

The Devil and Useful Idiots

From Ronald L. Dart's Program Notes

How does Satan influence the behavior of human beings? Now this is not about demon possession. This about a more subtle approach the Adversary uses.

In the Fifties at the height of the Cold War, everyone knew that the Soviets were running agents in this country. There were several levels of this operation, and it was intended to, in the words of Krushchev, to bury the United States. Marxism, particularly Stalinism, had as an objective the spread of Marxism throughout the world, and the US was the primary obstacle on the way.

Two main categories of agents existed in this country: active agents and useful idiots—a graphic description of people recruited by agents, often without their knowledge, to advance the Marxist cause in this country. How can you recruit someone without him knowing it? You find someone with a grievance against the system, a political view that suits you, a bent toward your doctrine, and you support him heavily. You feed him information that reinforces his prejudices. You contribute to his political campaign; you get him a job in a key position.

Unfortunately, in the anti-communist witch hunts of the Fifties,

it was mostly useful idiots who were persecuted while the active agents went unrecognized and untouched.

When Marxism finally collapsed, the active agents knew it before anyone else did. They took their Swiss bank accounts and went elsewhere. Meanwhile, many of the useful idiots were left, many in a state of denial. There might still be tenured professors at universities that would prefer Marxism, given the choice, and that in spite of the most spectacular failure in modern history.

What does all this have to do with the way Satan works in the world?

Simple enough. He works through active agents and useful idiots. And just like the communist hunters of the Fifties we tend to

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prosecute useful idiots and let the active agents steal away.

Again, this is not about demon possession—that's a subject for another day. What this is about is something much more dangerous. Satan is subtle. Read that, sneaky. He doesn't attack head on. Satan is a deceiver. He can lie without a second thought and he is good at it. But how does he do it? Does he put thoughts into your mind? Does he have a kind of ESP? We may not be capable of understanding the

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Does God Need Your Money? . . .

Just what does the Bible say about God needing your money? "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof" (Psalm 50:10-12). So, if God is so rich that he doesn't need your tithes and offerings, why does he require them of you? Tithing and giving to God is an act of worship to the Almighty. It is for your good that you give to God. You give—and he blesses you.

A Gospel for the 21st Century

We are now almost 15 years into the 21st century and these notes from Ronald L. Dart are as applicable today and they were in the year 2000.

One would think that, of all the things that Christians might disagree over, the Gospel would not be one of them. What could be more basic? What could be better attested to?

But the question is a little trickier than you might think. There are some subtle distinctions that are often overlooked. Notice that when the Gospel is mentioned, it is talking about the message of the Christian faith to the world. This isn't talking about the church's message to itself.

Take Paul's epistles, for example. Every one of them is addressed to believers. You can't go to any of the New Testament epistles, Revelation included, to find the message to unbelievers. You'll have to go the four Gospels and the Book of Acts for that. There are four speeches in the Book of Acts that you need to examine. These are really important, for reasons you might not expect. These four speeches are:

- Peter to the Jerusalem Jews, Pentecost (Acts 2).
- Peter to the Gentile God fearer, Cornelius (Acts 10:32 ff).
- Paul to the diaspora Jews at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:14 ff).
- Paul to the Gentile intelligentsia at Athens (Acts 17:16).

Now let's examine these four speeches for similarities and differences.

In Acts 2 the Jews were dwelling in Jerusalem, many of

whom had shouted, "Let him be crucified." This was a heated political atmosphere with a strong pharisaical influence while they were expecting the Messiah. Did any of these cultural and recent historical things affect the Gospel as delivered?

The speech in Acts 10:32 was given to a Gentile, the Roman Centurion. A miraculous vision was involved. They already knew much about the Scriptures. They believed in God.

The message in Acts 13:14 was delivered to the Jews of the diaspora. They were not involved in the politics of Jerusalem, but they were knowledgeable in the Scriptures. Religiously they were the same as the Jews of Jerusalem, but culturally they were very different.

In Acts 17:16, the pagan Gentiles were intellectuals, who were not in the least interested in Judaism.

These four groups are different in their culture and their history. And the message delivered to each is different in important ways.

Now let's determine how was it the same. Jesus died for our sins, was buried and rose again. Jesus is coming again to judge the world.

Is this all there is to the Gospel? Absolutely not. The entire Bible is the Gospel. But the way an evangelist presents the Gospel has to take many things into account as to how the Bible should be presented.

He starts with the core: Jesus Christ, his person, his ministry, his work. From there, it is a matter of discretion how he goes. You can't

leave out Jesus and have it be the Gospel.

What does all this say about the way we present the Gospel in the 21st century? The basic message is the same. But, would you present the Gospel the same way in Sierra Leone in Equatorial Africa as you would present it in Southern California?

The USA at the beginning of the 21st century were the richest people in the history of the world. But there are still people in the world who are as poor as they ever have been.

Frankly, we may need a prophet more than an evangelist. But it requires some thought to speak to people about life who care little for any life other than their own.

What do you have to say to a man who can sit in front of a computer all day trading stocks and make more money in a year than you will see in your life?

What do you have to say to teenagers who are caught up in the pursuit of pleasure, and who have all the money they want?

This is something we have to think about in the modern world. You need to understand that what we have done in the past may not work in the future, yet, the beauty of the Bible is that the truth of it is timeless.

Jesus is never irrelevant. And there is no modern culture to whom Jesus does not speak. When we try to make the Gospel relevant, we forget the important truth that the Gospel is always relevant. It is timeless.

The Gospel is timeless because men will always be sinners. Their lives will always show the ravages of sin. They will always need

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mechanism, but we can surely understand the effects.

The Bible tells us to “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan’s tracks are visible. Have you seen them? They are even visible in the church as much as anywhere in the world. And why should that surprise anyone?

The Apostle Paul tells us “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness

of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:10-12).

But it does no good to beat up on your brothers. At worst, they are useful idiots to the devil and they need to be rescued, not burned at the stake. If you don’t recognize your real enemy, he will continue to win out over you.

The first time Satan is mentioned by name in the Bible is this one in 1 Chronicles 21:1 “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.” The operative word is “provoked.” The French have a word for it. He is an “Agent Provocateur.” This is “a secret agent hired to incite suspected persons to some illegal action that will make them liable to punishment.” In the US, we call such operations a “sting.”

What is significant about a sting is, if a person has no proclivity at all to the illegal act, he won’t do it. If he has little proclivity, we call it entrapment. If David had no inclination, the provocation would probably not have worked.

There is little doubt the tracks of the devil are visible everywhere, even in the church.

This has been true down through all history, that Satan has had his agents and his useful idiots at work inside and outside the church.

So what do we do about it? What lessons can you learn from this thought-provoking CD titled *The Devil and Useful Idiots*? Order this most interesting *FREE* sermon and get the answers. It can make you a better person. And it can make you a better Christian. So check the card and return it today.

Do They Know?

By Linda Benton

Do all men know that you are a disciple of Christ? Can they tell through the love you demonstrate to your brethren and your fellow man? John 13:35 states “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (NIV).

I suspect people might know by seeing you feed the hungry, clothe the naked, help the homeless, visit those sick or in prison, and numerous other acts of kindness. Seeing people in action is a good way to know.

If someone heard you speak, would they know? How do you use your tongue? What do you say about fellow church members, other churches, your neighbors, or your

enemies? Do you gossip about the shortcomings and problems of your brethren? Do you share your neighbors’ sins with others? Does it somehow make you feel more powerful and righteous when you speak ill of those whose doctrines differ from yours? Are you a peacemaker? Do your words demonstrate love?

If I referred a friend to your church, would they find thankful brethren lifting each other up, praising God, and sharing their testimony (Colossians 3:15-16)? Would they hear gossip, filthy language, and slander? Paul told the Ephesians, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may

minister grace unto the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29 NIV).

What things do you share at work about your peers, your boss, your fellow brethren, other churches, or your fellow man? Based on your conversation, would the people at your place of business know you are a Christian? Would they want to go to church with you, go to any church, or even believe?

Paul admonishes the church at Colossae: “Use your heads as you live and work among outsiders. Don’t miss a trick. Make the most of every opportunity. Be gracious in your speech. The goal is to bring out the best in others in a conversation, not put them down, not cut them out”

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someone to rescue them, to call them back, to give meaning to their lives. Jesus died for their sins and was resurrected showing that they can be too. He is still coming back to judge the world. His purpose still stands.

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(Colossians 4:5-6, MES).

Are we gracious in our speech within our own families? Do we argue with brothers, sisters, parents, and close friends who don't see everything just the way we do? Do we speak ill of our spouse to our children or friends? Do we bring out the best in our children with our words, or do we cut them down and belittle them? Do we say grace and thank God, but curse our family and friends?

Throughout the Bible we are told of the power of our words—and indeed they are powerful. Words can make war or peace. It is important that we use our tongues to speak in a way that edifies all that we love. Luke 10:27 tells us we should “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (NIV).

Paul reminds us of the power and love that come through the Holy Spirit. “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7 NIV).

Love is powerful. It is the first of the “fruit of the spirit” (Galatians 5:22). It is the greatest of these: faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13:13). It is how we know God: “Whoever does not love does not

know God, because God is love” (John 4:8 NIV).

We should then use our words to speak this power—to express this love to our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ, our neighbors, ourselves, and even our enemies (Luke 6:35). In spite of these admonitions, we seem to forget the power of love as we criticize our friends, gossip about brethren, and speak discouragement and resentment to those around us.

We start speaking in anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy words. In these circumstances we are not reflecting the powerful love of our Savior. Yet we still call ourselves Christians!

James tells us this is a problem: “Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless” (James 1:26 NIV). We must learn to tame our tongues so our religion is not worthless.

Changing our behavior is difficult but doable. Paul says in Philippians 4:13 that through Christ we can do all things. We must stop and think before we speak: Will people know I am Christ's disciple when they hear me speak? Will these words bring peace or strife? Would I say this if Jesus were standing here beside me? Do my words demonstrate my love for my fellow man? If we can't answer yes to these questions, we probably should not say whatever is on the tip of our tongues.

James tells us: “But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these

things ought not to be so . . .” (James 3: 8-10 NIV).

We, of and by ourselves, cannot tame our tongues—but through Jesus Christ we can. Let us show our fellowship and friendship with Christ by reflecting his merciful love, not only through our actions, but also our speech. “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:17 NIV).

Let all men know you are Christ's disciple and friend by speaking with his wisdom and love.

A Correction from the August LTW

What was printed on page one, column two: The legend that Mohammed ascended into heaven from the rock on the Temple Mount served two purposes: 1) it co-opted the Temple Mount from the Jews and made it impossible for the Muslims to go there and build another temple; 2) it established an equivalency with Christianity that had Christ ascending from the Mount of Olives.

1) This should have read “it co-opted the Temple Mount from the Jews and made it impossible for the Jews to go there and build another temple. . .”

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equipped for every good work.*