



Preacher's Pen *by Gene McCoy*

Satan's Tricks Are Not Treats

A recurring imperative regarding our dealings with the devil is to be on the alert against his tricks, for he is like a prowling lion ever ready to pounce and devour us (1 Pet. 5:8). To avoid being outwitted by Satan, we need to be aware of his designs and never give him the least little opportunity (2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 4:27).

Satan is an opportunist. The account of Jesus' temptations concludes with the statement that Satan departed from him until a more opportune time (Lk. 4:13). None of us dares relax for we know Satan is always up to his tricks. He is a snake in the grass awaiting the opportunity to strike.

His most effective trick is deception. He has effectively made us think we are lion tamers. While none of us would enter the cage in the circus act, our casual approach to sin and holiness indicates that we think the roaring lion is a house cat that we can easily control with the crack of our imaginary whip. In reality, our carelessness is like saying, "Here, kitty kitty."

—We wonder how close to the edge we can live without falling off. Here, kitty kitty.

—We adopt a wardrobe and vocabulary that allows us to look and sound a lot like the pagans. Here, kitty kitty.

—Our speech is characterized by innuendo, the crude and even vulgar. Here, kitty kitty.

—We look at suggestive images and videos that excite our worldly lusts and appetite. Here, kitty kitty.

—Our playlist contains music that makes the illicit sound innocent, drunkenness seem humorous and sin an exciting adventure. Here, kitty kitty.

Another trick Satan has up his sleeve is to feed the deception that he is not real; that he is the mere personification of perceived evil. If this is true, Jesus never cast out demons, but merely accommodated the superstitions of mentally deranged people.

Do we play into Satan's deception when we dress up in hideous costumes designed to scare the life out of people? We then try to calm our frightened children by assuring them that the ghosts and goblins are not real. How confused our children must be when we then try to teach them that Satan is real and that his demons are out to destroy us. No wonder Satan can masquerade as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14) and so effectively deceive us. We have actually become complicit in his deception. Our "playing along" has desensitized us to his reality and the dangers his tricks pose.

Enough of his tricks. We have been treated to victory over Satan by the power of God. But that victory is realized only as we consistently obey several imperatives in 1 Peter 5:6-9.

Humble yourself. Warren Wiersbe says we

must bow before God before we can stand before Satan. It is the humble man from whom Satan flees. James 4:7 says, "Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

Be of sober spirit and be on the alert. Our judgment must be clear and senses sharp if we are to participate in the victory won by the Lord.

Resist the devil. This is a defensive battle stance in which the Christian squares off with his feet firmly planted in the faith and declares, "I am not budging. Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who did not bow, bend or burn, so will I refuse to compromise or capitulate."

We must never retreat, but we must always resist. We share Jesus' victory, not by engaging Satan in warfare, but by standing strong in faith that he is a vanquished enemy. The extent of our engagement is to quote Scripture, as Jesus did at His temptations, and to put on the full armor of God, as Paul instructed.

The Hebrew writer says Jesus came in the flesh so that, through death, he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (2:14). We have the opportunity every day to deal the devil a death blow by humbly submitting to God and boldly taking our stand as victors through Christ. This stand begins and ends with God.

Remember the victory has already been won. The outcome was predetermined in eternity and sealed when Jesus emerged alive from the tomb. We were made victors through Christ, Who loved us (Rom. 8:37), when we were baptized into His death and raised in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom. 6:4-5).

Recognize Satan's power and tactics. We do not possess the power or prowess to defeat him, except by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. We are no match for Satan without God. Like David before Goliath, we confront Satan in the name of the Lord of hosts (1 Sam. 17:45-47).

Respect his subtle slyness; never relaxed, but ever vigilant, knowing how crafty he is.

Resist Satan's advances. Do not give him an inch, lest he become your ruler. Put on the full armor of God and stand firm (Eph. 6:10-17).

Rely on Christ and the Holy Spirit. First John 4:4 assures us that he who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. Our reliance upon God must be accompanied by our deliberate avoidance of people and places where encounters with Satan are likely. Flee immorality (1 Cor. 6:18-20). Flee from idolatry (1 Cor. 10:14-15). Flee youthful lusts (1 Tim. 2:22). But be strong in the Lord and, in the strength of his might, stand firm against the tricks of the devil (Eph. 6:10). 