

GOD'S CALL

Major themes in the Scriptures

Quality of being (4)

Quality of being under attack

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The Lord willing, today we will consider the subject, “Quality of being”, the fourth message, in seeking to appreciate major themes in the Scriptures.

A short summary of today's message:

Moral quality of being is at the heart of what God wants to bring about in His creation of moral beings. It is under severe attack. We need to be alert and we need to respond well.

We will seek the Lord to appreciate more of what this means.

God in His great wisdom and infinite love created us with a very, very great purpose.

It is something which, if we walk in His ways, we will find ultimate and eternal fulfilment in our lives. It is something very meaningful, wonderful for all eternity.

And yet, sadly, it is also true that not many will ultimately find that meaning and satisfaction. The Lord Jesus tells us, "The broad way leads to destruction; the narrow way leads to life". In the end, how many would truly walk in God's ways and find that meaning?

God wants to bring about the greatest quality in our being in the moral and spiritual realm.

However, it is under severe and vicious attack. In order for us to develop that quality, God permits that attack. God allows many difficulties and problems to come so that we can be tested, we can be trained, we can develop in that direction. But it also means that in the process of that, there will be many casualties: many will fall, many will turn away from this path. So it is something that we cannot treat lightly.

The potential is very great. The danger is also very great. It is up to us ultimately what we will choose, where we will go, what we will become.

We need to recognize that there is an enemy that seeks to destroy us with regard to what God desires us to become and this enemy is very, very powerful. Who is this enemy who is attacking us?

First, we must recognize that ultimately, no one can make us evil. Whether we become good or evil is our choice – what we want to be. But while that is true, we must also recognize that other moral beings can significantly affect us, influence us and draw us away from the path of true goodness.

We can be influenced, we can be affected, we can be drawn away from the path that God is calling us towards. So while it is our choice, we must also be alert because many a time, the way that the enemy operates is not so obvious to us, and being cunning, he offers us many alternatives that seem to be very good when in the end, it leads us to destruction.

So we need to understand who the enemy is, how he operates, what is he seeking to achieve, and how we are to take our stand.

1 Peter 5: 8-9

- 8 Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
- 9 But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

The greatest enemy that we have is the most evil being in the moral universe. Satan is described as our adversary.

He is seeking to destroy us, preventing us from reaching the goal that we ought to reach, from becoming the persons that we ought to be. And he is very active. He is constantly at work everywhere throughout the world. Through all the centuries, he has never given up. He prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. He is seeking to kill, to destroy and to devour, to eat us up. What does that mean?

What he is seeking to do includes destroying the moral quality of our being. What he is seeking to do includes drawing us to follow him, so that we become obedient to him; we depend on him for what he can offer us. He wants to draw us away from the path of God's calling and he will use all means at his disposal without regard to whether right or wrong, proper or improper. In fact, he concentrates on what is wrong and improper and evil.

We need to understand that while the issue of moral quality of our being is under attack, it does not mean that Satan can only attack those who morally are in a bad state.

In fact, he is particularly interested in those who are seeking to live well, those who desire to live for God, those who desire a life of quality. He will concentrate very intense attention on these.

We know that Satan concentrated very great attention when the Lord Jesus came to earth to be our Saviour. He sought by all means possible to tempt Him, to draw Him away from God, to destroy His moral character. But the Lord Jesus never failed. He resisted him, He rejected all his temptations; He overcame him.

So too we see Job was described as a man who was blameless, upright, fearing God ... turning away from evil. Satan attacked him. Satan sought to destroy his being, sought to destroy his confidence in God, his relationship with God, sought to draw him to follow him.

So he is constantly at work and for those whose hearts are not properly set in terms of following God, then it is very easy for him to work. And he has many followers who may not even know that they are following him.

He is a mastermind; he works in many different ways and people even follow him without realizing that he is behind it all.

So we need to recognize that we have an enemy that is very powerful and very capable and we must be sober and we must be alert. If we are not, we will be easily drawn away.

But we also need to recognize that it is not only Satan who is our enemy.

Together with Satan are all the evil spirits that follow him. But not only that: We also have enemies amongst human beings. Those who follow the evil one, those who reject God's ways are also our enemies because they will also draw us away from God. They will also destroy our beings if we follow them and when they influence us.

2 Corinthians 4: 3-4

- 3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,
- 4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Here, we are told that Satan is the god of this world and one of his activities, a very major one, is to blind the minds of the unbelieving. When our hearts are not inclined towards God, the evil one has great power in blinding our minds so that we will not appreciate what God is seeking to tell us, what is the right path, what it means.

He specializes in deception and in deceiving us, he will blind us to the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

So what happens when they listen to him and they follow him?

Philippians 3: 17-19

- 17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.
- 18 For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ,
- 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.

Sometimes we may think that Satan is our enemy and in the spiritual realm, only the spiritual forces are our enemy – our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against ... spiritual hosts of wickedness. But here, the apostle Paul tells us that these people are enemies of the cross of Christ and therefore, certainly, enemies of what God is seeking to do in our lives and enemies of the path of quality of being.

Those who follow the evil one, who are intent on following the evil one, they have their own motives. Satan can work effectively, most effectively, amongst those who desire the things that he can offer – basically the principle of togetherness.

When our hearts move in a similar direction to that of the evil one, he has the greatest power. He can offer us what we like, what we prefer, what we long for, and he can offer us excuses as well, so that we may think that we are doing the right thing while going the wrong way. We can have, what people say, “the best of both worlds”: You can have the world and yet you can follow God.

Sometimes, we may think that the evil one is so powerful and we are totally helpless. But in reality, the evil one is very powerful in our lives basically because we are willing to listen to him, basically because we are attracted by what he can give to us.

The apostle Paul says, “... many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ”. Who are these people who are enemies of the cross of Christ? He says, “... whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things”.

When you look at this description, you can see that this is the kind of direction that the evil one is leading people towards. That is what he wants to do: the path of destruction.

God says, “The soul who sins shall die” and the evil one concentrates on this. He wants to bring this about so that we will die. Right from the Garden of Eden until such time when he can no longer operate, Satan will continue to work in this way.

“... whose god is *their* appetite” – these people live by how they feel, what they feel like, what they desire: the pleasures that this world can offer. Satan himself seeks for pleasure and he will offer the pleasures of this world to all who desire it. The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life – these are directly and powerfully encouraged by the evil one. He is behind the spirit of the world, to draw us in that direction. So if we allow this kind of direction, then this description may become applicable – whose god is *their* appetite.

And once this is the case, the desires of the flesh come in; then: *whose* glory is in their shame. They no longer keep to the principles of God’s kingdom; they are not concerned as to whether it is really right or wrong, good or bad. They do it because it is pleasurable – what they like.

“... who set their minds on earthly things” – the things of the world become so important rather than the things of eternity – the things that are of true ultimate value.

So these are enemies of the cross of Christ and in particular, there are many who not only pursue this direction, but they draw others together with them. There some who are tempted in the wrong direction in this world, but they are struggling, seeking not to follow the world. But there are many others who enjoy this path, who want to follow the evil one, who find this path what they prefer in this world and they will seek to draw others in that direction. And if you do not join them, they will criticize you, ridicule you and provoke you so that you may then follow them. So these can influence us in the wrong direction and cause destruction of the moral quality of our being.

We need therefore to be alert in the world that we live.

Do we really keep close to the Lord? Are we conscious of what He is saying to us? Are we prayerful and vigilant? If we are not, then all these influences around us will readily have a grip on our lives.

And this can take place very readily because every day, we are exposed to all these influences in a very significant way. Whether it be in the home, whether on the television, the newspapers, or various other activities around us, or at our place of work, the influence of the evil one is very widespread, and those who follow him are plentiful around us. So we need to look to the Lord: Be alert, be vigilant.

What is his target, what does he concentrate on? What does the evil one concentrate on in all his efforts?

A verse that is very helpful for us to be conscious of is found in **Ephesians 4: 27**. And here the apostle Paul says:

Ephesians 4: 27

and do not give the devil an opportunity.

“... do not give the devil an opportunity” – the word “opportunity” is translated from a word that literally means “place”: do not give the devil a place. This is a very critical issue.

The apostle Paul says, “do not”. But many people are giving the devil a place. What is that place? What is he looking for? He is looking for a place where he can operate. What is that place? What is his target?

While it is true that the evil one enjoys seeing people suffer in the physical realm – and he may cause many pains and problems in the physical realm – that is not his primary concern. His motives go far deeper than that. So in order to appreciate that, let us look at the context of **Ephesians 4**, reading from **verse 17 to 32**.

Ephesians 4: 17-32

- 17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,
 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;
 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.
 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way,
 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,
 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,
 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,
 24 and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.
 25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE *of you* WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.
 26 BE ANGRY, AND *yet* DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger,
 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity.
 28 He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need.
 29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.
 30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.
 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

We look at the context: it is very clear. The apostle Paul here is concentrating on transformation of our being – transformation from the *old man* to the *new man* in terms of our moral character.

He tells us we must no longer be what we used to be, we must *no longer* live as we used to live. We must be transformed. This is God's calling.

First and foremost, we need to be transformed in our being; then we can properly participate in all that God wants to accomplish. If we do not pay attention to this, then the rest cannot properly follow.

So he says, “this I say, and affirm together with the Lord”. Why does he need to say “this I say, and affirm together with the Lord”? It is to emphasize this is very important. This is what the Lord wants to tell you, it is a very important aspect that you must pay attention to: that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk. No longer – we used to be like that but no longer.

There must be a change, there must be a transformation. It does not mean that now that we have become Christians, we will automatically develop in the path of moral perfection. That is God’s calling, that is what God wants to bring about but it does not mean that it will take place. What we do from here will determine whether it will or will not take place.

“... you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk” – the apostle Paul tells us that the evil one is the prince of the power of the air, he is the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. He is actively at work and this is what he promotes. All those who do not submit to God, who are not prepared to follow Him will move in this direction.

He says, “... in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart...”

Something is wrong with the heart and because something is wrong with the heart, the evil one has room to operate. And when he has room to operate, other things come about quite readily: futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding ... ignorance that is in them ...

These arise from the hardness of the heart. He says, “... because of the hardness of their heart”: Hardness in what sense? Hardness in terms of not responding to what God has to say, not responding to God’s call to the path of holiness, of righteousness, of goodness.

Hebrews chapter 3 and chapter 4 tell us very clearly: “TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS” – the voice of the Holy Spirit seeking to draw us to God, to the path of righteousness and holiness – do we harden our hearts? The problem is many people are hardening their hearts and when we harden our hearts, the result would be futility of our mind, darkened in OUR understanding ... ignorance and excluded from the life of God.

God’s life cannot reside in us if we harden our hearts. We cannot say, “I accept the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour” and yet not repent of our sins, not turn away from the path of evil and darkness and self-centredness. If we want the Lord Jesus to be our Saviour, then we must repent, we must turn away from the path that is displeasing to Him, that is dishonouring to Him, that is contrary to His moral being.

And so the apostle Paul says, “... and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness”. “... having become callous” – they have become hardened.

A callus forms when you harden with time. You become insensitive, you do not care; you do not bother. You do not care about what God thinks, what He says; you are not sensitive to what He has to say.

They ... become callous and they give themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. This is the path of destruction: “whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things”.

Of course, there is a wide range in terms of people who pursue this path. Some are not so severely involved in this way, but some are. But this is the direction when we do not listen to God: When we are not sensitive to Him, this is the path and the direction.

And so he says, “But you did not learn Christ in this way – What the Lord has been teaching you is a different path, is opposite to that – if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self [or literally, “the old man”], which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit.”

The old man, the former manner of life – the way we live our life when we go our own way – is characterized by the phrase “lusts of deceit” and this phrase is very important in helping us understand the problem when we go astray.

The lusts here refer to the wrong desires, the wrong things that we want, we look for, we seek for, we pursue in this world and these kinds of lusts are what the evil one specializes in to provide for us, to encourage us to be involved.

And lusts of deceit tells us that while he draws us into this direction, he deceives us into thinking that these are good and that you are not going to suffer bad consequences, so we think it is all right to pursue this. The lusts of deceit can come in many, many different ways and the evil one keeps us in the path of darkness and he does not want us to see the light of the ... glory of God.

So then the apostle Paul says: “... and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self [or the new man], which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth”. We see the contrast has to do with quality of being. Are we moving in the direction of evil or are we moving in the direction of righteousness? The new man that God wants to bring about, to develop in our hearts, in our being, is the moral perfection of God: in *the likeness of God* ... created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. The path that is truly meaningful, that is truly good is found in righteousness and holiness in the truth.

It is in this context then that the apostle Paul urges the believers to take practical steps: Lay aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH ... BE ANGRY ... DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger". At the heart of it is DO NOT SIN, whether it is in the direction of going against God's ways and laws and righteousness or going the path of God's call in righteousness and holiness.

And it is in this context he says, "and do not give the devil an opportunity (or a place)". If we sin, if we move away from God's calling, then we are giving the devil a place. So where is that place?

From the context, you can see that place is in the heart. It is in the heart that the evil one is seeking to operate. He is making great efforts to change our hearts from neutral to bad, from bad to worse, from worse to worst. He seeks to draw all men in the direction of the most evil possible. And the more evil we become, the more we will become his subjects, we will follow him.

Do not give the devil a place – when we give the devil a place, two important things can take place very rapidly. One is: When we give him a place in our hearts, he can have freedom to destroy our hearts. We become corrupted, we become evil; we follow him. That is one primary aspect. Together with that, once we give a place in our hearts to him, it becomes a base for his operations. He can make use of us: he can work through us to destroy others and to oppose God's work.

So this is a very major aspect. Quality of being is under severe attack, and the evil one wants to destroy us in the quality of our being, and he wants to destroy the work of God through our evil character as a result of our listening to him.

So the apostle Paul is concerned and he urges us to take practical steps.

“He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor ... Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a *word* as is good for edification”. We must take practical steps to change our conduct – but not just the outward; it must come from the inward. It must come from the right spirit where we truly love God and we care for the well-being of others.

Then in **verse 30**, he tells us something very, very important in the context of spiritual warfare: Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God” – our hope of victory is in the Spirit of God. He is the One who will help us to be transformed, to be like Christ. He will come to dwell in our hearts so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, we can become like Him. He is the One who will teach us God’s ways; He will bring to our remembrance what the Lord Jesus has said. He will help us to know how to live that way.

If we grieve the Holy Spirit, He will not work. He will be very sad, He will keep away from us; He will not help us and we will be an easy victim of the evil one.

Let us not take it lightly – that we can just sin and just carry on and we think it is all right: “I just come to God, say, ‘God forgive me’; it will be alright.” When we persist in the direction we know is wrong and we do not properly repent, deal with that before God, we grieve the Holy Spirit and when He is grieved, then the evil one becomes far more effective in our lives.

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you”. In the midst of telling us how the

evil one works and what the Holy Spirit is looking for, he continues to tell us the importance of the right spirit within us.

There should not be this kind of bitterness ... wrath and anger that arise from a self-centred life – we are only concerned about ourselves, we just want our own ways – but instead, we are to be kind ... tender-hearted, a right spirit within us.

So we see the target is the heart of man and he concentrates on destroying the moral quality of our heart.

When he can do that, then our heart will not be completely given to God. Remember that God is looking for those whose heart is completely His, then He will strongly support us. God will work in us and help us and bring us to the highest quality that is possible in us. But if our quality of being is destroyed by the evil one because we listen to him, we cannot properly give our heart to God. God will not accept us. God will only accept a heart that is pure, a desire to honour Him, a commitment to follow His path.

Whether the evil one will succeed or whether the Holy Spirit will succeed is dependent upon our moral choice.

Remember, the evil one is the most powerful evil power in the moral universe, seeking to work in our hearts to destroy us in the moral quality of our being. He is the most powerful evil power.

The Holy Spirit is the most powerful power of goodness in the universe, seeking to work in our hearts to help us to develop true moral quality of our being.

Recognize how serious it is: The two most powerful beings in terms of moral goodness and moral evil are actively seeking to work in our hearts.

What will be the outcome? What determines the outcome?

If we talk in terms of just power, of course the Holy Spirit is more powerful, therefore we expect Him to succeed. But that is not true. The reason is: Although the Holy Spirit is more powerful, far, far more powerful than the evil one, He cannot make us good unless we really choose to be good, we want to be good. Likewise, the evil one, though he may be very powerful, he also cannot make us evil, unless we are prepared to listen to him, to accept what he offers to us.

So it is determined by us. What will be the outcome? This is a very, very heavy responsibility that God has placed on every moral being: We make the choice and the choice will make us. What do you choose?

Notice these words: “do not” in reference to the devil and in reference to the Holy Spirit.

Look at these words and see how important they are. **Verse 27:** and do not give the devil an opportunity or a place. **Verse 30:** Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. “Do not” tells us that it is within your power, it is up to you. The evil one cannot just snatch a place in your heart if you do not allow it. The Holy Spirit will not be grieved unless you choose to ignore Him and not to listen to Him.

So do not give the devil a place or an opportunity. It is your choice. Will you or will you not? Will you seek to understand how he is working? Will you seek to understand how to reject him?

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God”. Do you understand what would grieve the Holy Spirit of God, are you conscious of that? Will you make efforts, will you exercise yourselves constantly, to seek God, to understand how you can live your life so that you will not grieve the Holy Spirit of God?

Do not think it is just a small matter.

A small matter can become a very big matter. We all know: Little drops of water, little grains of sand, make the mighty ocean and the pleasant land. Yes, it may be small little things at the beginning; it grows. We just give the devil a small place, he puts his foot in there; soon, he will come in and occupy the whole place. We grieve the Holy Spirit a little bit, soon, our conscience becomes dulled, we grieve Him more and more; after some time, He no longer wants to work in our hearts.

So let us take care not to give room for the evil one to work, take care not to live our lives so that the Holy Spirit will be grieved.

Let us look at what is his objective.

Isaiah 14: 12-14

- 12 "How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn!
You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations!
- 13 "But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne
above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the
recesses of the north.
- 14 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the
Most High.'

In order to understand how we can effectively fight against the evil one and not to give him that room or the place to work, it is helpful for us to understand what are his objectives, what is he seeking to do.

This passage in **Isaiah** is generally recognized to be a reference to Satan and his fall. And the context points strongly in this direction. No one else fits this description.

He says, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God". He wants a throne, he wants to be a king; he wants to set up his own kingdom. And he says, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

Who can have such a power to be like the Most High? Satan was a very powerful angel and when he fell because of his desire to be like God, he retains much of his power in terms of what he can do in this world. But the moral aspect of his being became totally corrupted.

"I will raise my throne above the stars of God". He is not satisfied just to be a small little king. He wants to have the most powerful kingdom. He wants to be like the Most High, the most powerful being. So he wants to be worshipped, he wants to have a kingdom; he wants to have followers who will obey him.

And we are told: "You who have weakened the nations". His power stretches over the whole world. He has weakened the nations; he has drawn many in the direction of moral weakness, spiritual death, so that they will not listen to God.

There are so many people in the world who say there is no God, who say there is nothing after death: "We will not be ultimately accountable, just live for your time on earth. Eat, drink and be merry, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE. We do not know what is going to happen. Let us enjoy ourselves, live for the time being."

The evil one has great power in this world and the kinds of things that people want in this world, he has the power to offer to those who

want them. God has allowed him to have such power. That is why he is described as the god of this world, the ruler of the world. The Lord Jesus said before He went to the cross: "The ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me". Although he is the ruler of this world, it does not mean that he has power over every one of us. Basically, he is the ruler of the world with regard to those who reject God, who do not seek to follow God. The whole world lies in the ... evil one. That is because men have chosen to go their own way.

We must remember that sin is not only the result of temptation by Satan.

Some of us may think we sin because Satan drew us to sin, that only because Satan is at work, then we sin. That is not true. Satan's work is to make it much easier for us to sin. He tempts us to sin; he threatens us; he urges us to sin; so it makes it much easier to sin. But it does not mean that without Satan, we will not sin.

We all know Satan himself sinned when nobody tempted him. God created him morally neutral. He chose to sin because of his wrong objectives, wrong values, wrong desires. He chose the path of sin; he wanted to be great in the wrong way.

We too can sin even if we are not tempted by the evil one. Looking at things around us, seeing what is possible, we can consider what we want and what we want to pursue. So if we do not set our heart on what is truly good, then we will pursue the things that are just for selfish enjoyment.

The self-centred life is something that all of us are capable of choosing, whatever our environment.

When Satan works, he is bringing to us all the attractions that come with a life of self-centredness. We can enjoy the world; we can enjoy the self-life.

And we know that one of the most powerful temptations that the evil one brings to us is what he himself chose: pride. He wanted glory, he wanted to be exalted, he wanted to be worshipped, he wanted to have a throne; he wanted to set up his own kingdom. This is what he also offers.

Satan offered the Lord Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. He said, "All these ... I will give to You. You can become a king; You can have all these, but on condition You fall down and worship me."

Satan is prepared to have many, many sub-kings under him, many people who can have power, authority, who can be proud, but all subjected to him. He is prepared to give you positions of power, authority, enjoyment, praise, so long as in the end, you are subjected to him.

Of course, if he comes to us as Satan and he tells you, "I am Satan and I am going to give you all this glory of this world", you will say, "No, no I don't want that from you." But there are others who want. There are those people who know he is Satan and they want power and they worship Satan. So there are people like that but most people will not do that and especially, Christians will not directly do that. So he comes in a not so obvious way. And that is where it is very dangerous. If we are not alert, we are not prayerful, he can offer us many things that can appear as something good and positive in the eyes of God.

We can do many things that apparently are good but we must be careful what motivates us.

Are we doing these things because we love God? Are we doing these things because we really believe they are good and meaningful, helpful to other people? Or is there something we want to get out of it for ourselves? Is there something that we long for, some recognition, some praise, some glory? Even the disciples had problems in this area. They wanted to know who was the greatest and they wanted to be the greatest. The Lord Jesus told them, "This is not what you should seek for. You should seek to be a servant." The Lord Jesus came to serve ... to give His life a ransom for many.

True greatness is not primarily in terms of the power over other people. True greatness is in terms of the moral quality of our hearts, where we can live in freedom to be what we ought to be and to do what we ought to do. That is true greatness and that is what God is seeking to help us towards.

God is the greatest in terms of power; He rules over all the kingdoms of the world – although Satan is called the ruler of the world, he is subjected to God. God is the ultimate ruler, He is the sovereign ruler of all creation; He is the most powerful. The Lord Jesus is called the KING OF KINGS, AND THE LORD OF LORDS.

Yes, that is true. Ultimately, this will be known and established, but we notice that God's emphasis and approach has not been to declare His power and to exert that influence so that we just simply follow Him. We see that God's approach is primarily to help us to recognize what is truly good, what is pure, what is holy, so that we will choose it because it is good and in so doing, we love Him, we submit to Him willingly. And in that context, we can appreciate the glory of God, the power of God.

The power of God over all creation in the physical realm is so very meaningful only because He is perfectly good. Because He is pure, He is good, He loves us with a true love, that is why it is so wonderful to know that He is the sovereign ruler of the universe.

But Satan wants to rule not in a spirit of love but in a spirit of self-seeking. What he wants is control over others – submission - power over others.

If we long for anything in that kind of direction, then we will be fulfilling his objective, we will be falling into his trap because once we do that, we will grieve the Holy Spirit, He will not work.

Once we do that, we will be opposed to God. Once we do that, we sin and we will die. So we need to see these things clearly.

Quality of being is central in what God wants to bring about and quality of being is central in terms of true service to God. Quality of being is primary in terms of spiritual warfare.

The Lord willing, we will consider further quality of being in relation to the realm of the warfare and how we should fight. We need to first recognize how serious the matter is, what is involved and then we need to know how we can properly and effectively overcome the evil one and develop that quality of being that God wants to build in us.

We must recognize it is a very difficult path, it is a very dangerous situation, but if we do well, if we follow God properly, then the outcome, we can say, is truly wonderful. And the word “wonderful” here is used in the way it ought to be used. Many people use this word very freely, referring to things that are of little value. But God’s purposes are truly wonderful – very, very meaningful. We will find it eternally satisfying, but we have to go through this path.

Do we really want it? Are we prepared for the cost of it? Will we reject all that the evil one may offer us? Will we take our stand against him? Will we follow the Lord? These are issues that all of us will have to face.

The apostle Paul himself recognized that he must be vigilant; he must discipline his body and make it his slave. Otherwise, he also might be disqualified.

Anyone of us can go astray, if we do not keep close to the Lord, if we are not properly committed to Him, if we do not take our stand together with Him, if we do not depend on Him, we do not walk with Him daily. We can go astray.

But the more you develop well, the more you choose His ways, the more stable you will become. The more your heart belongs to Him, the more you will want to remain with Him. And so the way we choose each day – even small choices – are important.

But we need to pay attention to the really important issues.

What are we seeking for in life? What do we want to give ourselves for? What are we pursuing? What are we doing every day with our lives?

Are we truly giving ourselves for something that is truly worthwhile, that we can look back from eternity and say, “I am very glad I chose the right path”? Or will we regret that our lives have not been what they ought to be?

So quality of being is under severe attack. The enemy is very powerful and very cunning. He concentrates on the heart to destroy it and use it as a place, as a base for him to operate. His objective is to be

the king, the powerful king of his own kingdom, so that he can do whatever he pleases, to enjoy himself according to whatever he may desire, and he will make use of us for his own ends.

Do we want to allow him to work or will we fight against him, take our stand together with the Lord and destroy the works of the evil one?

The Lord Jesus came that he may destroy the works of the evil one. Will we do the same by His power, by abiding in Him, and He abiding in us?

Let us come before the Lord and ask Him to help us understand these issues more deeply.

Let us ask Him to help us understand ourselves so that if in any way we have given room for the evil one to work, we may take that back, come to the Lord for His forgiveness, ask Him to cleanse us, to help us, so that we will live well by His power.

Let us ponder over His goodness to us – what the Lord has done for us – and let us tell Him that we are prepared to walk with Him, to follow Him.