

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE UNDER THE POWER OF SATAN?

by Max B. Skousen

So what does it mean to be under Satan's power? What a negative question, one might think? The obvious answer would seem to be that being under the power of Satan means we would be full of destructive behavior and terrible thoughts. Drunkards, con-men, deceivers, abusers, criminals, dope addicts and the like are obviously under a darker power than the light of God.

In this way, most of us take great comfort in the assurance that we are not under Satan's power, at least not most of the time. Instead, we are good citizens, having good credit, faithful employees or employers, active church members, hard working parents, friendly neighbors and all around decent people. Having a temple recommend is almost like a certificate of worthiness, declaring before God, angels and these witnesses that the devil has been outclassed, out maneuvered and out of luck when it comes to having us in his dark and evil clutches.

THE NATURAL MAN--AN ENEMY BY NATURE?

Remember, there is a reason why the "natural man" is an enemy to God and will be forever. So we might take a second look at this question of what it means to be under the power of the devil. Every Latter-day Saint who has gone to the temple has made a covenant that he or she will obey ALL the commandments of God. In Chapter 2 of *Book II* I listed some of these more spiritual commandments which I knew I had to obey. Over the years, try as I would, I found many clearly stated requirements of godliness seemingly beyond my ability. Certainly, I had not rid myself of ALL my --

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1. pride, | (Alma 5:29) |
| 2. impatience, | (I Thessalonians 5:14) |
| 3. envy, | (Galatians 5:21) |
| 4. procrastination, | (Alma 13:27) |
| 5. selfishness, | (D&C 56:8) |
| 6. materialism, | (Jacob 2:17) |
| 7. judging, | (Matthew 7:1) |
| 8. intolerance, | (Matthew 7:2) |
| 9. unholy thoughts, | (Matthew 5:28) |
| -- just to name a few of the elements which are not godly. Nor was I a possessor of those things which are godly, such as being -- | |
| 10. thankful for ALL things, | (D&C 59:7) |
| nor did I have | |
| 11. an eye single to the glory of God, | (D&C 88:67) |
| nor | |
| 12. filled with the light as Christ is in the light, | (I John 1:6-7) |
| 13. truly confessing His hand in all things, | (D&C 59:21) |
| 14. loving God with all my heart, might, and soul, | (Matthew 22:37) |
| 15. fully loving others even as myself, | (Matthew 22:39) |
| 16. and being perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect. | (Matthew 5:48) |

And yet, we are assured that if we do not keep every covenant that we have made in the temple, we will be in Satan's power. So either the threat is not true or we are under his power and do not know it, for we are obviously pretty good people.

THE DEVIL JUST LOVES ZEALOUS PEOPLE IN HIS KINGDOM

What we probably fail to realize is that, first of all, the devil just loves nice people in his kingdom. Without them, there would be no other way he could expect to win. Oh yes, he will put up with the trash, but his real prizes are those who stand tall and straight, beautiful and talented, dedicated and zealous. Well, we might ask, if those kinds of people are in his power, what is he getting them to do which is not righteous?

To understand the answer to that question, let's remember the garden of Eden story. What was Lucifer's first great triumph? It was to get man to partake of the forbidden tree of knowledge of good and evil, thus put us under the fall wherein he could rule and reign over the world, right on schedule. In this way, mankind fell and lost access, for a time at least, to the tree of life which represents the pure and holy love of God which He would shed into the hearts of the children of men.

So we see that all Satan has to do to keep us away from the tree of life is to keep us eating off of the tree of knowledge. Remember Lehi's vision. Obviously those self-righteous, judgmental members of God's church, the children of Israel, who were in the great and spacious building, representing the pride of the earth, were not free from Satanic domination.

But what about those who left the building and found the strait and narrow path which led directly to the tree of life? In *Book II*, I identified these zealous seekers as those who moved away from the temporal law to the spiritual law, and thus were joyfully and hopefully on their way to the tree of life. But there was one problem. There rose a great mist of darkness which totally obscured their view of the path. However, in their confidence, they bravely continued on, feeling sure they remembered where the path lay under their feet. But soon they wandered off the path and were lost.

So much for the infallibility of the one and only true "strait and narrow path." Now what was symbolized by the mist of darkness? We are told it represents the temptations of the devil. And again, what was the devil's most victorious temptation? To get us eating the fruit from the forbidden, yet God-created, tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Remember, Paul said that when one partakes of the pure love of Christ, prophecies start to fail, gifts like tongues cease and knowledge of our fixed good and evil just passes away. Why? Because perfect love replaces our utter dependence upon our fixed ideals of what ought to be with a more perfect way of living spontaneously like the wind instead of rigid like a rock. In that state, we "becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us], even as a child doth submit to his father." (*Mosiah 3:19*)

ALMA'S GREAT SERMON ON THE PRICE OF PRIDE

Alma, who presided over the church of God in his day, found that the members had lost the way. The people of the church had also become subject to the devil without knowing it. His great sermon of revival is found in the powerful *Fifth Chapter of Alma*. Let's read part of it very carefully to see if he is not also talking to us in our day--

"And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren [and sisters] of the church, HAVE YE SPIRITUALLY BEEN BORN OF GOD? Have ye received His image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this might change in your hearts?...I say unto you, can ye think of being saved when you have yielded yourselves to become subjects to the devil?... "And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren [and sisters], if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now? Have ye walked, keeping yourself blameless before God?...Behold, are ye stripped of pride? I say unto you, if ye are not ye are not prepared to meet God...Behold, I say, is there one among you who is not stripped of envy?...And again I say unto you, is

there one among you that doth make a mock of his brother [by gossip]?... "Yea, He saith, COME UNTO ME AND YE SHALL PARTAKE OF THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF LIFE; YEA, YE SHALL EAT AND DRINK OF THE BREAD AND THE WATERS OF LIFE FREELY. Yea, come unto me [and become members of the church of the Lamb of God] and bring forth works of righteousness, and ye shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire... "O ye [members] workers of iniquity; ye that are puffed up in the vain things of the world, YE THAT HAVE PROFESSED TO HAVE KNOWN THE WAYS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS nevertheless have gone astray, as sheep having no shepherd, notwithstanding a shepherd hath called after you and is still calling after you, but ye will not hearken unto His voice!... "And now if ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd, of what fold are ye? Behold, I say unto you, that the devil is your shepherd, and ye are of his fold; and now, WHO CAN DENY THIS? Behold, I say unto you, whosoever denieth this IS A LIAR and a child of the devil." (*Alma 5:14-39*)

So could it be that we need another spiritual revival like Alma was able to create in the church in his day, where we too "profess to know the ways of righteousness nevertheless have gone astray?" Are all the other churches in the same boat? In the *84th Section*, the Lord made it very clear

"And the whole world lieth in sin, and groaneth under darkness and under the bondage of sin. And by this you may know they are under the bondage of sin, because they come not [truly] unto me...and your minds [of those who hold my priesthood] in times past have been darkened because of unbelief...which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation."

In *Solving the Mormon Puzzle*, I mention that the church at Corinth was apparently enjoying far greater outpouring of spiritual gifts than we are in either the LDS Church, the Southern Baptists or most if not all of the other Christian churches of the last 2,000 years. Yet the Corinthians were so contending among themselves about who really had the ultimate truth, so heavily involved in the "right-wrong game," Paul could not teach them the spiritual meat of the gospel and could only give them the spiritual milk. In other words, he left them at the level of the preparatory gospel milk, like we have been, and could not take them to the level of the spiritual meat, even partaking of the fruit of the tree of life, which is sweet above all that is sweet and pure above all that is pure. But as President Benson was allowed to announce to the church, the day is soon coming when we will have poured on each child of Zion and the church such a blessing hitherto unknown.

Max B. Skousen
(Oct. 28, 1921 – Nov. 16, 2002)

For more information, visit:
www.maxskousen.org