



## DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

LUKE 4:5-7

OCTOBER 2015

# The Devil to Pay

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*And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Luke 4:5-7*

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Satan confronted Eve and Adam in the Garden. He engaged Israel in the wilderness. He even tried to cut a deal with Jesus in the desert. According to the apostle Peter, he is still stalking around looking for someone who will deal. Has he found a taker in the modern American church?

To Jesus he offered the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would only bow before him. Satan demonstrated that he is not alarmed by the thought of a Christ-ruled but unredeemed universe. Russell Moore writes, "Satan did not fear a bloodless moralism. He had nothing to fear but the blood itself."<sup>1</sup> Satan is perfectly satisfied

promoting the values and ethics of moral living. He knows what evidently many Christians don't: Moral standards can't rescue hell-enslaved people. The gates of hell remain securely in place against all the attacks of well-meaning moralists desiring to produce a happy society without a bloody redemption.

The deal must have sounded something like this:

"Don't you want to have influence in the world? Aren't you supposed to be making the world a better place for people? You know that in this world, you gotta' have influence, and the bigger your footprint, the more influence you will have. These

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<sup>1</sup> Russell Moore. *Onward*. (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015) p. 109

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people you are trying to attract, they are ultimate consumers. They are customers, and the customer is always right. You can't afford to offend their sensibilities. They know what they want, and those who give them that will have their business. They want to be blessed and are willing to work to get it. They love religious hoops to jump through. It makes them feel significant. They hate being helpless and desperate. They like fuzzy boundaries and inclusive language.

"Why don't you tell them to believe in whatever version of Jesus they like, and live a good moral life, as they understand it? After all, God only wants us to be authentic and real to ourselves. I wouldn't feature the sinfulness of mankind or the necessity of a perfect sacrifice. Blood is offensive and reeks of primitive religion, which will turn off the enlightened. Offer them lots of steps to being better. Improvement is a high priority for them.

"Oh yes, tell them that God is waiting for them to achieve certain standards before he can bless them. They love blaming each other for not doing enough to get God's blessing. They love to long for revival that is always just out of their reach. Their hope is that if only they could get a significant number to do right, God would relent. They really love this game.

"Another suggestion: Hold up unity as

a standard. It sounds right. They believe that God loves unity and withholds the big blessings until his people get together on stuff. Of course, this will force them to jettison much of the foundational truth of the gospel. It is too divisive. It will leave them striving for a common ground of agreement, but always arguing over what is essential. But they like that. It makes them feel like they are fighting the fight of faith.

"Give them what they demand. They will come in droves. They will congratulate themselves on having a large footprint in the community. Give them something to keep their focus on the nice facilities of worship and the exciting entertainment on Sunday. They won't have time to see those unfortunate ones who are victims of life's pain."

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It seems like a good deal, but now we have the devil to pay. The culture no longer respects the influence of the American church. Our large footprint doesn't matter much because it looks pretty much like all the other corporations that were built using the marketing strategies of the world and its god. We have customers but not body members. We have an attractive message but not a transforming one. We have a congregation but not a community of faith. We have standards but no crucifixion. We

work for unity among ourselves but ignore the union we have with God. We can't speak to prisoners of addiction and perversion without prejudice because we haven't defined sin in relation to the gospel. For instance, we would not say to those practicing homosexuality (or exhibiting greed, or addicted to drugs, or . . .) that they are not welcome to attend our churches. We welcome all. But since we have refused to

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emphasize more than casual attendance, there is no possibility of an accountability that treats all sin as detrimental to the body, and offers real hope of wholeness.

We should have known. We have biblical history as a witness. Israel had the right values, the best standard, a great community, a divinely sanctioned government, and the promise of blessing, but could not succeed as God's image bearers on earth. It requires a bloody sacrifice for sinful

people to be restored to God and his order. Without the gospel of the New Testament, no deal will work.

Jesus refused the devil's offer. He chose to follow the path that led to the cross. We who follow him must follow the path of the cross. Truth is not complete until Jesus is revealed. Salvation does not happen until the Son of God dies. The kingdom is not inaugurated until the Son of Man is seated. We are sons of God with full rights and privileges because of him. We have been commissioned to proclaim a message that offers real hope to all. God has acted in history through his Son, and that changes everything. Those who hear and respond are empowered to live by the standard of divine love. They will bring healing and restoration wherever they reside. Ezekiel saw it when the bones in the valley came to life. (See Ezekiel 47:8–12.) Like water in the desert, life will come forth. Like fresh water in the Dead Sea, fish will swim. This stream of life flows from the cross of Christ by the Spirit of God through those who trust Jesus alone for abundant life.

The people of God are now defined by their relationship with Jesus the Son. They have heard the sound of the good news and responded by faith. They have embraced Jesus as the Lord over all. No Caesar nor king holds sway over them. They have believed in Jesus as Messiah and no longer

look for a rescuer. They have been born of imperishable seed, and as new creations they have cast aside the accusations from the devil regarding their qualifications to be blessed. They live without condemnation, guilt, shame, and fear. They are

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lights in a world shrouded with darkness. While men and women grope in confusion regarding their true identity, these living lights offer a way through. They stumble enough to offer believable hope to others on the journey beset with temptation and trials. They grieve at personal loss, but not as those who have no promise of a secure future. They are unashamed to weep and unafraid to shout. They have heard the joyful sound of a victory over sin, death, and hell, and they are willing to work and wait until all is accomplished. They believe that humans have no problems that cannot be solved through the death and resurrection. They have found death to the old man preferable to the struggle of the flesh. They have found freedom in the resurrection more profound than any

attempt to improve by personal willpower. They possess the greatest power the world has ever known. It can change murderers into priests, enemies into loyal friends, and perverts into the pure in heart. They have been loved by an alien love, and it has captured their hearts. This love came down from heaven and was fully expressed in the Father, Son, and Spirit.

This kind of people will influence their culture. They will bless the world. They will rule over kingdoms in the name of Jesus, the Lamb-Lion. They are a threat to hell and a menace to the devil. They want to bless their neighbors but refuse to live by their neighbors' definitions. They are not obligated to meet the demands of the customer, but they are loyal to the Lord who gave them the authority to proclaim the truth as revealed in the cross of Jesus. They live on the promise of the one who is head of the church, which is the body of Christ. "The gates of hell will not prevail against his church."

Jesus has a better deal.



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