

Can Satan Speak to You?

As a blog author, I am intrigued by what posts strike a nerve and what posts do not. Apparently, (some) people have strong feelings (to use a phrase from my children's preschool) about Lectio Divina. The concerns I've heard are that it opens the door to Satan, it results in a subjective understanding of the Word, it leads to New Age spirituality and so forth.

Some people are very concerned about Bible reading and prayer that involves a time of quiet meditation. As I read their concerns, my perception is that when reading the Bible, in their opinion you should only be reading or speaking prayer, but not sitting or waiting in Scripture quietly. Stopping to sit in Scripture and pausing in prayer to hear from God through the Word are viewed with great suspicion as a time that opens us to deception by Satan. I find that entire concept foreign, and I think it is because of my own theological convictions that I do so.

I've been thinking today through doctrines from the Word that give me a framework for sitting with God in prayer and Bible reading with a desire to hear from Him. Here are some theological points to consider:

1. Perseverance of the saints. I believe with the Apostle Paul that He who began the good work in me will continue it (Phil. 1:6). My conviction is that God keeps me, and I am not afraid that Satan will pluck me out of God's hand (John 10:28). I am definitely not afraid that Satan will pluck me away from God through my own personal Bible reading. God says He's not going to lose me, and He's left the Holy Spirit within me as the deposit to ensure that outcome (Eph. 1:14).
2. The value of memorization and meditation on the Word. God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, the psalmist says. The psalmist then commits to

hide God's Word in his heart (Ps. 119:105). How do we hide God's Word in our hearts? We memorize it by repeating it to ourselves. Repetition of God's Word is a normative, healthy Christian practice! Now some are concerned with repetition of small portions, like a word or phrase, of Scripture. I don't see that as the thrust of listening prayer and Bible reading. The particular instructions I suggested and have used for myself focus on a passage around 12 verses, reading through the entire passage repeatedly. While one may zoom in on a particular word or phrase, it is in the context of its place in a larger reading of Scripture.

3. In short, if you are concerned with someone repeating a single word from Scripture in an eastern type trance, fine. But don't project that onto my post in particular. And in general, I don't think that's a fair concern for most modern evangelical discussion around listening Bible reading and prayer. That seems a straw man that is irrelevant to what is actually being discussed—slowing down in Scripture reading to let God speak to us through His Word.
4. An inflated understanding of Satan. Critics seem more worried about Satan than they are confident in the Holy Spirit. I keep thinking of 1 John 4:4, "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." We are certainly instructed to be cautious of Satan (for instance Paul's instructions in Ephesians and Peter's of Satan walking about as a lion seeking to devour). But those warnings have Satan on the outside, not talking to us from the inside. That's pretty important! If you are in Christ, you have been SEALED by the Spirit (Eph. 1:13 and 2 Cor. 1:22). Now people debate what exactly it means to be sealed by the Spirit, but it means something. My conviction is that it means that we are safe in the Spirit—He is the guarantee of Phil. 1:6, that God will not default on His promises to us, and Jesus loses none of those God gives Him. God took both

sides of the covenant with Abraham, and He has taken both sides with us. We are safe in Him because HE will not default on His promises to us.

Furthermore, it is the SPIRIT not Satan that lives within me. While Satan can and does taunt me from the outside, the Bible never talks of him as indwelling us or speaking to us from the inside. Again, the phrasing of being sealed by the Spirit is helpful. A seal locks the letter with the stamp of the king. Seals remove openings that allow contaminants to flow into an object or that allow seepage out of the object. We are sealed in the Spirit. Exposit that and then think of the implications!

Consider also that when Satan approached Eve and later when he approached Jesus, while he did use God's Words against them, he did it externally. He did not come internally into their psyche, and I would argue strongly that he is unable to do that to any who are in Christ Jesus, sealed by the Spirit. Satan can possess unbelievers from the inside. And he can oppress believers from the outside. But I see no Scripture that warns of a Satan that can speak inside of us once we are in Christ and sealed by the Spirit. The Bible presents a dangerous Satan, but not an omnipresent and omniscient one. That's God, not Satan.

If you are in Christ, you do not have Satan and the Spirit inside of you dueling it out. THAT is a bad teaching, and those knowledgeable in theology should know better than to entertain that idea.

I am a big proponent of expository Bible preaching and teaching. I employ it even right now as I think about why an expository understanding of Scripture protects us from fear of a Satanic voice that can lead us astray from Scripture from the inside. Satan may attempt to use someone outside of me misusing Scripture to deceive me, and in that event it is

important to understand Scripture objectively to ward off such bad teaching.

But if we are in Christ and sealed by the Spirit, the Spirit within us is greater than our opponent outside of us. It is in that framework that I can come to God in my Bible reading and confidently listen for Him to speak through His written Word to me.

I hope something there is helpful to you as you think of how to approach your own personal Bible reading and prayer.

*Adapted from **Wendy Alsup's** blog, . Wendy has authored three books including By His Wounds You are Healed: How the Message of Ephesians Transforms a Woman's Identity. She is also a wife, mom and college math teacher who loves ministering to women.*