

AN IMPORTANT “LAW”

“So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.” (Rom 7:21)

After Eden no living thing is completely safe. The whole creation groans as in the pains of child birth (Rom. 8:22). Plants are not safe for a wide variety of insects and animals use them for food. Insects and animals are not safe for they too are a part of the “food chain” and must constantly be on guard against predators. It would be totally unrealistic for Christians to believe that we are immune from danger. Quite to the contrary. The Scriptures warn us to be self controlled and alert because our adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to devour us (1 Pet. 5:8).

Paul found this “truth” to be an ever present reality. In fact, it was so universally true that he called it a “law”. It seems that every time he wanted to do good, evil was right there with him. Jesus taught us to pray: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”. In Damascus Paul was delivered from evil by being lowered over the wall in a basket (Acts 9:25). In Jerusalem he was delivered from evil by a vision that warned him to quickly leave Jerusalem (Acts 22:18). In every city where Paul preached evil was right there with him. Had it not been for the power of God to deliver him he would have died in Antioch, or Iconium, or Lystra, or in dozens of other cities and circumstances. Bible history is replete with illustrations of this spiritual “law”. Every time we want to do good, evil is right there with us!

The effectiveness of soldiers in battle is often enhanced by camouflage. We do not want the enemy to see us until it is too late. So also in spiritual warfare the wicked one often masquerades as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). He does not appear like he truly is, he dresses up in camouflage. He is like a wolf in sheep’s clothing. His minions do the same thing. They emulate his deceitful ways and infiltrate the church of the living God (Gal. 2:4). They disguise their true colors and hide behind a mask of sincerity. They are unscrupulous servants of the devil and are an ever present danger to every believer. Remember! Every time we want to do good, evil is right there.

The devil is most destructive, of course, when he slithers his way into a position of leadership. The chickens are never more in danger than when the fox is guarding the hen house. Jeremiah faced this problem when backsliding Israel was ripe for judgement and Babylonian captivity. Note these pointed references to the sins of their pastors: **“For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.” (Jer 10:21) “Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.” (Jer 12:10). “The wind shall eat up all thy pastors, and thy lovers shall go into captivity: surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness.” (Jer 22:22). “Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.” (Jer 23:1-2)**

Jesus said that you would know them by their fruits. Men do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles (Matt. 7:16). Hosea said it like this **“Like people, like priest”** (Hos. 4:9). Sometimes the sins of the “priest” are even magnified in the lives of his converts. **“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.”** (Matt 23:15) In spite of the fact that evil was constantly present with Paul, it never had the power to rob him of his joy in the Lord. Like a sheep lying down beside still waters, he was confident that the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul would never leave him or forsake him. This same thrilling promise is available to each of us and gives us confidence that no matter what the devil does, we are still more than conquerors through Him Who loves us!