

A walk with Mr O (8)

Sometimes I lose spiritual interest.

Mr O, a strange thing happened to me yesterday. It has happened before, but this time it was far worse.

Go on, tell me about it.

Well, in my morning Bible reading and prayer I had a really good time with the Lord, and then I experienced a real sense of His presence throughout the day. But everything changed in the evening

I can see that you are upset, but try and tell me more.

I don't really know how to describe it. When the time came for me to read and pray in the evening, I simply didn't want to do it. My conscience was troubled for a short while, and after that I couldn't care less. Spiritual things lost all their appeal, so I put my feet up and spent the whole evening flicking from channel to channel on the TV.

And what happened this morning?

When I woke up I was filled with a sense of shame. I sought the Lord, wept over my wasted evening, confessed everything to Him, and found pardon and peace at His cross. But, Mr O, what happened to me yesterday evening? I really need to know.

You know what happened. Your confession proves it. You sinned. But let's be clear; your sin didn't lie in your failure to read the Bible. As we have seen before, daily Bible reading is a privilege, but it's not an obligation. Your sin lay in the fact that throughout a whole evening and night you abandoned your God. You walked out on Him. By your actions you told Him that you could manage without Him.

But I can't manage without Him, Mr O! I love Him! So why did this happen, especially on a day when I had walked with Him so closely?

Tell me about your time of prayer yesterday morning. Did it include all the requests that are found in the Lord's Prayer? The reference there to 'daily bread' makes it clear that these are the things that we should pray for every day. Did you pray anything that resembled 'lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'? 'Evil', of course, means the evil one. Did you pray that you would be supported in the day's temptations and delivered from the devil?

No, I didn't. And, to be honest, I hardly ever think about the devil.

I hope you don't mind, but I have to say that I am shocked. The Saviour commands us to prepare for temptation, and to pray for deliverance from the devil, every day! He knows that everyone who doesn't think regularly about the devil is heading for serious trouble. You surely have read the verse which says, 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.' (1 Peter 5:8).

Yes, of course. But I suppose I have never taken it seriously. And my church certainly doesn't either, because the devil is never mentioned in any prayers that I hear, and only very, very occasionally in the preaching.

Don't you find that troubling? We meet the devil in the third chapter of the Bible, and the whole of the Old Testament is about the way that his 'seed' tries to prevent the coming of the woman's Seed, whose suffering is going to ruin him. In the New Testament we find that every book except Titus, Philemon and 3 John makes direct reference to either the devil or to his allies. We are still reading about him when we are three chapters from the end of the Bible. And yet you say that you hardly ever think about him!

I am stung by your rebuke. So, are you saying that I wouldn't have behaved as I did yesterday if I had taken the devil into account?

Yes. Everything in this life which restrains personal holiness is from the devil. But we don't have to give in. Christ has defeated Satan. Say 'no!' to him and he will go away. He will! 1 Peter 5:9 says, 'Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world', while James 4:7 says, 'Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you'.
Hallelujah!