife cast her eyes on him to lure him to sleep with her. He refused, saying, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" She tempted him "day by day" but Joseph "did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her" [**Ex. 39: 1-10**].

3) *Expect your reward from Christ*

The God of all grace who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus will perfectly establish, strengthen and settle you [**1 Pet. 5:10**]. Peter and Judas Iscariot were two out of the twelve apostles who fell to Satan's temptation during the trial of Jesus. Judas committed suicide [**Matt. 27: 3-5**], but Peter repented [**Lk 22:62**].

On the day of Christ's resurrection, the angel who spoke to the women that came to the tomb where Jesus had been buried said to them, "You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here...But go tell His disciples-*and Peter*- that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you" [**Mk 16: 7**]. That confirmed to Peter that he had been forgiven. He resumed his leadership of the new congregation with greater zeal because Christ had given him the reward of forgiveness. In like

manner, when you stand by the word of God and repent each time you fail Him, Jesus will restore you to His grace with God His Father.

From the forgoing, it is better for us to submit to God and resist Satan. We should be steadfast in faith and never submit to Satan's whims and caprices. Satan can never be on your side.

3. **Conclusion: Satan cannot help you!**

Jesus told His disciples while He was still with them on earth, ***"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven"*** [Lk 10: 18]. A deceiver of the whole world and an accuser of believers, he and his angels were cast out with him [Rev. 12: 9-10]. Jesus assured His disciples, ***"Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you."*** Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" [Lk 10: 19-20]. Jesus shed His blood on the cross for us and by His stripes we have been healed [Is. 53: 5; 1 Pet. 2: 24]. Satan cannot help or save us because he has no blood.³

Satan cannot help you. Therefore, you have nothing to fear of him. He can never be on your side.

³ http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume_2/PDFs/Satanhasnoblood.pdf