



## 05 How the Devil Makes War on Us – The Rules of Engagement with the Evil Realm

### Different Points of View Concerning this Topic

This is probably the most difficult topic concerning spiritual warfare that we've covered to date. This is because it is an area in which people have all sorts of preconceived notions. There are some that see every hardship or personal weakness as being caused by Satan. We came to the realization last week that our own flesh is our greatest enemy. We read the book of James that told us that the messes we get into arise up out of our own fleshly desires, which, when given into draw us into sin. Today we will look at what the devil can or cannot do to us, and what we can do about it.

Many years ago, I lived in Chile, and I remember having a conversation with a friend of mine named Don Cartledge. Don had lived in Chile with his wife Jacquie for many years before we ever got there. I had prayed for God to send me an accountability and prayer partner, and the very next day I saw Don in a local bookstore. I asked him, "What mine are you working in?" He answered, "I'm an Assembly of God missionary." I immediately thought, "Well Lord, I prayed for a spiritual friend and perhaps this is him." As our friendship flourished, I was aware of doctrinal differences that Don and I might have. Some of the differences among AG churches and how I had been brought up had to do with the operation of what are sometimes called the charismatic gifts. I sort of braced myself waiting for Don to persuade me concerning his ideas on key scriptural passages concerning these doctrines.

We greatly enjoyed our friendship which sort of centered not only on our love for the Lord, but also on our intense interest in history of all kinds. One day I asked him, "Don, I've now known you for like six months. Why haven't you tried to convince me of your position on AG doctrines?" I will NEVER forget his answer. He looked straight into my eyes, and said, "This is what I'll die for." He then proceeded to recite the Apostles' Creed which dates back to the earliest days of Christianity.

**The Apostles' Creed** - From the Book of Common Prayer (1928) The Creed commonly called the Apostles' Creed

**I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary: Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried: He descended into hell [not sure if Don included this, but I don't think either he or I would die for this]; The third day he rose again from the dead: He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty: From thence he shall come to Judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost: The holy Catholic Church [this is not to be confused with the Roman Catholic church.**

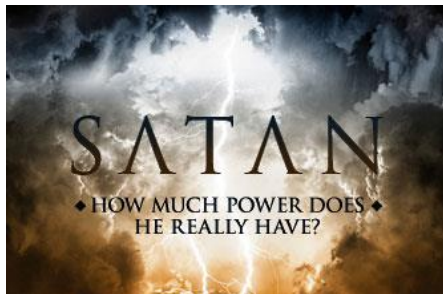
**The ancient Greek meaning of Catholic means “universal” meaning all believers everywhere] ; The Communion of Saints: The Forgiveness of sins: The Resurrection of the body: And the Life everlasting. Amen.<sup>1</sup>**

I bring all of this up because I want you to remember what is fundamental to the Christian faith. What the Apostles’ Creed recites is fundamental. Christians are all over the spectrum on what they believe about the devil and demons. What exactly we believe about the evil realm is not fundamental in the sense of being key to our salvation.

Christians are on a long continuum concerning God’s use of supernatural events in our lives. On one end of the spectrum are those who basically think that God is all-powerful, but He does very little in our lives today that might be called supernatural. These are by and large called cessationists. They believe that certain gifts and certain acts we see in the New Testament church (in the Book of Acts) have now completely ceased, and no longer have a part in the applicable doctrines in this era and age of the church. This would include gifts of healing (healers), the gift of speaking in unknown tongues, and some even include the idea of casting out demons, etc. Various groups may think one or more of these functions have ceased.

On the other end of the spectrum are those Christians who are driven by the desire to see and experience signs and wonders such as the early church experienced in the Book of Acts. The wildest end of this might be those who handle snakes and drink poison. Their faith centers around an almost mystical supernaturalism that perhaps focuses so much on the spiritual realm that they leave the realm of common sense, practical living, and just plain hard spiritual work. (Study of the Bible and applying it to one’s life). Their belief is centered on the following passage in the Book of Mark which is disputed by scholars as to its inclusion in the original manuscripts that were inspired by the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

*<sup>17</sup> These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; <sup>18</sup> they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” (Mark 16:17-18, NASB).*



### **What power, if any, does Satan have over the believer?**

Many scholars believe that the Book of Job is the oldest book of the Bible. It is an attempt to answer what we have all asked: Why do bad things happen to good people? It is interesting because it is the first text that overtly shows Satan at work. We can learn much from this book. Let’s read from chapter one.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.christchurchatl.org/docs/apostles\\_and\\_nicene\\_creeds.pdf](https://www.christchurchatl.org/docs/apostles_and_nicene_creeds.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Mark-16-9-20.html>

<sup>6</sup> Now there was a day when the sons of Gods (means angels) came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. <sup>7</sup> The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." <sup>8</sup> The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." <sup>9</sup> Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" <sup>10</sup> Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. <sup>11</sup> But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face." <sup>12</sup> Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So, Satan departed from the presence of the LORD. (Job 1:6-12, NASB).

First, from the text we can learn that Satan is not all powerful. He is a created being and his power does not match God's power. The text also tells us that Satan is roaming around on the earth. God asks, "From where do you come?" Peter gives us more detail of Satan's roaming in the following passage.

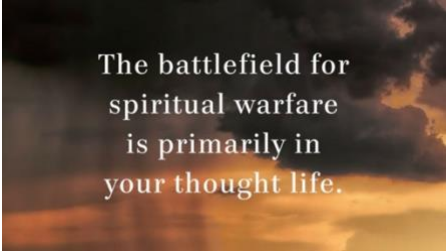
*"<sup>8</sup> Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8, NASB).*

Firstly, note that he doesn't prowl around AS a lion, but LIKE a lion. That's an indication of his limited power. The text makes it clear that although Satan is capable of attacking human beings, it appears that he may not be permitted to do so without permission. God is still sovereign over the lives of every believer.

Secondly, God initiated the conversation concerning Job. Satan didn't hunt down Job and persecute him. God asks, "Have you considered my servant Job?" Thirdly, Satan had to ask permission of God to afflict Job. Satan would not have asked permission if it were not necessary. Fourthly, Satan realized that God had put a hedge around Job and his house. I believe that God puts a hedge around all believers without our having to ask for it. (We *can* cause breaches in that hedge, but we'll address that in a moment). At least in the case of Job, Satan could not pass through that hedge of protection without divine permission. Fifthly, after granting Satan permission to harass Job, God put limits on the amount of harassment that Job would have to endure.

Satan does not have unlimited power over us. Unlike God, Satan is not omniscient, omnipresent, or omnipotent. He can only be in one place at a time and he isn't all-knowing. He is not all-powerful. He uses his demons to cover the earth so to speak to do his will.

**What sort of attacks do Satan and his demons direct at us?**



The battlefield for  
spiritual warfare  
is primarily in  
your thought life.

Satan and his demons can surely blind people to the good news of the gospel, and he can side-track our thoughts with great ease. I think his primary work is on our minds. I am not sure how this exactly happens, but it does. This can be done by creating attractions to things that are not of God, and creating distractions from the things that are of God. In a small way, we've all experienced some of this. It seems like when we sit down to read our bibles and pray, a thousand "to do's" flood into our minds. It is mind-boggling how distracted we can become. Does it all come from Satan and his demons? Probably not. But there is no doubt that some of this comes from the evil realm. I will sometimes pray that my mind will stay focused before I ever delve into Bible study or commit a certain amount of time in prayer. I also frequently use a prayer shawl to physically remind myself that I am in God's presence and for a time period all else must stay out of my mind.

I think it is important to remind ourselves that Satan's primary work is on our minds, but he gets to us through our flesh. Our flesh desires certain things, and he whispers falsehoods to entice us to fulfill those desires with his counterfeits. As such, we should avoid certain activities and conduct that give entrance, opportunity, or a portal into our minds. Drunkenness and drugs lower our guard and can invite demonic activity. Sexual sin and sensuality can do the same thing. Giving in to fleshly lust and desire gives great opportunity for attack on our minds and our souls. It is a foothold for Satan and his army. Scripture tells us to be careful of our actions, "*and do not give the devil a foothold*" (*Ephesians 4:26-29*). We will talk about "territorial spirits" next week, but I believe if they congregate anywhere, it is where such sinful conduct is in abundance.

Satan's attacks against us come in many ways. First, He uses the ungodly world, which he controls and influences (1 John 5:19), to stir up desires (our fleshly lust) within us that tempt us to sin. Think about advertising and all that it drives us to want. Second, as we studied several weeks ago, he uses the unbelieving world and its values and systems to attempt to deceive us with worldly "wisdom" opposed to God's truth. Remember when Eve was tempted, the fruit looked "*pleasing and desirable for gaining wisdom*" (*Genesis, 3:6*). Third, he uses false religions to try to mislead us into a false gospel centered on something other than Jesus. Fourth, he sometimes physically afflicts us or our loved ones with sickness, crime, tragedy, or persecution. Knowing that God is the sovereign Ruler of the universe, it is natural to wonder why God allows Satan to launch these attacks on us.

Hence, we see that the Bible teaches that God allows Satan a certain amount of freedom, but that freedom is always limited. The hardships the evil realm might cause will always work for the good of the believer no matter how bad it seems in the moment (Romans 8:28). Satan cannot do all that he wishes. Satan chooses to attack God's children as we saw in the passage from 1 Peter. Satan's intent is always evil. Satan is a murderer and a thief. God's design in allowing certain satanic attacks must be to work them for good in our lives. God is always good. God loves His children. Whatever we go through, will work together for our good in the end if we love Him (Romans 8:28). We cannot blame God for what Satan does. Our

vulnerability to satanic attack started with Adam's choice to follow Satan's lying suggestions in the garden of Eden. He was a liar and a thief then, and he is a liar and a thief still. So, how can we fight this enemy?

### **Fleeing the Devil and the Armor of God**

We've talked about all the bad stuff the devil can do to us, so now let's talk about the good news. In his epistle, Peter tells us:

*<sup>6</sup> Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, <sup>7</sup> casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. <sup>8</sup> Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. <sup>10</sup> After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. (1 Peter 5:6-10. NASB).*

Peter was writing a church under severe persecution. They were under attack. He tells them to put their anxieties on God because He cares for each of us. Be sober (be serious about it). Be on the alert. This means be aware that you are in a spiritual war and you are being attacked. Peter also tells us to resist the devil, staying firm in our faith. James, the brother of Jesus, gives even more instruction when he says, "*Submit yourselves then to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*" (James 4:7, NASB). These are promises.

Then, in Ephesians 6 we are given an entire arsenal of weaponry to survive these attacks. We are going to spend an entire Sunday a few weeks from now analyzing each and every piece of armor that we are to put on. Paul will outline for us key elements of Christian character and discipline that are available to us (see Ephesians 6:10-20) Remember, dear friends, "*<sup>37</sup> Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*" (Romans 8:37, NKJV). We must never give up. We must never surrender. We are on the winning side.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.