



Understanding How Satan Works Against Christians

By Warren Mainard

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:10-11

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have an Enemy who is seeking to steal, kill and destroy every aspect of your life that matters. While our worship and our focus must be on Christ, who reigns and rules victoriously, it is wise to understand how Satan works against Christians and the Church. Following are Satan's top 5 strategies for attacking God's people.

Satan's Top 5 Strategies:

1. Deny/Distort Himself: Satan thrives when people ignore or deny his existence. When we fail to recognize the spiritual nature of our battle, we end up hurting ourselves and one another.

"For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens." Ephesians 6:12. It is not to our benefit to behave as if Satan does not exist. We are instructed by the Apostle Peter to ***"Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour."*** 1 Peter 5:8. Peter, would understand this well, as it was Jesus who once said to Peter, ***"Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's."*** Matthew 16:23. Why did Jesus say this to Peter? Because Peter was trying to convince Jesus He should not go to the cross. Jesus also told Peter, however, ***"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."*** Matthew 16:18. Both Peter and Jesus recognized the threat that Satan presents against Christians and the Church, and we should too.

The classic imagery of Satan as a red villainous being with horns and a tail is not helpful. Most often, as Paul teaches, ***"Satan disguises himself as an angel of light"*** (2 Corinthians 11:14) to look like something good and desirable, even like God. Thinking of Satan as the cartoonish character with a pitchfork only makes us more susceptible to his schemes and attacks in real life.

2. Deny/Distort Jesus Christ: This is at the very heart of Satan's agenda, to deny and distort the person and work of Jesus Christ. Satan does not need you to worship him, he just wants to prevent you from worshipping Christ. Every false religion & cult can be exposed by these questions:

1. Is Jesus the only Son of God? *Yes, Jesus is God's only Son.* (John 3:16, Colossians 1:15)

2. Is Jesus fully God? *Yes, Jesus is fully God.* (John 1:1, Romans 9:5, Titus 2:13)

3. Is Jesus fully man? *Yes, Jesus is fully man.* (Galatians 4:4, Hebrews 2:14)

4. Is salvation through faith alone, by grace alone in Christ alone? *Yes, salvation is available only through faith alone, by grace alone in Christ alone.* (Ephesians 2:8-9, Acts 4:12, Romans 10:9)

Every cult or false religion will answer "no" to at least 1 of those 4 questions. This is the work of Satan. They often come, looking like fellow believers, but their intent is to pull the vulnerable away from the flock and devour them (see Matthew 7:15). Using these questions, we can distinguish between the truth and a lie. John instructs believers to be discerning to recognize that, ***"every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God."*** 1 John 4:2-3. It is not enough for someone to simply say that they "believe in Jesus." We must clarify and affirm the true Gospel of Jesus, because even the demons believe (James 2:10, Mark 1:24 and Mark 5:7)

3. Destroy Marriage and the Family: Satan's first attack on mankind began by bringing lust, blame and shame into the marriage of Adam and Eve (see Genesis 3). The first murder was between Adam and Eve's two sons Cain and Abel (see Genesis 4). Satan has always hated marriage and family because it reflects God's relationship with us through Christ (see Ephesians 5). If you want to see where Satan is at work in the world,



look at the current state of marriage and family. As believers, we must be vigilant to ***“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”*** Ephesians 6:11 on behalf of our marriages and families.

4. Destroy the Church: When Peter declared that Jesus was the Christ and the Son of God, Jesus responded by telling Peter that this truth he had spoken did not come from man, but from God. He continued by saying, ***“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*** Matthew 16:18 The truth of the Gospel, spoken first by Peter, is the rock on which Jesus has built His Church. A Church that has sustained over 2,000 years of hell’s fiercest attacks. Satan will not relent from attacking the church until his days on earth are done. Satan loves to see churches divided, Christians become apathetic, Pastors discouraged or disqualified, and congregations disbanded. While Satan has certainly inflicted great suffering and hardships upon the Church, we can take courage in the promise that the true Church, built on the solid rock of the Gospel, is invincible.

5. Oppose Salvation: ***“But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”*** Matthew 16:23
“The sower sows the word. And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.” Mark 4:14-15

Satan does not want to see the good news message of salvation reach the hearts of unbelievers. He will do everything he can to discourage believers from sharing the Gospel and distract unbelievers from receiving the Gospel. Jesus gave us a Great Commission to ***“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”*** Matthew 28:19-20. Satan will use any tactic he can to prevent believers from fulfilling this mission for their lives.

Satan’s Power over Christians: Matthew 17:14-18; Luke 4:33-35; 8:27-33, James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9, Romans 8:9-11; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19-2, Matthew 6:33

What power does Satan have in the lives of believers? While there is certainly a spectrum on this debate, the Bible teaches that Satan (or by extension, the ***“spiritual forces of evil”***) can impact believers in the following ways.

*** Satan can deceive and manipulate Christians-** When Satan first tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 3:6), we saw a template for how he would work against all humanity. Satan is the architect of this world’s system- ***“For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.”*** 1 John 2:16. Satan can tempt, confuse and manipulate Christians, but a Christian can never say, “the devil made me do it.”

How do we discern between God’s perfect and pleasing will and our own sinful nature and the will of Satan? Paul instructs us that we must learn to ***“take every thought captive”*** (2 Corinthians 10:5) and examine them against God’s Word. Further, Paul tells us, ***“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*** Romans 12:2. Believers should take strong confidence in this; the Spirit of God will never contradict the Word of God. Study the Scriptures, pray and seek Godly counsel from others if we are unsure of what is truth.

*** Satan can oppress, but not possess Christians-** As Christians, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit, we are not our own, we have been bought with a price, the blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Demon possession involves a demon having direct and complete control over the thoughts and/or actions of a person. Demon oppression involves a demon or demons attacking a person spiritually and manipulating sinful behavior (Mark 17:14-18). The Holy Spirit is far more powerful than any demon. A Christian can be influenced by a demon, but a demon cannot possess a Christian.



Believers are told to **“resist the devil”** (James 4:7) not to cast him out. Do not over-emphasize the work of Satan and give him more attention than he deserves. Don’t pray or speak to Satan when facing temptation but rather turn your eyes upon Jesus, praying to God the Father, through the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ name. Christians are in a spiritual battle, but our focus should be on Jesus, not demons.

A Christian’s Power over Satan: 1 John 4:4, 1 John 4:18-19, Luke 4:1-12, Ephesians 6:10-20, Matthew 4:10

* The power is God in us- **“for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”** 1 John 4:4. Our source of power and strength comes fully from God, which is why we must rely fully upon God in times of spiritual attack and warfare.

* God protects and equips us for spiritual warfare- **“Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”** Ephesians 6:11. We are not left helpless and alone. God has given us all we need through Christ, the Church and His Word to overcome our Enemy.

* God’s Word is our best defense- **“Be gone, Satan! For it is written...”** Matthew 4:10. When Jesus battled Satan in the desert, Satan tried to tempt and test Jesus. Every time Jesus was tempted by Satan, He rebuked Satan with the Word of God. We should strive to know and utilize God’s Word to counteract the lies and schemes of the Enemy.

* Resisting sin and Satan begins with submitting to God- **“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”** James 4:7. Satan’s initial sin was an act of rebellion, a refusal to submit to the loving authority of God. If we resist the authority of God and Scripture, we are unwittingly submitting ourselves to Satan. By submitting ourselves to God and His Word, we will therefore resist the devil. When this happens, Satan has no choice but to flee from us, because he cannot defeat a believer who is living a life in submission to God.

Be encouraged, while we live in this present darkness, we will overcome by the light of Christ (1 John 1:5).

“We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” Romans 8:37.