

Though This World With Devils Filled – *1 John 3:8, 10*

Introduction – John assumes the existence of the devil; do we? C.S Lewis writes, “*There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.*” Seeking to avoid both errors, let us pause to consider what John says here regarding the existence, activity, power, and overthrow of the devil and his minions.

The Existence of the Devil – It’s hard to be a serious follower of Jesus Christ and not believe in the devil as an actual created being. Obviously, Jesus did; we can see this in His address to the devil while tempted in the wilderness (Matt 4:1ff). John describes the devil elsewhere as the serpent of old and also identifies him as Satan (Rev 12:9). When John warns us that “*he who practices sin is of the devil,*” (1 John 3:8), he continues, “*for the devil is sinning from the beginning,*” that is, ever since the Garden.

The Activity and Power of the Devil – The reason John brings the devil into his argument in the epistle is because the devil is the original “*lawless one.*” He is the first and quintessential rebel. In 3:8 John is speaking of sinning in this vein; the devil has been rebelling against the Triune God since the beginning and continues to do so. He was the power behind the four Beast-empires of Daniel’s prophesy (Dan 7:3-7, Rev 12:3-4) and so to that extent he was the ruler of this world (John 12:31). As a rebel, he seeks to deceive others to rebellion and he is very sly (2 Cor 11:1-3). Paul and John both saw the work of the devil in the false teachers who clothed themselves as angels of light (2 Cor 11:13-15). He is a false teacher for he is the father of lies (John 8:44), slandering the person and work of Jesus. Diabolos means slanderer. He is also the accuser/adversary, which is where he gets his name Satan. He lies about God to us and he wants to lie about us before the throne of God (the book of Job). He is the wicked one and wicked deeds originate from him (1 John 3:12).

The Overthrow of the Devil – “*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil*” (1 John 3:8). Having been crucified for our sins and raised from the dead on the third day, at the ascension and enthronement of the Second Adam, the devil was cast out of that position and all authority in heaven and earth was given to Jesus. Before the throne of God, the devil can no longer bring accusations against us, for our Mediator, our elder Brother, our Friend and Savior sits there making intercession for us at all times (Rev 12:10, Heb 7:25).

Resounding Triumph – Jesus did not come in a rescue boat to pull as many people out of this sorry world before it all was turned over to the devil. He came to restore and redeem what He had created. The devil was defeated, not only in the heavens, but with regard to this world as well (John 12:31-32, Luke 10:18, 1 John 3:8). The cross toppled the devil and joined the saints of Christ in His glory (1 Cor 2:6-7).

And Though This World With Devils Filled – We must understand that when we say that the devil was defeated, it was a defeat that removed him as ruler of this world; Christ is King of kings. That victory is accomplished; it is finished. And in that, the elect have been ransomed, and the world reconciled. However, the devil hates this and so he persecutes the church and continues his guerilla tactics of rebellion. This is why there still are false teachers, apostate disciples, physical, emotional, and spiritual trials and attacks, and this is why temptations still abound. This defeated foe can gain strongholds and must be resisted (1 Pet 5:8-9). So we are to be sober, watchful, and vigilant. He is seeking to devour and destroy. We are to stand against Him in the steadfastness of our faith, not in our own strength. And so, Christ teaches us to pray (Matt 6:13). We pray that the ‘temptations’ of the devil (as well as our flesh and the evil in the world) never bring the fruit that they seek, but rather become the ‘trials’ and ‘tests’ God uses to perfect and purify His saints (1 Pet 5:10-11, Matt 6:13b).

One Little Word Shall Fell him – The Word Incarnate, Jesus, and the power of His gospel proclaimed is ours by grace through faith. Here is the work of the gospel: “*to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me*” (Acts 26:18). John writes his epistle establishing God’s people in just this truth.