

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit

SATAN WITH THE SONS OF GOD.

A Sermon

preached by the
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Biographical Introduction

The circulation of Spurgeon's sermons was called one of the 'miracles' of the nineteenth century. Each Thursday from the 11th January 1855 until 26th April 1917, a weekly sermon was published and sold for one penny. During this period, these timely messages were circulated throughout the world, and were the means of great spiritual blessing. Although the preacher himself was called to his eternal rest in 1892, the weekly sermons continued without interruption, long after his death, until they reached the grand total of 3,561.

These extraordinary printed messages are to be found in sixty three volumes entitled: *'The New Park Street Pulpit'* and *'The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit'*. Through these 'literary pulpits', Mr Spurgeon has reached out to far larger numbers than his voice could ever have addressed. What many people do not realise, however, is that Sermon Number 3,561 was *not* the last message of the Prince of Preachers to be printed.

When the publication of the weekly sermon came to an end in 1917, it was not due to the exhaustion of material, but mainly because war conditions brought about a host of difficulties. A number of unpublished manuscripts remained, and from these, twenty further sermons were eventually printed. Although admittedly they were not as meticulously edited as the previous ones, they are gems nevertheless. *Satan With the Sons of God* was one of these hitherto unpublished gems, and we send it forth now with the desire that the Lord will use it in the salvation of precious souls, and for the building up of His saints.

This particular message has been prayerfully selected because it is especially timely and relevant. It is a sad fact that many Christians today seem totally unaware of the Devil's devious designs. They seem oblivious to the fact that **Satan is constantly coming in among the sons of God** seeking to distract, divide and destroy. Our prayer is that through this thought-provoking sermon the Lord's people may be delivered from ignorance concerning the devil's devices.

There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them .— (Job i. 6.)

IT is no use enquiring what day it was. The Jewish Rabbis, who like to waste time over difficult questions—questions of no profit—say it was the Sabbath; and that is very possible. But I am afraid that Satan does not only go abroad on Sundays, but that he will be found in congregations that meet on week-days, and that when the sons of God at any time come together it will generally happen that Satan is among them. The question has also been raised, Did Satan go into Heaven, then? I do not see anything about Heaven in the text. The sons of God came together. They may have been the sons of God on earth—the descendants of them, or other godly men who were in the habit of meeting together for prayer and praise. They may have been the angels in Heaven; and I sometimes like to think that Sabbath is kept in Heaven, as well as on earth, and that when we come together with special gatherings below, the saints are keeping special festival above, for though it be always Sabbath with them, there may be a Sabbath of Sabbaths, and they may have their high days and holidays keeping time and time with us below, only excelling us in the volume of their praise. Satan could present himself before God without being in Heaven. The whole universe is God's audience-hall, and when He mounts the throne and summons all His creatures together, they are there and then before Him, whatever their position as to place may be. Satan seems to have intentionally, however, mingled, as far as he could, with the sons of God, wherever those sons of God were found in the presence of the Most High.

Is not there something to be learned out of this? Let us see if there be not some teaching in it.

And the first fact, I think, which is very clear is this—that mere coming up with God's people is of no value whatever, for "Satan came also among them." I hope none of you have ever received the notion, though I am afraid it is common, that if you attend a place of worship regularly, and especially if you have a seat of your own, you have done something exceedingly meritorious, although you should never give your heart to God and never repent of sin or believe in Christ. Some seem to fancy that they stand on a vantage ground because they are regular hearers. They observe the Sabbath; they are church-goers and chapel-goers. Now, see what a mistake such persons have made, because Satan kept this holiday, whatever it may have been, and Satan appeared with God's saints. Satan mingled in the throng. And it was not only once that he came, but

as far as the Book of Job is concerned, there are two days when the sons of God came together, and Satan was there both times. He seems to have been a very regular attendant, to have been constantly there. And yet of what service could it have been to him? And of what service can it be to anybody unless there be spiritual worship, and unless the heart shall be given to God? "Who hath required this at your hands that ye should tread my courts? "

There is no value whatever in a mere bodily attendance upon the means of grace; for, in the first place, it is certain that Satan's attendance at divine worship could not be acceptable to God. Could anything be acceptable that that false spirit did? Did not his polluted nature profane the whole? So in the case of ungodly men, their attendance with the people of God cannot be acceptable with God. Do they bow the head in prayer? If you do not pray with your hearts you do but mock God; or if you offer the prayer of the Pharisee, and say, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men," you do but provoke the Most High. You have not brought to Him anything that He can receive. And when the song rises up to Heaven, and no doubt some think that that is good singing which is very musical—which is after the best style of art—yet, oh, it is not so with God. What doth He care for your concords and your harmonies, such as delight human ears? He reads the heart, and unless the soul blesses Him whose mercy endureth for ever, and unless the heart adores the Creator and the Benefactor, there is no song such as He can receive. Hosannahs fall short of Heaven if they do not rise from our hearts. Only that praise which comes from our heart will go to God's ear. If we do not bless Him from within, neither will He receive us.

I.

I would like some of you to think of this—that you have been twenty or thirty years, perhaps—possibly forty or fifty—constantly attending before God, and have never once offered any sacrifice that He can accept, for until you believe in His Son there is nothing about you that He can look upon with pleasure. Till you have repented of your sins, till you have trusted Jesus, till you are born again, you are condemned already, and the condemnation which is upon you personally is upon all that you do. Even your prayer becomes an abomination unto God, viewed as coming from one whose heart is not right with God. Oh, do think of this, I pray you, and henceforth never rely upon the outward use of the means of grace. Get farther than that, or else you stop short of acceptance and salvation.

Moreover, it is quite certain that as Satan's presence was not acceptable, so Satan's presence there was not beneficial to himself. He never repented of any ill that he had done. It does not appear that he ever slacked in his diligent rebellion against God. His proud heart was not humbled; his lustful mind was never purified. He remained the same devil after he had mixed with the sons of God as he was before. And do recollect, I pray you, that in the mere exercise of sitting in a pew and listening to a sermon, or joining in prayer, there is nothing that can benefit you. "Ye must be born again." If it does not come to that, no impression has been made. You may take the Ethiopian, and wash him as much as you will, but unless a miracle should change his skin he will remain black. And all the preaching in the world is no better than the washing of the Ethiopian until the Spirit of God shall apply it to the heart, till a divine power shall beget faith in the soul. Do remember this. I am sure there are some who pride themselves that they attend on the Church which they believe to be the only authorised one. Well, Satan was in a very authorised assembly, but remained Satan still.

Some, on the other hand, will boast that they belong to the most simple sect in the world, that their worship has nothing at all of adornment. It is as plain as possible. Perhaps they are Baptists; perhaps they belong to the Society of Friends. We may as readily be hypocrites in an informal worship as in a formal one. We have as great reason to guard ourselves against trusting in our simplicity, as others have to guard against trusting in formalities, for if we rest in anything short of the work of the Spirit in the soul, and a real reconciliation to God by the blood of the atonement—in fact, a new creation within our heart and a saving faith in Jesus—we shall no more be benefited by our hearing and our attendance than Satan was by joining with the sons of God. It is a spiritual business. Oh, that all recollected this! In vain your sacraments; in vain your gatherings of any sort. If God the Holy Ghost be not in you it falleth to the ground.

And note, once more, that Satan's attendance with the sons of God even gave him an opportunity for the commission of greater sins. So far from being accepted with God, or being benefited by his attendance, he even went from bad to worse, for there it was that he dared challenge God with regard to His servant Job, and go forth into the world to do more mischief than he had done before.

I fear me there are some that grow Gospel-hardened! They have heard the Gospel till they never mind it now. They have heard the law preached till there is no terror in it now. Good Rowland Hill used to say they are like the

blacksmith's dog that goes to sleep under his master's anvil, though the sparks fly about him. They have learnt to sleep when the very sparks of damnation fly about them. It matters not how it is put; they cannot be aroused. And you know these persons often become the raw material for making the very worst of people. When the devil wanted to make a Judas, he was obliged to take an apostle for the raw material, for you can always make the worst thing out of that which is akin to the best. Those men that miss virtue, as it were by an inch, are prepared to go out and out in all manner of vice. I do think that some could not sin as they do if they were not well acquainted with their duty, but they are able now, having a tender conscience, to sin greatly against conscience. Having light, they sin greatly against light. Knowing much of God, they are able to brave that knowledge, and to defy God more than others could do.

O dear hearers, are some of you getting worse? Am I preaching some of you into hell? Am I rocking cradles for you that I might rock you into eternal sleep? Is it so after all the care we take to try and adapt our discourse to your mind? Do we only, after all, make you fitter heirs of wrath because you continue to despise the message? I hesitate to come and speak in this pulpit when I think of some of you, for I despair of you. I fear that, after all, you will never be brought to Christ. You will remain as you are, and all that I shall be able to do will be to increase your condemnation. God forbid it by His infinite mercy! But this I am sure of, if there are any people against whom the woes which our Lord pronounced upon Capernaum and Bethsaida will fall with a sevenfold vengeance, it will be those people who have been plainly told their sins in words that never minced the matter, and have been earnestly pointed to Christ, and commanded over again in the name of God to repent and turn unto the Saviour that they might find salvation.

Well, that first point is solemnly clear. It proves that, as Satan came up with the assembly, the mere coming up with the people of God is just nothing; but as his worship was not accepted, as it did not benefit him, but even gave him an opportunity to be even yet a greater transgressor, so may it be with some who frequent the courts of the Lord's house.

II

But now, secondly, another topic. Our text teaches us that the best assemblies of saints are not free from evil persons. The sons of God came together, "and Satan came also among them." What does this teach us?

First, that we should not leave the assembly of the saints because unworthy persons happen to be there. I believe this to be a practical observation that may be useful to some present. For instance, I have known at the communion-table a person say, "I cannot sit down there, because in my judgement such a person is allowed to sit down who is unworthy." Now, dear friend, your course is plain. If you are aware of anything wrong in a church member—grievously wrong—there are the proper authorities of the church to whom, not in a spirit of gossiping, but in a spirit of righteous love for the purity of the church, you ought to communicate this fact. But you are not infallible yourself, and therefore it may happen that you have misjudged this individual, and your responsibility will cease when you have done what you believe to be your duty in that matter. If, then, it should seem to those who are set over the church that it is not a fault as you think it is, or that it is not proved, or if they think it not such a fault as should exclude the person, you have nothing further to do with it. It is your business to come to the table of the Lord, and to observe His command, whoever may be there; for, believe me, if you never come to a communion-table unless you feel sure that everybody there is perfect, I think you ought to stop away if for no other reason than this—that you are not perfect yourself. You will make one unworthy person; and therefore do not try to carry out that rule. Remember the first communion supper. Our Lord was there, and twelve apostles, but one of them was a devil. I hardly dare to hope that we have a larger proportion of true saints than Christ had among His apostles. I should not like to say that I believe that one in twelve of all professors will turn out like Judas, but I should feel very happy if I did not think it was more than one in twelve. It is not for us to judge, but there are many things that cause us justly to suspect; and therefore since Peter and James and John did not rise from the table and say, "Master, thou hast said that one here is a devil, and we will no longer sit down with him," but as they continued there, and put the warning He had given them to quite another use, I would say to you, dear brother, dear sister, come up and meet with your Master and keep the feast, even though you should have to feel there is someone there who ought not to be there.

And then, again, seeing that in every assembly there is some unworthy person, turn it to the account the apostles did. Examine yourselves whether you are the unworthy person. If one of you be a devil, all should say, "Lord, is it I?"

We cannot do better than always take the points of censure and of caution, and use them upon ourselves. Oh, to think that there should be here a company of God's people, and some of us should be hypocrites! Do not let us look across the gallery and say, "I see someone there that I think is one." Look at home and say, "Lord, am I one?" To think that we should meet around the table to commemorate our Saviour's death, and that it should be morally certain that there are some persons there who are as the devil is! I beseech you do not begin to say, "I am afraid that my neighbour, So-and-so, may be such." How goes it with your soul? What about yourself? Try your own gold. Test your own silver; and if you be clear there you may very well leave these matters to your Master.

And do you not think, once more, that this fact—that in every holy assembly there will be some evil person—should make us long for those blessed assemblies above where Satan cannot come, and where no evil persons will ever intrude? We have to walk with caution here, for there may be some evil eye fixed upon us even in these sacred chambers of God's house where we act like familiar children and unbosom ourselves; but up yonder there shall be no Judas-eye to detect our inconsistencies, and we shall have no inconsistencies to be detected. There shall be none to suspect and to impute wrong motives; there shall be none there to charge us with sins of which we are guiltless. We shall be quite free and clear from all contamination when we shall be permitted to stretch our wings and fly to those blessed assemblies where we shall feel ourselves eternally at home.

So much upon the second topic.

III.

Now a third and more important one. It is this: You will find that whenever God's children desire to draw near to God Satan will come among them. I believe this is so with each individual. My experience leads me to remark that if ever I desire to pray more earnestly than at other times I feel temptation to be stronger at that particular season. I am morally certain that if I want to be quite alone the devil will send somebody to knock at my front door whom I must see; or if he does not do that, and I can get the time to myself, then he will come in without knocking, and begin to bring all sorts of thoughts into my mind, stagger me with recollections of some old sins, bring before me, perhaps, quaint and pithy passages that I would rather not recollect at all, for they are unseasonable then, make me remember what I would fain forget, and forget what I desire to

remember. Have you never felt, when you were flying up to the throne, your face full upon the Eternal Sun, desiring only to behold its light, and to fly right into the fulness of its blaze, as if you have heard a mutter at your side, and, turning round, you have seen that the heel of the dragon wing has been equal with you in its flight? No, he seems as if he would disturb you, and come right before you, and blot out the vision of God's presence from your eye, and, when you are nearest to God, would come into conflict with you there? When the people of God, the sons of God, came before the Lord, Satan came also among them.

And this is a lesson to those who are seeking to come to God for the first time—you with troubled consciences that desire reconciliation—awakened sinners that long that their Father should fall upon their neck and kiss them and blot out their sins. Now that you are trying to come to God you are very likely to be subjected to temptations you never knew before. Possibly you will be tormented with blasphemous thoughts. Many are. And you will find sin to be more active in you than ever it was. Satan knows it is 'now or never' with you. He is afraid he shall lose you, and he stirs up all his force. I think I hear the Black Prince say to the spirits that surround him, "Empty out your quivers upon that man. Spare him not. He begins to desert us. He will leave us, and he will turn away from the pleasures of sin to follow after our enemy Christ. Now, tell him Christ won't receive him. Tell him his sins are too many. Remind him of his old transgressions; pierce him with your barbed shafts; put venom into all his blood. Torment him; make him, if you can, commit suicide, or abstain from listening to the Gospel. Don't let Christ have him. Do keep him away from God." When the Lord's people are coming to Him with penitence, seeking mercy, then Satan presents himself and stands in the way to seek their destruction.

Keeping, however, to the subject closely, whenever our assemblies come together, brethren, do you not find that Satan also comes among us? He will come with the minister. He will come into his study, he will come with him into the pulpit; and he incites the minister to say those things that will strike—to put them in very pretty language; and he will suggest, as soon as it is so stated, "How well you put that point—uncommonly well!" Or he will say, "You were very faithful to the people over that head, now. You are doing your work exceedingly well." Seldom enough does the preacher want to be told that he has done his work well. If there is one that stands behind, that pats him patronisingly and saith to him, "Well done! well done!" it is another voice than

that which will say "Well done! " at last. Meanwhile, if Satan is busy in the pulpit, he is busy in the pew, too. Did he not just now make one of you recollect that sick child at home? When there was something that might be beneficial to you he brought before your mind where you left your keys when you came away. A thousand little things will come just at the moment you do not want them.

I cannot, of course, mention these, but Satan is a great hand at leading people into distracting thoughts which prevent their worship of God. And I have known him to go and stand at the front gate, and, if he can, make some trouble in your coming into the pew; and when you get there something will happen that makes you feel uncomfortable and get into a vexed state of mind. And then, when the word is being preached, he will come and insinuate doubts about this and doubts about the other. If there is a choice promise, just as you hope you are going to get the flavour of it he will pluck it out from between your teeth and away with it before you can feed upon it. And if there should happen to be a word of rebuke, he will tell you that that does not mean you; you are superior to the necessity of receiving such a word as that; or he will even make you rebel against the word when it comes home to you, as if, after all, it was not the preacher's business to speak very pointedly to your conscience.

Oh, the ways in which Satan will spoil our best services! He is ever busy, and I believe where there is the best spiritual meat, and God feeds His children best, there the devil will be most active. When there is a very nice, prim, natty sermon which is read very nicely to the people, and the devil rides down the street, he never goes in there. He knows there will be no hurt done by that. But if there is an earnest preacher, he says, "I must stop my chariot here," and in he goes and begins to put forth all his strength, if by any means he may spoil the worship of God's people and prevent the Gospel coming with power to their hearts. Watch, dear brethren, watch and pray and resist him, for he will flee from you. And let it be our endeavour never to come to this Tabernacle as a matter of form, and never to go away satisfied unless we have seen Jesus, never contented unless we have bathed our souls in Heaven, and have had the dew of the Lord upon our foreheads.

It ought to be a wretched Sunday evening with us when we feel that we have not worshipped and have not fed upon spiritual meat; and if there is a Sunday in which you have not got good and done good too, you should feel, "Well, I could lament that I have lost, not a day as Titus did, but a Sabbath day, which is ten times worse." What a dreadful thing it is to have barren Sabbaths,

formal Sabbaths. The Lord save us from this great calamity! Satan will come and make it so if he can; but may the Spirit of God come too, and He will soon put Satan to the rout, and we shall worship God in His strength.

Now, if Satan comes into an assembly of saints, we may expect him to come into a mixed assembly like this, in which there are saints and sinners too; and if there should be a word in the sermon that is likely to be blessed to a sinner, Satan will be sure to distract his attention if he can. I have told you several times of that simple-hearted little boy that used to lean forward and put his hand to his ear to catch every word the minister said, His mother said to him, "Why are you so very attentive?" "Because, mother," said he, "the minister once said that if there was a sentence in the sermon that had a blessing in it for us, Satan would be sure, if he could, to prevent our attending to it; and I am anxious not to lose a sentence that God may bless to me."

Oh for hearers like that! Beloved, there would be no fear for conversions if our congregations were made up of people who sought for the blessing, who would take every sentence like a cluster from the vine, and press it with anxious foot to get the wine from it, that they might drink and be satisfied. The Lord give us to feel that, since the enemy will distract attention if he can, we will hear, and take heed how we hear.

Then I have known him do much mischief by suggesting criticisms of the preacher. Many come merely for that very reason. Well, they will compare one preacher with another preacher. "Paul, well he is very argumentative, but he has not at all the brilliance of Apollos, and Apollos—well, he is a rhetorician. Cephas is my man—rough, plain, blunt Cephas." And another says, "Well, Cephas is almost vulgar. Give me Apollos. He is the man for my money." But is that the way in which we should hear the word of God? Well, as George Herbert put it, "Judge not the preacher; he is thy judge." If there be anything in God's ministry at all it is not meant to be looked at, and examined, and turned over as if it were a work of art. Sirs, I care nothing of what you should think of the hilt of my sword. I want to strike right through your souls, and cut and wound with it; and surely I have failed utterly to do that when you are able to think about the style of the sermon. When anyone says, "That was a famous sermon," the preacher may conclude that that was a sermon lost; it was a useless sermon; for that only will be famous with God that will affect men's consciences. Oh, how busy Satan is to engage men with the niceties of phrases, when, instead, they should be looking at the inner sense, and receiving meekly the word of God.

Then Satan has a great art of taking off people's minds from the word of God when it is delivered. When the seed was scattered on the stony ground the birds of the air found it and took it away. Oh, those birds of the air! Yes, when you get down the Tabernacle steps there will be one of those birds of the air waiting for you. You will be taking an evening walk, and then the chat will take away any impression that may have been produced on your mind. Oftentimes one no sooner crosses the threshold of the door than topics are suggested for conversation that effectually put out of memory any good thing that may have been heard. I believe this to be one of the devices of Satan, and that he comes into our assemblies to see in which way he may best destroy the power of the word in men's hearts.

Brethren and sisters, pray for us. If this enemy be so busy, how much we need the gracious spirit to be ever at work to make the truth "the power of God unto salvation."

IV.

And now, lastly, Satan came up with the people of God, but he was never more Satan-like than he was then; and so we close with that observation, that there is a possibility that there may be in the midst of the people of God those who will develop their character, their evil character, all the more terribly because of their association with worship and with the Gospel. Satan at once began to find fault with one of God's best servants; and many who join in the assembly of the saints amuse themselves by pulling to pieces the characters of God's people, and if they cannot find anything to fix upon in their characters, they usually impute motives or make suppositions as to what such persons would be if they were in a different position. Oh, do not come into contact with God's people merely to oppose them! He that touches them touches the apple of Jehovah's eye. If he be a bad man, better let him alone than injure the character of one true child of God. Touch a man's child, and you will see the colour coming into the man's face at once. He might have forgiven a blow upon himself; but a blow upon his child—it shall go hard with you if you provoke him so. Never, I pray you, come up into the midst of the assembly, and there sit and indulge hard and bitter and cruel thoughts against those that seek to follow their Master. Satan was very satanic, for even when he had accused Job he went away to persecute him and torment him. I pray that husband not to go home tonight to ridicule his wife as he has often done. You can get to hell very well

and very surely without going post haste there by persecution; for if any man wants to make his destruction infallibly sure, and his being driven from the presence of God certain beyond all doubt, he has only got to begin to persecute his children or his wife, or his friend because they will follow the Lord. Why, if you do not want to go to Heaven yourself, let other people go. What is the good of being a dog in the manger? Let them have their way: you have yours. Wherefore should you, as an Englishman, oppose their liberty; and as a man of sense and a man of decency, why should you attempt persecution? I speak thus because I know there are some that have to smart very severely under the cruel things that are said about them and against them when they reach their homes. Satan came also among the saints, and he came there to do them mischief. It is enough for one Satan to do that. Let none of us imitate Satan lest we should fall into his eternal condemnation.

And now I send you away, but not till I have stated again, for the thousandth time, the simple way of salvation. Whoever in this audience desires to be reconciled to God, whoever desires the pardon of his sin, this is the way of salvation. It is that you stop in your career of sin and repent of your transgression, and then listen to this word, which is the word of His Gospel—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." To believe is to trust; and if you would know what you have to trust, hearken to these words. "Hear, and thy soul shall live." Christ, the Son of God, became man, and as man suffered and died upon the cross. On Him were laid the sins of all who believe in Him, and He was punished for their sins, that so God might be just, and yet might receive those for whom Jesus died—as many as believe in Jesus, the Saviour; "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." If you trust Christ, then know your sin is forgiven, for it was laid on Christ; your iniquity is put away, for Christ put it away by His death. You are pardoned and saved. Go your way, and rejoice in such a Gospel.

May the Lord grant that many of you tonight may seek mercy through Jesus, may not delay and procrastinate, but may seek and find now pardon through the precious blood of our redeeming Lord! **Amen.**