

Sabbath School Lesson #9 – Satan and his Allies – 23 February-1 March 2019

Christ is soon returning, but meanwhile, Satan with his allies continue waging war on the followers of Christ. Of this we read: “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17). Whilst Satan wages his war on the remnant, they will continue to spread the third angel’s message *to every nation, and people, urging them to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus*. And this third angel’s message will cause the devil to be a particularly wrathful, and to put forth all his power. Who will win? “And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God” (Revelation 15:2).

The nearer we approach the end of time, the more momentous are the issues. It has always been a great thing to be a follower of Christ. In every age there have been difficulties in the way of the true believer, due to the fact that he belonged to a class that was greatly in the minority. Since the fall of man, it has been true that “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14). Added to the natural disinclination of the human heart to follow that which is good have always been the difficulties thrown in the way of Christians by evil men, whom Satan has used as his agents.

While many look to the Dark Ages as the time of the remnant’s greatest trial, it seems evident that for a brief period just before the coming of the Lord the true followers of Christ will be subjected to trials of faith exceeding those of any other age. Following are some of the reasons which indicate this. First, the “little horn” – the papacy – is represented as making war with the saints, and prevailing against them, “until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom” (Daniel 7:22). Second, the two-horned beast, whose great work is to make an image to the papal beast, “exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him,” – that is, in his presence (Revelation 13:12), – and issues sentence of death against all who refuse to worship the image instead of God (verse 15). Third, the dragon, with whose voice the two-horned beast speaks, is represented as “wroth with the woman,” – the church, – and going “to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17). Fourth, the apostle Paul says that “in the last days perilous times shall come” (2 Timothy 3:1). If the last days were to be days of no greater peril than those which precede them, there would be no force in this statement. The fact that the last days are distinguished as “perilous,” shows that they are to be such in a preeminent degree. And then, after telling of the fierceness and maliciousness of the reprobates who, despise those that are good, the apostle adds: “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13).

Add to these reasons the fact that Satan is gathering all his forces for a final struggle, knowing that his end is near, and we cannot but conclude that the conflict before God’s people, though short, will be terrible. The adversary will seek to drag down to his own ruin as many as possible, and will endeavour accomplish this by the deceitfulness of sin and by the terrors of persecution. Let us note the indications that these forces are rapidly gathering for the conflict. Hitherto the predictions that religious intolerance would gain control in the US, and that church and state would unite to persecute Sabbath-keepers have been pronounced groundless and absurd. But already, the US Supreme Court in *McGowan v Maryland* (366 U.S. 420, 1961) held, 8:1, that state “blue laws” (Sunday closing laws) were constitutional. It should be easy to consolidate states Sunday laws into a National Sunday Law. Although calls for the EU to pass a law to protect Sunday as a weekly rest day (DC/763921EN, 2009) failed, as calls continue to be made, soon a universal Sunday law must be approaching.

“The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty ... While the observance of the false sabbath in compliance with the law of the state, contrary to the fourth commandment, will be an avowal of allegiance to a power that is in opposition to God, the keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God’s law, is an evidence of loyalty to the Creator. While one class, by accepting the sign of submission to earthly powers, receive the mark of the beast,

the other, choosing the token of allegiance to divine authority, receive the seal of God" {GC 605}. The third angel warns that those who accept the mark of the beast, "the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation" (Revelation 14:10). Everything is now at stake. It is a life and death question. Those who in the face of these specifications refuse to repent of their transgressions will realise the result of disobedience. When Sunday observance becomes law – mark of the beast, – God will reveal Himself. "It is time for Thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void Thy law" (Psalms 119:126). When the powers of this earth will force men to keep Sunday, God will arise in His majesty, and will "shake terribly the earth" (Isaiah 2:19). God will come "out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity" (Isaiah 26:21).

The effort to secure a national Sunday law, which will result in the revival of the methods of the Inquisition, is gaining strength. Yet severe as are the persecutions which await the people of God, these are doubtless not the greatest dangers that lie before true Christians.

The apostle Peter, in his description of the false teachers of the last days, says, "For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error" (2 Peter 2:18). Long has the way been prepared for just such deceptions. Spiritualism, under the form of Christianity, has long permeated all the churches. Rationalism has undermined faith in the Bible as the literal Word of God. A popular taste is for amusements even among the professed Seventh-day Adventists. Our church gatherings are more of amusements. In the world, newspapers teem with reports of immoralities, which are nearly always, by the jocular way in which they are described, made to appear comparatively innocent. Thus the moral sense of the reader is unconsciously blunted; and even when brutal crime is reported in all its hideousness, the frequency of it has a tendency to beget that familiarity which destroys loathing for it. Everywhere are the foundations being undermined, and the way being made more easy for the lusts of the flesh to assert themselves (read 2 Timothy 3:1-8).

In view of these things, our duty is clear. The injunction in Isaiah 58:1, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins," must be faithfully obeyed, not in a spirit of Pharisaism, but of humility. The world must be warned of impending danger. The peril of persecution, which threatens the faithful commandment keepers, must be lost sight of in view of the greater peril which threatens those "who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8). The people must be shown in kindness the inevitable result of Sunday worship. Our literature, *The Great Controversy*, upon this subject must be widely circulated.

Satan's work in preparing for Sunday law must be exposed, not in any captious spirit, but in order that the unwary may not be deceived. Error must be met with truth. Bitterness of spirit must be met with meekness. Let each worker ever keep in mind the words of the apostle in 2 Timothy 2:24-26: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

But the work is not all to be done for those who are without. The first work must be done within, and for ourselves, by the Spirit of God. The growing skepticism of the age must be guarded against by unswerving devotion to the Word of God, an intelligent love for which is the only safeguard against the sins that so easily beset us. Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we must live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. And we shall find that the means by which this is accomplished, will, at the same time, prepare the soul for the persecutions that will follow. He who has proved the power of Christ to destroy the power of sin in the flesh, will not lack for strength to endure tribulation. The soul that stands in the evil day, undaunted by the prospect of imprisonment, hunger, loss of friends and property, and even death, will do so only by depending on Christ, of whose sufferings he will be a partaker; and the time to learn that dependence on Christ is now. "The faith that will not shrink, though pressed by many a foe, that will not tremble on the brink Of poverty or woe" – is the faith that has been gained in the conflict with self. Let the shield of faith be used with "all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance" (Ephesians 6:18).