

“Neither Give Place To The Devil ...”

In the middle of five *“lets”* which instructed Ephesians what they must do to *“put off”* the old man and replace *“him”* with the new is this short exhortation: *“Neither give place to the devil”* (Eph. 4:27).

There is such a being as the devil. He is the fourth person introduced by Moses in Genesis, following God, Adam and Eve. He appeared often in the Old Testament and always with the intent of bring ruin to man. His names describe his character. He is Satan, our accuser (Rev. 12:10). He is the devil, our adversary (1 Pet. 5:8). He is the evil one (Mt. 5:37). He is called the *“god of this world,”* the *“prince of the powers of the air,”* and the *“old serpent”* (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; Rev. 20:2).

When Paul urged *“neither give place to the devil,”* he tells us, *“give no ground”* to him. In the sixth chapter he urged us to, *“Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”* (6:11). Just how do men *“give place to the devil”*?

We *“give place to the devil”* when we give him an advantage. Paul wrote Corinthians, *“But to whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also ... that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices”* (2 Cor. 2:11). These words were apparently written in view of the man who had taken his father’s wife and who the church had, by Paul instructions, deliver to Satan (1 Cor. 5:5). That this is that man is not specifically spelled out, but the implication is strong that it is he. *“But if any hath caused sorrow, he hath caused sorrow, not to me, but in part (that I press not too heavily) to you all. Sufficient to such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the many so that contrawise ye should rather forgive him and comfort him, lest by any means such a one should be swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow”* (2 Cor. 2:5-7). The man had sinned and the church had withdrawn from him. He felt keenly the loss of their fellowship and wanted both it and their forgiveness. To have failed to give him those two things would have driven him to greater despair. Satan would have been given a great advantage in such an instance. When one sins against us, we must forgive him lest we give Satan an advantage and *“give place to the devil.”*

We are told to *“resist the devil and he will flee from you”* (Jam. 4:11). Yet, in resisting the devil, or in not giving advantage nor place to him sometimes means that we must remove ourselves for the danger of temptation. Thus we are told to *“flee fornication,”* *“idolatry,”* *“youthful lust,”* and *“these things”* (1 Cor. 6:18; 10:14; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22). In addition we are

told to "*shun the appearance of evil*" (1 Thess. 5:22). Joseph knew the danger of youthful lusts, so when the invitation of his master's wife "*lie with me*" came to him, he fled. He did not trust himself. He knew, "*The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*" (Mt. 26:46). When he fled, he was giving no place to the devil.

"*Sin*" has a deadly appeal for us. To embrace sin is to embrace its wages, death. But, oh how strong are the temptations Satan sends our way! It is easy enough to advise, "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes and the vainglory of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof,*" yet harder to say, "No" (1 Jn. 2:15-17). Thus, "Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin. Each victory will help you, some other to win."

Therefore let us "*be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour. Whom withstand steadfast in your faith ...*" (1 Pet. 5:8f).

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