



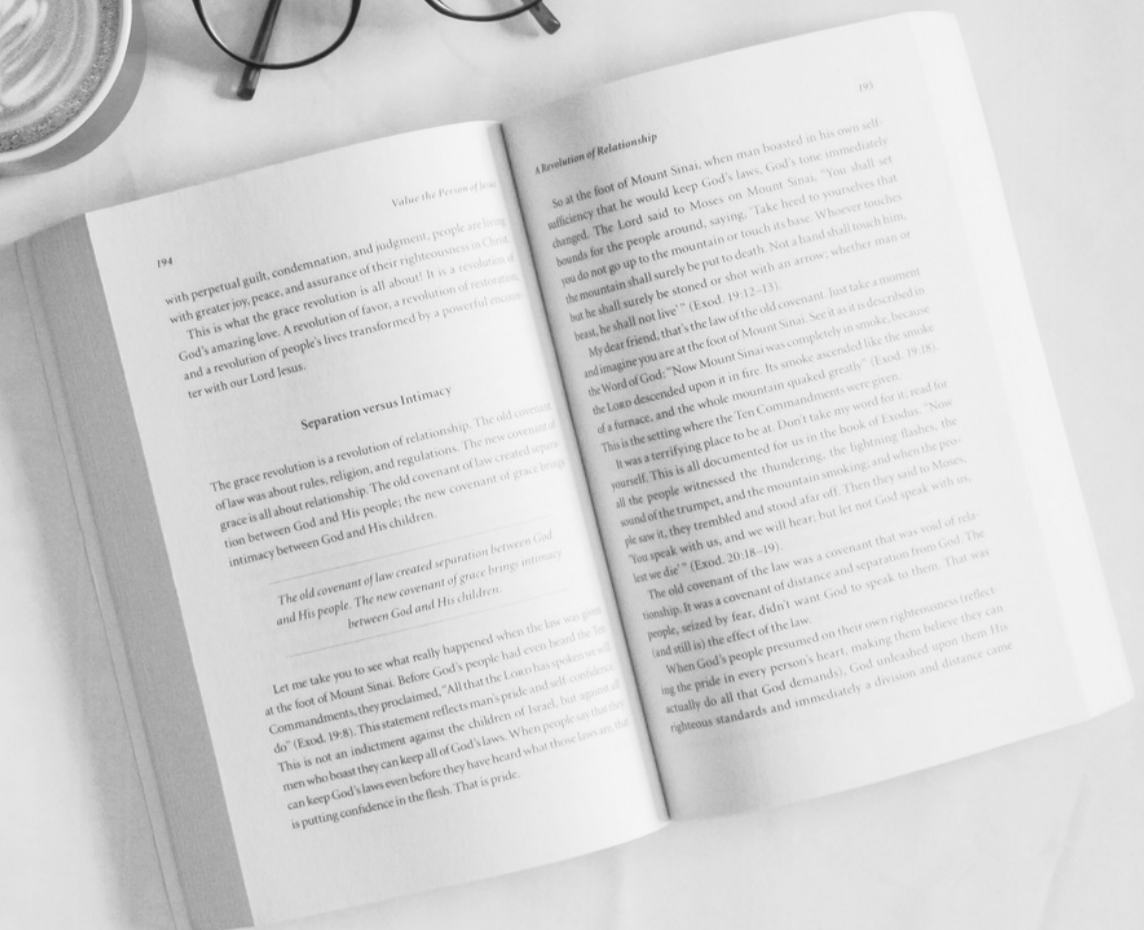
The Paideia Center

FOR WHOLE LIFE DISCIPLESHIP

DISCUSSION LEADER GUIDE



THOMAS BROOKS,
*PRECIOUS REMEDIES AGAINST
SATAN'S DEVICES (1652)*



DISCUSSION LEADER GUIDE

THOMAS BROOKS

Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices



WHO WAS THOMAS BROOKS?

There is little biographical information about Thomas Brooks (1608-1680). The English Puritan preacher and author studied at Emmanuel College. Entering in 1625, among his contemporaries were Thomas Hooker, John Cotton, and Thomas Shepard. Brooks apparently left Cambridge before graduating. He was ordained in 1640 and became a chaplain to the parliament fleet. His service at sea likely explains his absence from the Westminster Assembly. Reflecting later on his experience, he observed: “through grace I can say that I would not exchange my sea experiences for England’s riches.”

Congregationalist in his church polity, Brooks became minister at the church of St. Thomas the Apostle, Queen Street, London (1648-1651), and on occasions was asked to preach before Parliament. In 1652, he became rector of St. Margaret’s, New Fish Street Hill, London. In 1662, he fell victim to the Act of Uniformity and the subsequent “Great Ejection” of non-conformist ministers. He still found opportunities to preach, and he became minister of a congregation near St. Margaret’s where he continued faithfully to pastor through the Great Plague (1665) and the Great Fire of London (1666).

Brooks is often numbered among the most influential of Puritan writers, and *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices* is the most popular of the writings of Brooks. The nineteenth century Scottish pastor, Alexander B. Grosart, expresses the enduring value of this book in this assessment:

Brooks’s slightest “epistle” is “bread of life”; his most fugitive “sermon” a full cup of living water: the very foliage of his exuberant fancies “leaves” of the tree of life: his one dominating aim to make dead hearts warm with the life of the gospel of him who is life; his supreme purpose to “bring near” the very truth of God. Hence his directness, his urgency, his yearning, his fervor, his fulness of Bible citation, his wistfulness, his intensity, his emotion, and that fine passion of enthusiasm sprung of compassion, and his iteration and forgetfulness, and Pauline accident of choice words or melody of sentence. His desire to be useful to souls, to achieve the holy success of serving Christ, to win a sparkling crown to lay at his feet, breathes and burns from first to last. Everything is subordinated to “usefulness,” and while he gathered around him the cultured and the titled ... it was his chief rejoicing that like his Master, “the common people” heard and read him “gladly.”

OTHER BOOKS BY BROOKS

The Works of Thomas Brooks. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980. Six volumes.

Heaven on Earth: A Treatise on Christian Assurance. London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1961.

The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1839.

Smooth Stones from Ancient Brooks: Selections from the Writings of Thomas Brooks. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2011.

This collection of quotes from the writings and sermons of Brooks was compiled by Charles Spurgeon, a great lover of the Puritans. In his preface to the book, Spurgeon wrote: “As a writer, Brooks scatters stars with both his hands. He has dust of gold; in his storehouse are all manner of precious stones. Genius is always marvelous, but when sanctified it is matchless.”

In addition, take note of Ligon Duncan’s reflection on the influence of *Precious Remedies* in his life and ministry in *You Must Read: Books that have Shaped Our Lives* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2015), 209-219.

This Paideia Center discussion leader guide divides the reading and study of *Precious Remedies* into three roughly equal parts:

FIRST MONTH: Pages xxix-102

- Epistle Dedicatory
- Introduction
- The Proof of the Point
- Satan’s Devices to Draw the Soul to Sin (12 devices and their remedies)

SECOND MONTH: Pages 103-209

- Satan’s Devices to Keep Souls from Holy Duties, to Hinder Souls in Holy Services, to Keep Them off From Religious Performances (8 devices and their remedies)
- Satan’s Devices to Keep Saints in a Sad, Doubting, Questioning and Uncomfortable Condition (8 devices and their remedies)

THIRD MONTH: Pages 211-301

- Satan’s Devices to Destroy and Ensnare all Sorts and Ranks of Men in the World (5 devices and their remedies)
- Appendix
 - Touching Five More of Satan’s Devices
 - Seven Characters of False Teachers
 - Six Propositions Concerning Satan and His Devices
 - Conclusion – Chiefly, Ten Special Helps and Rules Against Satan’s Devices

Note on the edition: in 2021 the Banner of Truth reset *Precious Remedies* in an attractive new edition for its *Paperback Puritan Series*. The pagination listed above and throughout this guide will refer to the new edition.



1ST MONTH

Pages 1-102

There is good reason to spend time on the brief preliminary sections that begin the book, as they reveal the pastoral desires that motivated its writing.

EPISTLE DEDICATORY

Here Brooks opens with listing the four “prime things” that Christians must study: “Christ, the Scripture, your own hearts, and Satan's devices.” He underscores the folly of omitting the last, which may escape the attention of most modern Christians. He explains:

Beloved, Satan being fallen from light to darkness, from felicity to misery, from heaven to hell, from an Angel to a devil, is so full of malice and envy that he will leave no means unattempted, whereby he may make all others eternally miserable with himself; He being shut out of heaven, and shut up “under the chains of darkness till the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6), makes use of all his power and skill to bring all the sons of men into the same condition and condemnation with himself.

A WORD TO THE READER

Here Brooks makes a plea for slow, deliberate and meditative reading, rather than a hasty read. In the course of a careful read, note that the marginal notes of the original have been become footnotes in modern editions, a reason not to bypass them quickly.

Brooks goes on to add a warning that few writers use to preface their books:

Reader, If it be not strong upon thy heart to practice what thou readest, to what end dost thou read? To increase thy own condemnation? If thy light and knowledge be not turned into practice, the more knowing man thou art, the more miserable man thou wilt be in the day of recompense; thy light and knowledge will more torment thee than all the devils in hell. Thy knowledge will be that rod that will eternally lash thee, and that scorpion that will for ever bite thee, and that worm that will everlastingly gnaw thee; therefore read, and labour to know, that thou mayest do, or else thou art undone for ever.

PROOF OF THE POINT

Brooks impresses on the reader the scope of the arsenal of Satan:

Satan hath snares for the wise and snares for the simple; snares for hypocrites, and snares for the upright; snares for general souls, and snares for timorous souls; Snares for the rich, and snares for the poor; Snares for the aged, and snares for youth. Happy are those souls that are not taken and held in the snares that he hath laid!

The principal prooftext for Brooks (2 Corinthians 2:11) is supplemented by three others:

- Ephesians 6:11 (the book's title derives from this verse)
- 2 Timothy 2:26
- Revelation 2:24

PART ONE: SATAN'S DEVICES TO DRAW THE SOUL INTO SIN

In this section and those that follow, Brooks gives a list of "Devices" (ploys, strategies, and schemes) of Satan, and following each he proves from three to twelve "Remedies" (biblical cures, truths, promises, and graces with which to fight against sin). This section lists twelve devices and their remedies:

- Presenting the bait and hiding the hook.
- Painting sin with virtue's colors.
- Extenuating and lessening of sin.
- Showing to the soul the best men's sins and hiding their virtues, their sorrows, and their repentance.
- Presenting God to the soul as One made up all of mercy.
- Persuading the soul that the work of repentance is easy and that therefore the soul need not scruple about sinning.
- Making the soul bold to venture upon the occasions of sin.
- Representing to the soul the outward mercies enjoyed by men walking in sin, and their freedom from outward miseries.
- Presenting to the soul the crosses, losses, reproaches, sorrows and sufferings that daily attend those who walk in the ways of holiness.
- Causing saints to compare themselves and their ways with those reputed to be worse than themselves.
- Polluting the souls and judgments of men with dangerous errors that lead to looseness and wickedness.
- Leading men to choose wicked company.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Of the "four prime things that should be first and foremost studied and search[ed]" by believers (xxix), which is least studied in our age? Why do you think that is? What risk do we run by underestimating the importance of any of them?
- What is the point of the "Proof of the Point"?
- What do you make of the warning to the reader on page xxxviii, to the effect one ought not to read the book unless one is prepared to implement its teaching?
- What other prooftexts might speak to the threat of the devices of Satan?
- What do you make of Brooks' description of the "bewitching power of sin?"
- What is the particular danger of little sins? Why is there greatest danger in the smallest sins? (Device 3)
- Is Satan misrepresenting Scripture's testimony of the repentance of these men (David, Hezekiah, Job, Noah, and Peter)? (device 5) This may be worth reflecting on at greater length.

- Is easy repentance a variant of easy believism? Explain what Brooks means when he writes with respect to the difficulty of repentance that “to repent of sin is as great a work of grace as not to sin.” (device 6)

GENERAL QUESTIONS

(As your reading group works through the several kinds of devices, these are some recurring questions that may be worth pursuing through the entire book)

- What schemes of Satan have changed over nearly four centuries and which remain the same? What are some modern variants of these ancient wiles of Satan?
- How might a modern reader misunderstand what Brooks intends when he lists “remedies?” How can the church resist the temptation to regard remedies as mechanical formulas?
- How might Brooks’s approach in this book address the antinomianism in our age that claims that when the law says “do,” the gospel says “done” and our obligation is simply to trust God for his grace?
- It is often observed that Puritan preaching accounted for the variety among its hearers, addressing the unconverted, the weak, those struggling with assurance, those under trial, those beset with pride, etc. Do you see this book as a resource to speaking God’s words to different hearers?
- Ligon Duncan commends this book especially because it helped him in sermon application, because Brooks does not content himself with general and superficial application. What strikes you about his *specificity* regarding the character of Satan’s temptation? Is this a feature of preaching today? What value does it add to sermons?
- Does the vividness of Brooks’s illustrations (from Scripture and beyond Scripture) assist us in identifying the strategy by which Satan is tempting us?
- Do you pick up on both his knowledge of Scripture and his pastoral wisdom? Throughout the study, encourage the readers to be attentive to the theological and practical character of his remedies.

2ND MONTH

Pages 103-209



PART TWO: SATAN'S DEVICES TO KEEP SOULS FROM HOLY DUTIES, TO HINDER SOULS IN HOLY SERVICES, AND TO KEEP THEM OFF FROM RELIGIOUS PERFORMANCES

If Satan cannot tempt us to sin, he can prompt our sluggishness in pursuing the Christian life. Here Brooks shows how the evil one attempts to keep us from taking full advantage of the means of grace. He works to hinder our use and even our motivation to use them. He aims to keep us away from them, so that we are more vulnerable to his assaults. These are his eight devices:

- Presenting the world in such a garb as to ensnare the soul.
- Presenting to the soul the dangers, losses and sufferings that accompany the performance of certain religious duties.
- Presenting to the soul the difficulty of performing religious duties.
- Causing saints to draw false inferences from the blessed and glorious things that Christ has done.
- Presenting to view the fewness and poverty of those who hold to religious practices.
- Showing saints that the majority of men make light of God's ways and walk in the ways of their own hearts.
- Casting in vain thoughts while the soul is seeking God or waiting on God.
- Tempting Christians to rest in their performance.

PART THREE: SATAN'S DEVICES TO KEEP SAINTS IN A SAD, DOUBTING, QUESTIONING AND UNCOMFORTABLE CONDITION

In this chapter Brooks shows Satan's work of undermining the assurance of believers, robbing Christians "of their comfort and peace, to make their life a burden and hell unto them, to cause them to spend their days in sorrow and mourning, in doubting and questioning." There are eight devices here:

- Causing saints to remember their sins more than their Savior, yes, even to forget and neglect their Savior.
- Causing saints to make false definitions of their graces.
- Causing saints to make false inferences from the cross actings of Providence.
- Suggesting to saints that their graces are not true, but counterfeit.
- Suggesting to saints that the conflict that is in them is found also in hypocrites and profane souls.
- Suggesting to the saint who has lost joy and comfort that his state is not good.
- Reminding the saint of his frequent relapses into sin formerly repented of and prayed against.
- Persuading saints that their state is not good nor their graces sound.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you make of the throne-footstool illustration that Brooks employs on pages 113-14?
- What does Brooks intend by being “preemptive in religious services” (148)? What would be the opposite of it being preemptive?
- There are several references to the “evidence of the truth and power of grace”. Why is evidence so important a remedy? To whom is the evidence useful? (149)
- What does Brooks mean by the counterfeit rest that Satan tempts believers with (153)?
- Compare the similarities between part 1, device 9, with part 2, device 2. Do you find repetition elsewhere in the book? Does Brooks lapse into redundancy in his catalog of devices? Or is this displaying the subtlety and nuance in the wiles of Satan?
- What are the duties and services do you think of when you read of these schemes?
- How does doctrine bolster the confidence that one possesses “true grace”? What does it contribute? What does it not contribute?



3RD MONTH

Pages 211-301

PART FOUR: SATAN'S DEVICES TO DESTROY AND ENSNARE ALL SORTS AND RANKS OF MEN IN THE WORLD.

Here Brooks alters his approach by listing devices by four categories of Satan's targets:

- Against the Great and Honorable of the Earth
 - Causing them to seek greatness, position, riches and security.
 - Causing them to act against the people of the Most High.
- Against the Learned and the Wise: moving them to pride themselves on their parts and abilities, and to despise men of greater grace but inferior abilities.
- Against the Saints: Dividing them and causing them to "bite and devour one another."
- Against Poor and Ignorant Soul: Dividing them and causing them to "bite one another."

APPENDIX

- Touching Five More of Satan's Devices
- Seven Characters of False Teachers
- Six Propositions Concerning Satan and His Devices
- Conclusion – Chiefly, Ten Special Helps and Rules Against Satan's Devices

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How would you summarize and assess Brooks's approach to achieving peace in the church (231-47)?
- When Brooks writes, "Ignorance is a sin that leads to all other sins," is he being too hard on the ignorant?
- What are the marks of a false teacher? Does he describe the false teachers of our age?
- Which of the six propositions about Satan and his devices did you find most helpful?
- What do you make of the "double leave" (permission) that Satan must secure (278ff)?
- Reflect on the redemptive-historical point that Brooks makes on 283-84: how is Satan a "foiled adversary" now?
- Brooks waits until the end of the book to mention communion with God (293-95). Do you think he has "buried the lead"?

Continue to next page.

- One reason for this book's enduring importance, according to George Smeaton (writing in the nineteenth century), was that Christian authors of the past treated the wiles of Satan "greatly more full and suggestive than in the literature of the present day." Having finished the book, would you agree? What has changed in your thinking about the power of Satan? About the efficacy of the remedies offered? How has the book challenged your thinking about the nature of spiritual warfare in the Christian life?
- How does Brooks's conclusion move you to gratitude? It reads:

Remember this, that deliverance from Satan's snares does carry with it the clearest and the greatest evidence, that the soul and heart of God are towards us. Many a man by a common hand of providence escapes many a snare that another has laid for him—but yet escapes not the snares that Satan has laid for him. Saul, and Judas, and Demas, doubtless escaped many snares that men had laid for them— but none of them escaped the snares that the devil had laid for them. Many men are lifted up above the snares of men by a common hand of providence, that are left to fall into the snares of the devil by a hand of justice. Your deliverance from Satan's snares is a fruit of special love. Can you thus look upon it and not be thankful, O precious soul? I judge not.