

Resisting the Influence of Satan our Enemy

There is one thing we can be sure of, once we decide to follow Jesus Christ we will face opposition.

2 Corinthians 4:4 [NIV] *“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*

Satan is the one who is ruling the world at this time.

Revelation 12:9 [NIV] *“The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”*

Satan is the one who has led the whole of society astray.

Satan was our old master and he does **not** like to lose any humans he has been ruling over.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 [NIV] *“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”*

Satan has his own ministers who present themselves as righteous servants of God, but in truth they are servants of Satan.

Why?

2 Corinthians 3:16-18 [NIV] *“But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”*

It is only those who, by the Holy Spirit, have this veil of deception taken away, recognise who are the servants of God and who are the servants of Satan?

1 John 4:1-6 [NIV] *“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognise the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognise the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.”*

Only those who acknowledge Jesus to be the Son of God who came to earth and lived in human form.

Only those who acknowledged that Jesus died and shed His blood as a substitute for our own deserved death are preaching the truth.

Every other preacher is a false minister influenced by the spirit of antichrist, Satan.

We can now see why Satan will try everything he can to hinder, oppose or discourage us from continuing to follow Jesus as His disciple.

Satan hates that his lies and deception have been exposed for what they really are.

Satan will challenge every step we take towards maturity, being recreated now in the “likeness” [character] of the true God.

The same opposition by Satan was faced by Jesus before He started His ministry and the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 4:1 [NIV] *“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.”*

Jesus the Son of Man, with all the limitations of a human being was led by the Holy Spirit into a confrontation with humanity’s enemy Satan.

Why?

Hebrews 4:14-16 [NIV] *“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

To become our perfect High Priest Jesus had to be tempted in His weak state of a human being.

Matthew 4:2 [NIV] *“After fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.”*

This fasting left Jesus in a totally weak physical state, but at His strongest spiritually.

1 Peter 5:6-7 [NIV] *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”*

Jesus believed that humbling Himself before God He would be “lifted up”, strengthened by God through the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 5:8-9 [NIV] *“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”*

This is how we resist Satan.

Realising and accepting our total dependency on the Holy Spirit.

1 John 4:4 [NIV] *“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”*

The Holy Spirit in us is far greater than the spirit that is in the world, Satan.

Matthew 4:3-4 [NIV] *“The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”*

Notice Satan tried to put doubt into the mind of Jesus as to who He was, the Son of God.

Satan in the same way will try to cause us to doubt that we are born-again children of God.

How did Jesus resist this temptation?

By believing what the scriptures promised in the Word of God, the Christian Bible, our Handbook For Life.

Matthew 4:5-7 [NIV] *“Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:*

“He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Again Satan used the weapon of doubt.

Satan even misquoted scripture to Jesus to try to deceive Him.

Psalms 91:11-12 [NIV] *“For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”*

Satan used this psalm out of context.

What is referred to is Satan’s own attacks on those who are doing the work of God, **not** our deliberately putting ourselves at risk then expecting God to save us.

Such actions would be tempting God as Jesus told Satan.

Matthew 4:8-11 [NIV] *“Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.”*

Notice Jesus did **not** tell Satan that the world was **not** his to give, Jesus acknowledged that as yet God was allowing Satan to rule the world.

Jesus’ response was to use the authority that the Holy Spirit in Him gave to Him to tell Satan to “*get lost*” as we would say in modern terminology.

For Satan is the one who is truly lost.

He is so bitter that he cannot repent and again become subject to the creator God.

Only Christians in the light of the gospel message are not lost but saved from eternal death.

Luke 4:13 [NIV] *“When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.”*

Notice this was **not** the end of Satan’s temptations, he was just waiting for another opportunity to tempt Jesus.

We also need to be on our guard against Satan’s temptations at all times.

Satan most often attacks us before or after times of spiritual blessings, or at a time when important decisions have to be made.

Satan attacked Jesus, as we have just seen, after His baptism and the encouraging confirmation from His Father in Heaven.

Matthew 16:21-23 [NIV] *“From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!” Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”*

Satan attacked Jesus just before His suffering on the cross.

This time Satan used a close friend to attack Jesus.

Great temptations can come from Satan through those who love us and seek to protect us from harm, even as Peter was Jesus, out of ignorance.

Satan's prime targets are those who are "on fire" for God and His work on earth.

Satan knows the danger a spirit-filled Christian will be to his kingdom and the influence he still has over all humanity.

Revelation 12:9, 11 [NIV] *"The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. **They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.**"*

These spirit-filled, on fire Christians overcame Satan's influence by preaching salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and their own dedicated-to-Jesus life.

A living sacrifice of their own lives for others to benefit.

Christians who are still self-centred, only concerned with their own personal salvation, will be of little concern to Satan as they are still controlled by his own selfish nature and **not** filled and controlled by the spirit of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:3-8 [NIV] *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of **Christ Jesus**: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he **humbled himself** and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!"*

The spirit of Jesus Christ is a humble serving spirit.

Satan will appeal to our self-life and pride.

"Be somebody, and make sure you are noticed" Satan will whisper in our ear.

"Get what you want, put yourself first."

But remember that when self takes control in our life we step out of God's Will and control.

Matthew 16:24-26 [NIV] *"Then Jesus said to his disciples, **"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"***

We cannot take control of our lives and expect God to use us and bless us.

Matthew 6:24 [NIV] *"**No-one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.**"*

Satan will tempt us to get the best of both ways of living.

Serve God and at the same time follow the world's way of seeking power, money, physical goods and short-lived pleasure.

Satan will use family, friends, workmates and even less committed Christians to put pressure on us to *"keep one foot in the world."*

Matthew 12:30 [NIV] *“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.”*

Following Jesus there is **no** place for half-hearted commitment, Jesus demands 100% loyalty.

Revelation 3:14-16 [NIV] *“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, **because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.**”*

Jesus rejected these lukewarm Christians.

Luke 10:17-20 [Living Bible] *“When the seventy disciples returned, they joyfully reported to Him [Jesus]. “Even the demons obey us when we use your name.” “Yes,” he told them, **“I saw Satan falling from heaven as a flash of lightning!** And I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, and to **walk among serpents and scorpions and to crush them.** Nothing shall injure you! However the important thing is not that demons obey you, but that your names are registered as citizens of heaven.”*

As a child of God we have received this power from Jesus when we seek to be His disciple and fulfil our part in the work He is doing on earth during our physical life.

[“*Serpents and scorpions*” are symbolical of spiritual wickedness, this is **not** to be taken literally.]

The reference to Satan falling from heaven is a reminder that it was Satan’s pride that caused him to lose his high position at the throne of God.

So if God chooses to use us, don’t allow pride to be our downfall.

James 4:4-10 [NIV] *“You adulterous people, **don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.** Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: **“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”** Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **Come near to God and he will come near to you.** Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. **Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.**”*

The extensive guidelines to resisting Satan and pleasing God.

Memory verse:

1 John 4:4 [Living Bible] *“Dear young friends, you belong to God and have already won your fight with those who are against Christ, because there is someone in your hearts who is stronger than any evil teacher in this wicked world.”*

Next time we will consider how the changes in our lives can help others benefit by making the same changes in their lives.