

ONLY TWO MASTERS

In John 10:10 Jesus told a parable about the shepherd and the sheep, explaining that the sheep know their shepherd's voice and will follow him. The shepherd calls them by name and they enter the sheepfold by the door. Anyone who gets in some other way is a thief and a robber. The sheep flee from such a person because they do not know a stranger's voice. Jesus said "The thief comes not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Jesus explained that he was the good shepherd who would lay down his life for his sheep. He said, "I know my sheep and am known of mine." "I am the door. By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved..."

In contrast, in John 8:44, speaking of the devil, Jesus said, "He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him...he is a liar and the father of it". The devil's aim is not so much to get people on his side as to destroy them. He hates God's handiwork and all of his creation. Satan knows he is going down and wants to take as many humans as he can with him. He uses any means to do so, always with the goal of destruction. He destroys and steals money, bodies, sound minds, reputations, livelihoods, health, marriages, innocence, and potential in every sense as well as eternal souls.

The devil, like a hawker at a fair, dangles various "baubles" and promises of fun and power in front of people, especially young people, who have their whole lives to waste for him, or whose lives may be cut short by him. He entices in order to get control over them so he can "steal, kill and destroy".

In every life, and in every society, where the devil is made welcome, his dominion is marked by:

Disrespect for women exhibited by porn, dirty movies, prostitution, premarital sex, adultery, babies born out of wedlock, poverty, domestic violence, abuse, polygamy, degrading sex acts, etc.

Devaluation of the weak, handicapped, and old exhibited by euthanasia, neglect, abandonment, abuse, disrespect, etc.

Death proliferated by euthanasia, abortion, violence, and a broad range of self destructive behaviors including suicides, alcohol fuelled car accidents, fires, drowning, fights, cutting, drugs, etc.

Low regard and poor treatment of children evidenced by abortion, infanticide, neglect, indifference, abuse, abandonment, out of wedlock births, insufficient support, etc.

The society that turns its back on God and disregards his commandments, is marked by behaviors in keeping with the devil's character. Disrespect for authority (God, parents, teachers, laws of the land, etc.), swearing, lying, stealing, adultery, and murders become commonplace. The Lord's Day is no longer respected, while people do what they please all the days of the week.

Rebellion is central to the devil's nature. He said, "I will be like the most high" (Isaiah 14:14). 1 Samuel 15:23 says "...rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft". Rebellion and witchcraft come from the same pit. Rebellion, not surprisingly, is a constant theme in popular music, even in children's movie songs. Clearly, music is a vehicle for the devil to captivate his prey. Satan could not accept that he was not allowed to become God himself, so he initiated the GREAT rebellion, and he continues to seed and nurture rebellion in the hearts of all who follow him.

Satan is quoted in Job 1:7, indicating that he goes to and fro on the earth, and walks up and down in it. 1 Peter 5:8 cautions: "Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour".

Satan is always our adversary; he is NEVER our friend. He watches for ways to devour those whom God has created (which Satan cannot do). When he walks up and down our streets, does he see welcome signs on our dwellings? When we go out, do we willingly put ourselves in his path by the choices we make so he can more easily destroy us?

Whatever we put into our bodies (drink, drugs, etc.), watch, read, or listen to, these are tools the devil uses to take control of us. When we yield to Satan's devices, we relinquish God's protection. We put ourselves at the mercy of the one who hates us.

This is an old story that is played out over and over. The devil's fingerprints are clear in Galatians 5: 19-21: "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these..." (ESV)

On the other hand, Psalm 103:20, 21 indicates that angels are ministering servants of God under his direction, who take care of us. We do not know how often have we been spared or protected in some way through help dispatched especially for us.

If we reject God's care and protection, how can we expect unlimited grace to cover the devil's ravages and evil intent? Proverbs 29:1 says, "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy". Graphic examples, which have come far too close to us, are sobering. After years of opportunities, and the good hand of God's grace extended, it is dangerous business to play footsies with the devil, falling prey to his baubles.

The ownership of territory is often marked by the planting of a flag. An old chorus goes: "Joy is the flag flown high from the castle of my heart (Love is the flag...), For the King is in residence here". There are only two masters of spiritual territory. What flag is flying from the castle of your heart? What king is in residence there?"