



## INTRODUCTION

Right now, for two reasons, the devil is shaking in his boots.

First, like a giant rising from a long, deep slumber, the Church in the West is waking up to the problem of a shameful decline in evangelism. This is a nightmare for the devil. Later in this chapter, I will explain why. So how do we know the Church is now becoming alert to the crisis? Says researcher Marth Grace Reece, “Signs of change are emerging. Evidence affirms that pastors are beginning to recognise that we face a predicament with evangelism....they are beginning to say it out loud.”<sup>1</sup>

Second, the devil knows that through this book you are about to receive insight into exactly how millions of Christians have been knocked out of evangelism. You might even be an influential Christian who could pass on what you are about to learn to countless other Christians. Such a thought terrifies the devil.

Yet, tragically, and to the devil’s delight, some Christians are going to miss all this because they are averse to any book which mentions the devil. They know he is a real being but they think that any mention of him is spooky, or that it gives him glory.

They seem quick to forget, however, that the greatest book of all time (i.e. the Bible) mentions him frequently, and that Jesus often talked and warned about him, as did Paul and the other biblical writers. The Bible takes him seriously, and I am glad you do too. You are in the company of some very significant Christians.

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1 Marth Grace Reece. *Unbinding The Gospel. Real Life Evangelism.* Chalice Press. 2008, p.32

## Spiritual giants also take the devil seriously...

It was the late **Dr Francis Schaeffer** who wrote: “Do we really believe we are engaged in a cosmic battle? Do we really believe there are ‘powers of this dark world’ which rule our age? Or as the Apostle John says, do we really believe ‘the whole world is under the control of the evil one’? (1 John 5:19). If we do not believe these things (and we must say that much of the evangelical world acts as if it does not believe these things), we certainly cannot expect to have much success in fighting the battle.”<sup>2</sup>

**C.S Lewis** is another intellectual who took the devil seriously. “There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.”<sup>3</sup> Theologian **Paul Karleen** says: “We can count on the fact that [the devil] is always opposed to the will of God in our lives – both for individuals and the local church, and any kind of ministry. His name (Satan means “adversary”) tells us that upfront... And he would like nothing more than for us to be oblivious of what he is up to. It is part of his plan.”<sup>4</sup>

## Check out what the Bible says about him...

The Bible says of him, “Satan shall...go out and deceive” (Revelation 20:7-8, KJV). Speaking of Satan, Paul the Apostle said “...we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11). Many Christians believe that Satan can no longer have any influence over them because they belong to Jesus. This is not what the Bible teaches. The devil is a real being, and he *can* hinder God’s purposes.<sup>5</sup> “For we wanted to come to you — certainly I, Paul, did, again and again — but Satan stopped us” (1 Thessalonians 2:18). In fact his name also means “opposer.” Missionary statesman, **Oswald Sanders** wrote: “[The devil] is uniformly regarded as a malignant, malicious personality, hostile

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2 Dr Francis Schaeffer. *The Great Evangelical Disaster*. Crossway books, 1984, p.24

3 Dr C.S Lewis. *Christianity And Culture. Christian Reflections*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967, p.33

4 Sited in *Logos Bible Software 2.1*. Paul S. Karleen. *The Handbook To Bible Study*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

5 Not ultimately, because God is sovereign.

to God and man, and working to thwart the Lord's purposes."<sup>6</sup> What is the foremost 'purpose of the Lord' for His Church? In chapter five, we'll discover that it's that every person on the earth hears and understands the gospel of Jesus Christ. And what's hindering the fulfilment of this purpose? The devil and his devices operating inside the Christian Church.

### **If he can change the way we think, he can change our behaviour...**

What are "devices"? The Enhanced Greek Lexicon describes devices as "thoughts, mental perceptions; an evil purpose." Satan thinks, dreams and plans to frustrate evangelism. As I studied, prayed and researched Satan's part in hindering evangelism in the West, it became obvious that all his devices focus on changing the way we think about evangelism, the gospel, our priorities, and a myriad of other related issues. He knows that if he can deceive us by changing the way we think, he will change our behaviour. If he can change our behaviour, he can hinder evangelism. His plans appear to have been working with stunning success. Most Christians are completely unaware that these devices are operating, which is how the enemy likes it.

### **How to flower and flourish in evangelism...**

One metaphor to describe the relationship between the work of the devil and his influence over Christians is to think of Christians as flowers and the Church as a garden. In a typical garden, flowers vary in health and vitality. It's the same with the Church. A few Christians are blooming, making an impact, being mightily used by God. Sadly, many feel like they are limp, sickly flowers, not making much impact at all. So how can you be one of the bloomers? One key is to be active in evangelism.

No matter how impacting and mighty your walk with Jesus is at the moment, if you haven't been engaging in evangelism, you haven't fully bloomed yet. Outside of participating in evangelism, you'll never reach the fullness of your potential in Christ. For you,

the best is yet to come!

Listen to Romans 10:15 “...how beautiful are those who bring the gospel.” The word ‘beautiful’ in this verse is the Greek word *horaioi* (*horah-yos*) which refers to a flower in full bloom. This verse is in effect saying ‘...if you want to position yourself to fully bloom as a Christian, start evangelising.’

So how do we get to this point? First, we need to be planted in weed free soil. Most Christians, however, with respect to evangelism, are like flowers overgrown with a thick, dense mat of toxic weeds. Each weed represents a deadly device planted by the devil to hinder evangelism. Under these conditions, flowers have no hope of reaching their epitome of health and vitality. For Christians to mobilise for evangelism, and fully bloom, the weeds have to be cleared – and kept clear. As we progress through this book, we will identify each weed, naming it, and show how to eradicate it.

As such, this book is like spiritual herbicide. It will clear the weeds in your thinking about evangelism so that you as a flower in the garden of the Church can bloom.

While there are many factors which contribute to a Christian reaching the fullness of their potential, they will never achieve this outside of active participation in evangelism.

### **How to make your church “fly” in evangelism...**

Here’s another analogy which helps describe the relationship between Christians and the devil’s devices. Did you know that to start an average car, and keep it going smoothly, literally hundreds of car parts must synchronise and work together perfectly? If just one critical part malfunctions (e.g. the fuel pump), the car stops. Not all parts are critical (e.g. the windscreen wiper on the passenger’s side), but when all parts are working perfectly, the car feels and drives like new. Similarly with evangelism. Every person in your church is like a car, and every device of the devil causes a mechanical malfunction. If you can eliminate all malfunctions, the car will purr.

If you eliminate all the devil’s devices, the Christians in your church will begin to fly in evangelism, and you will have helped

turn the tide in the battle for souls. The more devices you identify and eliminate, the better the chance of mobilising your people for evangelism. When all the devices of the devil are operating together in an individual, their spiritual car, with respect to evangelism, is parked up on the side of the road with four flat tyres, muffler detached, windscreen broken, doors off the hinges, bonnet up, and smoke, flames and steam pouring forth. That car just ain't goin' anywhere!

The good news is that we can have all the spiritual cars in your church purring again when it comes to evangelism. But first you must discover the devices, learn which are critical and which are not, and then learn how to systematically eliminate them.<sup>7</sup>

**For starters, here are three devices of the devil which hinder evangelism...**

Firstly, he has us *exaggerating* about our evangelistic efforts. That is, we either contrive or exaggerate the numbers of non-Christians who are hearing the gospel. When we do this, those listening get the impression the job of evangelising the world is being done by others. They reason ‘*They* are doing such a great job, they don’t need me!’ and so justify personal non-involvement in evangelism. And you know the result if everyone gets this false impression? Evangelism stops. So the first way we can defeat the devil is learn what ‘the gospel’ is, objectively measure how many Christians are proclaiming it and how often, and then engage in truthful reporting.

Secondly, he has us wishfully *thinking* that Christians are evangelising regularly. Since we are constantly hearing about millions of non-Christians receiving the gospel, we assume millions of Christians must be proclaiming it. We tell ourselves, “I must be unusual because I know I’m not one of them, but that’s all right, because plenty of others *are* being obedient!” If the devil cons everyone in the Western Church into thinking like this, and if we do not ever cross-check with one another to verify our assumptions, it is easy to see how evangelism in the West has

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<sup>7</sup> At this point, please turn to appendix six, and complete the Evangelism Battle Fitness Test. This test will assess how ready you are right now, to enter the battle for souls and win.

declined so dramatically. So, the second way you can defeat the devil is to be accountable in evangelism, and help other Christians be accountable.

Thirdly, Satan has us *believing* that New Zealand, Britain, Australia and the United States, and every other Western country, is evangelised. We read certain mission maps and exclaim, “Great. The job is done in the West! Everyone has heard the gospel!” We know from the preface this is a completely false assumption. So the third way we can defeat the devil is to accept the truth that the West is a lost tribal group. The majority have not heard and understood the gospel.

These are just three devices. They are the entrée. They are tiddlers compared to what’s coming. This book reveals another 67.

At this point many Christians have asked ‘Why is the devil so interested in stopping evangelism and the gospel? Why does the Bible say of him, “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4)? Why doesn’t he pick on prayer, or good works, or worship, or Bible reading, or some other aspect of Christian life?’ This is a critical question, and here’s the answer.

## **What motivates our adversary to stop the gospel?**

**Dr Michael Green** uncovers two motives.<sup>8</sup>

### **The devil wants the glory...**

First, the devil hinders the gospel because he wants pride of place in the universe. Proclaiming the gospel humiliates the devil, because through it Jesus Christ, his enemy, is glorified. The gospel also exposes the devil as a liar and deceiver. You’ll learn exactly how this is so when you watch the small group DVD series which accompanies this book.<sup>9</sup>

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8 Dr Michael Green. *I Believe In Satan’s Downfall*. Hodder and Stoughton, 1999. pp. 62-63

9 The small group DVD series and study guides can be purchased from our web site at [www.esisite.com](http://www.esisite.com)

## The devil wants territory...

Secondly, the devil hinders the gospel because through it spiritual territory, or the ownership of souls, is lost. All people are born into the kingdom of darkness, and Satan wants to keep them there. When non-Christians are won to Jesus, not only does Satan lose territory but the pool of potential proclaimers of the gospel also increases. To regain territory lost to Jesus, he tries to entice Christians to backslide. The devil knows that when Christians wilfully and completely renounce Jesus, he regains turf.

He knows that the gospel is the most powerful weapon given to the Church for winning souls (Romans 1:16). So, for the sake of preserving territorial advantage, and increasing it, he must make sure this message is not proclaimed.

These are two motives. There is a third and this one is most significant.

## The devil wants to preserve his life...

According to Pastor **Jack Hanes** of Penrith Christian Life Centre, New South Wales, Australia, his overriding motive is self-preservation. “Satan,” say Hanes, “is not only trying to damn mankind – he’s trying to preserve himself!”<sup>10</sup> In Mark 13:10 and Matthew 24:14, Jesus speaks about His second coming, explaining that one of the conditions for His return is that everyone<sup>11</sup> has heard and understood the gospel. Not everyone agrees that this is a condition which must be fulfilled before Jesus returns. One of many who do is theologian and author, **Dr Millard Erickson**. “Certain events,” writes Erickson, “have to transpire before the second coming; for example... the gospel would have to be preached to all nations.”<sup>12</sup>

Let’s look at Mark 13:10 and Matthew 24:14. “And the gospel

10 Jack Hanes. *His Last Command, Our First Priority*. Mega Life Ministries, 2002, p.32

11 I interpret this to mean the people in this generation who are able to hear and understand the gospel. This would obviously exclude the very old, the very young, and those with mental problems or sickness for whom hearing and understanding the gospel would not be possible. In chapter nine I explain how, mathematically at least, it is feasible to have everyone on the earth hear and understand the gospel. To evangelise a whole generation requires the mobilisation of a large number of Christians who are willing to obey Jesus’ command to go into the world and proclaim the gospel.

12 In chapter two, I discuss the difference between the missions task of the Church, and the evangelism task. We need to know the difference.

must first be preached to all nations...”<sup>13</sup> (Mark 13:10) “And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

To what is ‘the end’ referring in this scripture? It’s the second coming of Jesus. And what must happen before He comes again? Everyone must hear the gospel. And what’s going to happen to the devil at the second coming? Check out Revelation 20:10: “And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” By carefully piecing these scriptures together, the message becomes clear. When everyone has heard the gospel, one of the conditions of the second coming will have been fulfilled. And when Jesus comes again, the devil, who is presently roaming the world like a lion off the leash wreaking havoc (1 Peter 5:8), will be cast into the lake of fire.

If you were the devil and you knew the plan of God outlined in these three Scriptures, wouldn’t you work tirelessly to prevent unbelievers from hearing the gospel and to prevent believers from proclaiming it? The devil knows the implications of Christians living out Mark 13:10 and Matthew 24:14. He also knows what is written in Revelation 20:10. Satan knows that if he can thwart the gospel being preached to all the nations, and every person within each nation, he can delay his sulphurous end.

Knowing these motives of the devil ought to fuel our desire to mobilise everyone in our churches to proclaim or spread the gospel. We can play a part in ushering in the second coming and the final destruction of Satan.

Now that we know what motivates the devil to oppose evangelism and the gospel, I want ask you an important question. If someone was to ask you ‘What is the best way to win the lost world to Christ?’, what would you say? What does the Bible say?

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13 The Greek word here is “ethnos” which means people groups. What’s the message? God wants us to make a priority of reaching every people group with the gospel, and then to reach every individual in each people group. More about this is coming in chapter two.

## **I want to help you discover what is the best way to win the lost...**

The bottom line is that every church leader and every genuine Christian wants to know how to win more non-Christians to Jesus and bring Him glory. There is no shortage of opinions in the Church on the best way to do this, and our opinion is shaped by our experience. For example, if we have experienced success with bringing people to the point of conversion a certain way, we quickly believe this is the best way. “Let your light shine!” say some. “Build relationships!” “Serve!” “Pray!” “Be hospitable!” “Live a life of integrity and love!” “Stand up for justice” “Social action!” “Feed the hungry” “Fight for the poor” say others.

Let me be very clear at this point. Every one of these behaviours is extremely important and entirely Biblical. Whenever non-Christians are drawn to Jesus, one or some of these behaviours will be ‘in the mix.’ Over and over again, Christians will testify that before they came to Christ, observing these behaviours in another Christian helped them come to the point of conversion. They are all part of God’s plan to draw people to Himself.

Yet, in chapter 5, we’ll learn why none of these behaviours is the priority of the Christian Church. None of these behaviours possesses the inherent power to save like the gospel does. In the New Testament, none of these behaviours is labelled ‘the power of God for salvation’ (Romans 1:16). It is no accident that Jesus’ last words to the disciples were ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation’ (Mark 16:15) and ‘you shall be my witnesses’<sup>14</sup> (Acts 1:8). In saying these things, He was clarifying *the best* strategy for winning the world. Make no mistake here - proclaiming the gospel is God’s front line weapon for saving lost souls, and it ought to be ours too.

We would even go as far to say that no one can be saved without hearing and understanding it. Think about it - if a person

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<sup>14</sup> The word ‘witness’ in this verse is widely misunderstood. It’s a legal word. In short it means to testify as in a court to the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and speak about the salvation significance of these events (the objective). It also means to speak about how these events have changed one’s own life (the subjective).

claims ‘I am saved’ or ‘I am a Christian,’ yet has not heard the gospel, how will they know what they are saved from? Save to? Saved for? How will they know who and what they are believing in? How will they know in Whom they are believing?

### **The war for souls is on...**

As I said in the preface, there is a colossal contest going on in the spiritual world over the proclamation of the gospel. On one side is the devil. On the other side Jesus and the Church. In the great valley in-between are the souls of men and women, and the glory of God. Ultimately, these are the prizes of our spiritual warfare.

This book is central to this war. In the preface we detailed the extent of the problem. In this chapter, the motives of the devil to stop evangelism. Now what?

Our next step is to know our enemy and his devices.

### **To win this war, we must know our enemy...**

In war, knowing our enemy is critical for success in the battle. Writing in the 4th century BC, the Chinese scholar **Sun Tzu** clearly recognised the centrality of accurate and timely information to the military commander. “First among these is knowing your enemy. The more accurate one’s picture of the enemy the better.”<sup>15</sup>

From here on in, you’ll be faced with two choices. First, you could read this book, have your eyes opened to the devices and the solutions, and then take positive action. Alternatively, you could have your eyes opened, and turn a blind eye. Whatever you do, don’t choose the latter!

Researcher Martha Grace Reece gives wise advice here: “The most dangerous way to face a serious threat or a dangerous situation is to ignore it, to be unconscious of it, to pretend it isn’t there. This is the way many of us have dealt with evangelism. We haven’t felt good about it, so we pushed the thought into the back of our minds, for later, or for someone else to think about! Many of us are still so overwhelmed with

our churches' smaller numbers and lower funding that we trundle along concentrating on 'business as usual.' Ask any corporate executive, psychologist, doctor, or spiritual director what the first step to change is. Chances are the answer will be, 'first you have to recognise there is a problem. Then you can do something about it.'<sup>16</sup>

My prayer is that by now, as a result of reading the preface to this book, you'll recognise *there is a serious problem*.

Thankfully, as I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, many leaders in the West are waking up to the evangelism crisis and are beginning to take action. If you are presently not one of this group, I am asking you to join them.

*Pastors, leaders and evangelists*, you are key players in this war. You can influence a lot of people. Through your influence you can lead people either into evangelism (i.e. be a positive influence) or out of it (i.e. be a negative influence). I have devoted chapters 12 to 17 to showing leaders how they can have an explosive *positive* impact on world evangelism. Leaders, Satan wants to keep you ignorant about the part you can play in the recovery (2 Corinthians 2:11).

'How can pastors, leaders, and evangelists have a *negative* influence?' you might ask. The answer may surprise you. One way Satan has been able to spread his devices is to work through unwitting church leaders. He figured 'How else will I get to the people in the pews?' His success with working through Church leaders has been phenomenal. In the next few chapters, you'll learn exactly how he has managed to do this.

Come with me now into chapter one. I am going to take you on an expedition deep into the battle, and uncover the first of his major devices for hindering world evangelism. Are you ready?