

Satan's Tactics

Satan is your adversary, and he is tirelessly seeking to destroy you through calamity, deception, and temptation. His goal is to see as many people in hell as possible. Unlike Hollywood depictions, Satan will not be ruling in hell. Satan himself will be condemned to an eternity of suffering and torment in hell (Revelation 20:10). In the meantime, Satan is actively roaming the earth seeking whom he can destroy (1 Peter 5:8). He is extremely knowledgeable in the Scriptures (Matthew 4:1-11), and brilliant at making himself appear good and believable (2 Corinthians 11:14). In other words, Satan's tactics are very crafty and usually subtle, so as to best lure a Christian into sin. The Bible gives us a lot of information about his tactics and this essay will focus on two stories that reveal Satan's schemes, and give insight on how to guard ourselves against them.

Satan vs. Adam & Eve

Thousands of years after Satan had deceived Eve in the garden of Eden, the Apostle Paul warned his church that Satan, ***"the serpent of old"*** (Revelation 12:9), is still up to his old and evil ways. Paul cautions believers in 2 Corinthians 11:3, ***"But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."*** We've been warned, and we can have victory.

In Genesis 2, we see that after God made Adam, He placed Adam in the garden of Eden and gave him specific instructions. Genesis 2:16-17, ***"The LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.'"*** Now, this command to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was given to Adam before the creation of Eve. Adam, as the man, was given a position of responsibility, called headship, over the family unit; responsible to account for Eve and their eventual children. Headship is a consistent responsibility for man throughout all of Scripture. 1 Corinthians 11:3, ***"But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ."*** Ephesians 5:23, ***"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body."*** We're about to see how Adam failed miserably in his role of headship, and how Satan cunningly undermined Adam's headship.

Genesis 3:1-6, ***"Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?' The woman said to the serpent, 'From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.''" The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."***

Let's unpack this.

Verse 1, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

"The serpent was more crafty" - The serpent here is Satan, meaning, that Satan uses a serpent as an agent to employ in a crafty manner; causing a simple creature to have speech and reason (similar to how the Lord used Balaam's donkey in Numbers 22:21-35). This serpent is, ***"more crafty"*** not in its natural state, but as Satan operates in it. Why didn't Satan manifest in a human form, as we know angels are capable of doing? No other humans existed yet, so, Satan operated through an animal. At this point in the garden, humans and animals weren't afraid of each other, and perhaps Satan noticed Adam and Eve sitting in the shade and enjoying the uniqueness of a snake winding between their fingers. We know the Lord appeared to Adam and Eve in human form, so as to be relatable to them. Perhaps the Lord didn't allow Satan to appear as a human, so that Satan couldn't pass himself off as the Lord.

Tactic #1 – Satan takes what is natural, innocent, and approachable, and subtly uses it for evil.

“And he said to the woman” - Satan speaks to Eve, not Adam, though Adam was with her (verse 6). Satan knows God’s design of headship, and Satan immediately dismisses Adam’s role as head and protector, and immediately appropriates that role to Eve by going straight to the woman.

Tactic #2 – Satan undermines and usurps God’s proper design for men, women, and marriage, and tempts us to do the same.

“Indeed has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” - Satan tries to take Eve’s focus off God’s command by misrepresenting God’s Word. By framing the upcoming question with this leading statement, ***“Indeed has God said,”*** Satan tries to create certainty of doubt; offering God’s command as something that is not obvious, but rather up to personal interpretation. Then Satan goes on to intentionally misquote the Lord, ***“You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?”*** Saying, ***“You shall not eat from any tree,”*** is unreasonable and quite different from what God really said, ***“From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.”***

Tactic #3 – Satan tempts us to question God’s Word.

Tactic #4 – Satan tempts us to view God as unreasonable.

Verses 2-5, “The woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” The serpent said to the woman, ***“You surely will not die! ‘For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”***

“The woman said” – Eve began by correcting Satan and defending God’s Word. She adds, ***“or touch it,”*** which may have been a portion of the command given by God that was not recorded in Genesis 2, or perhaps she adds this condition herself, as a way of keeping her proper distance from something she knew she couldn’t have.

“You surely will not die!” – Satan strikes back, but not with a question this time. Now, he speaks decisively, claiming a statement of fact. Of course, he’s lying, as death would certainly be the result of their eating the forbidden fruit. It’s important to note, that when the Lord said, “for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die,” this didn’t mean that they’d cease to live and breathe within the timeframe of that 24-hour day, but that on that day, death would fall upon them as a certainty, and their days would be numbered on earth. The bottom line here is that Satan accuses God of lying, which puts his authority in doubt. Satan first tempts Eve to doubt God, and then to deny God. Satan ultimately wants to take people that are certain of God, and creep in skepticism, eventually leading to atheism or deism.

Tactic #5 – Satan tempts us to question God’s authority.

“For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened” – Satan sneaks in an assumption here that Eve doesn’t need to obey God unless she understands His reason. Satan implies that if the reason isn’t agreeable, then the command can be dismissed. How many times have we heard people say something similar today, ***“It doesn’t apply to us,”*** or, ***“It’s old-fashioned,”*** or, ***“It’s too restrictive,”*** or, ***“You can’t apply God’s Word literally.”***

Tactic #6 – Satan tempts us to doubt God’s character by challenging the reason behind God’s commands.

“...and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” – Satan wants Eve to think God is withholding something good; that this tree offered something of great value. However, God told Adam that this tree offered nothing of value, only death. So, why did God put the tree there to begin with? The reason is that God taught Adam and Eve that some things are off-limits. For example, a person’s spouse is off-limits to everyone else. The forbidden tree teaches them that you don’t get to have everything you see. By creating a boundary, God gives Adam and Eve the knowledge of sin and disobedience, without first-hand experience of the effects of sin. This is a demonstration of God’s goodness. Adam and Eve were already rationally intelligent; consciously aware of right and wrong, good and evil. There weren’t lacking in all they needed to live a good, right, and God-glorifying life. The only thing they would gain by eating the forbidden fruit would be the experiential knowledge of sin and its effects, which nobody wants.

Tactic #7 – Satan tempts us to question God's goodness.

Satan vs. Job

Job was a man who lived in the land of Uz; a region most likely south east of Palestine, in or around the Arabian desert. Job loved the Lord and stood out amongst all the other believers in the world in his time. God describes him as, **"blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil"** (Job 1:1). This doesn't mean he was sinless, but that he strove to live righteously in all things. Job continually offers sacrifices and prayers for his ten children, **"for Job said, 'Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts,'"** Job 1:5. He was certainly on Satan's radar, as Satan knew Job was a man of influence. Satan delights in bringing down Christians that impact the world! You can read Job chapters one and two for yourself to get the full story, but for sake of this essay, I'll summarize and expound on some key points.

Job 1:6-7, "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. 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.'"

"sons of God" – This is a title given to beings that are holy. It can refer to righteous angels (Job 38:7) or men who follow the Lord (Matthew 5:9).

"and Satan also came among them," - Satan is presented here as an outlier to this meeting, as one who wouldn't expect to be in attendance with this group. Either Satan invites himself or is summoned by the Lord.

"From where do you come?" – God asks questions for two reasons; to bring to light something for the sake of the audience in attendance, or to confront an individual with something that he is hesitant to own. In short, God knows the answer already, but the question is asked for the sake of others.

"From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." – Notice that Satan is not about to own what he's actually been doing. He lies and pretends that he's just been walking around doing nothing in particular. The Lord gets to the point, as He knows what Satan has on his mind. The Lord questions whether or not Satan has focused in on Job.

Verses 9-11, "Then Satan answered the LORD, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? 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. But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.'"

"Does Job fear God for nothing?" – "Fear" in this context means to revere or honor; it's not the type of fear that means to be terrified of someone. Satan essentially makes the following bold accusation, **"No man has a noble motive for serving You. The only reason Job serves you is because of how You bless him. Mankind has no genuine longing to know his Creator! You're not worth worshipping simply because of who You are! In fact, remove Your blessings, and not only will Job cease to worship You, but Job will actually curse You to Your face."** Sadly, Satan's not wrong about a lot of people. Have you ever pretended to worship the Lord, only because you hoped He'd perform for you, like a genie? Have you ever shaken your fist at God when life didn't go your way, even when you're the one who screwed up?

Tactic #8 – Satan tempts us to believe that there is no value in a relationship with God, and that God's worth is limited to the blessings He bestows.

"Have You not made a hedge about Him" – God had blessed Job with a type of protection that apparently Satan was not able to infiltrate.

Verse 12, "Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.'"

"Only do not put forth your hand on him." - God accepts Satan's challenge, and God agrees to remove the hedge of protection around Job. However, Satan has to operate under certain conditions that limit his reach. Satan could attack all that Job had, but Satan couldn't physically touch Job himself. It's important to know that Satan is on a leash. Satan

can only go so far as God will allow. Day to day, Satan and his demonic hoard cannot directly kill people, but they can cause calamity, deception, and temptation. In this case though, Satan can take the life of those that Job loves.

Four Attacks on Job's Household

Verses 13-19, "Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

"...on the day...in the oldest brother's house" – Here, it appears that the siblings were either celebrating their oldest brother's birthday, or they took turns hosting one another for meals and it was the eldest brothers turn. In any case, the ten kids gathering under one roof comes into play soon.

1st attack – Satan deploys the Sabeans, a regional tribe or band of people, to come and steal oxen & donkeys and kill the herdsman. How does Satan use the Sabeans to carry out his attack? Depending on how you view it, Satan can put thoughts into our minds, or put desires in our hearts. Satan may put a sinful desire in a person's heart, followed by thoughts that justify those sinful desires. Or, he infiltrates our mind with a sinful thought, that leads to a sinful desire. John 13:2 says that Satan put the desire into Judas' heart to betray Jesus. This doesn't mean that Judas' didn't already have a sinful inclination. Judas had previously been a lover of money as John 12:6 tells us that Judas was a thief who stole money from the disciple's money box. Judas was willing to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, as Satan orchestrated in Judas's heart. Another example, Peter says to Ananias in Acts 5:3, **"Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?"** Elsewhere, Satan moved King David to sin by counting Israel against God's will, as 1 Chronicles 21:1 says, **"Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel."** Here in Job, the Sabeans were a people who were inclined to steal, and this wouldn't have been their first attempt at killing and stealing. Satan fuels a sinful disposition. Ephesians 4:26-27, **"Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity."**

Tactic #9 - Satan can infiltrate our thoughts and desires.

As Job heard this news about the Sabeans, he would likely have been thinking, *"I'll round up my fighting men, my neighbors, and go take back what the Sabeans stole!"* This would be a rational next step. But what follows next is aimed to change his thinking.

2nd attack – Satan can't control the weather; if he could, he'd wipe us all out. However, as best as I can tell, there are two examples of Satan being able to control weather in the Bible. Here is the first. **"Fire of God"**, what we might call lightning, comes down and specifically targets Job's sheep and shepherds. If lightening isn't in view, then it's likely a type of fire from the heavens, like the fire that consumed Elijah's offering on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18). Satan is very cunning with this attack. Consider that Job is probably thinking of attacking the Sabeans right about now, when he hears of this second attack. This non-coincidental attack from the sky causes Job to look upward. Satan's purpose here is to cause Job to dismiss the Sabeans, and in turn redirect his attention toward the Lord. Satan wants Job to think, "What have I done to anger You, Lord? Haven't I shown You my love and devotion? Only You could have caused this fire from the sky, so why do you see fit to punish me? Why have you also compelled the Sabeans to raid my land?"

Tactic #10 – Satan tempts us to think that God is unjust.

3rd attack – This attack is similar to the first attack by the Sabeans. In this attack though, Satan employs the Chaldeans to come and steal camels and kill the herdsman.

4th attack – The first three attacks didn't produce the desired result that Satan was hoping for; Job had not yet turned in anger toward the Lord. Remember, Satan proclaimed that if God removed Job's blessings, that Job would curse God to His face. Satan reserves the worst attack for last. Since Job was so devoted to his kid's righteousness, certainly destroying them would cause Job to curse God. For the second time that I can see in the Bible, Satan has a permission to control the weather. Wind doesn't blow in four directions at once. However, in this case, Satan causes the wind to blow simultaneously on all four corners of the eldest son's house, causing the walls to all cave in, and killing all ten of Job's kids. This too is meant to cause Job to once again look upward. Who else can control the wind? Four attacks all in a row, and each more devastating than the last. Satan was determined to convince Job that God was his adversary.

Tactic #11 – Satan tempts us to believe that any loss, trial, or death, is God's way of punishing us.

Job's Response

1:21-22 *"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God."*

What a response! I'm amazed at the depth of Job's spiritual maturity and his unshaken confidence in who God is. Job is convinced that God is good and that God loves him deeply. Job won't let even the worst experiences derail his faith. I'm ashamed to say that I've shaken my fist at God for far less than this. I've directed my anger at God for such embarrassing things like getting a flat tire. I'm thankful for God's patience and love for me; without it I'd be doomed.

The 5th & 6th Attacks

Verses 2:4-7, **"Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face." So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life." Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head."**

Of course, Satan wasn't satisfied with Job's continued devotion toward the Lord. Job demonstrated that his relationship with God was the greatest delight in his life, and that God was worthy of his praise and allegiance. Feeling defeated, Satan returns to the presence of the Lord and mocks God. Like the loser that he is, Satan basically says, "Of course Job still praises You, but only because You guarded him physically. Get serious, and let me attack his body, and then we'll see where Job's faith stands!"

5th Attack - The Lord extended Satan's leash a bit longer. Now, with permission to attack Job's body, but without the ability to kill Job, Satan causes Job's body to be covered with boils: burning, festering, and terribly itchy sores. The degree to which Job's body is covered in boils is so severe, that in no position, standing, sitting, or laying down, could Job experience a break from piercing pain. Sometimes sickness and health problems are Satan's doing; see Luke 13:16.

Tactic #12 – When temptation doesn't work, Satan will torment.

Verses 2:9-10, **"Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!" But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips."**

6th Attack – Satan had deliberately not attacked Job's wife, despite having the opportunity to destroy her along with their kids. We can be sure that if Satan has permission to kill, and doesn't, that he has a scheme in mind. Satan had observed the demeanor of Job's wife, and her weaker faith. Satan decided to use her as a final temptress, as a scoffer, if all other tactics failed. Just as Satan moved the hearts of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, now he uses Job's wife to shame Job's faith, and to tempt him to reject the Lord. Her statement to Job basically says, *"Are you seriously going to continue to worship this brutal God? Is this how God repays your love and devotion? Despite all your prayers, obedience, and sacrifices, God has destroyed our lives. Curse God and give Him the final reason to end your life, because you obviously can't please Him. Or, since God isn't relieving your agony, curse Him and relieve yourself by taking your own life."* Just as Satan used Eve to tempt Adam, and Peter to tempt Jesus (Matthew 16:23), Satan now uses Job's wife against him.

Tactic #13 – Satan uses those we love most to try to turn us against the Lord.

Overcoming Satan's Tactics

Truth matters – One of the greatest weapons you have against Satan is the Word of God. God's Word is truth and it is the final authority over your life. Truth defeats untruth. When Satan aims to defeat you with lies, you can discern and reject those lies by knowing and living according to God's Word. I don't mean that simply knowing or memorizing Scripture is all that's needed. Doing this have value, but it's not enough. Knowing and living according to the Word is needed. No matter how much Scripture you know, Satan knows more. It's embracing God's Word with your daily choices that sets you free. Satan will tempt you to doubt and question God's Word, but your certainty in it, and your unwavering stance upon it, will keep you from falling prey to these schemes. John 8:31-32, Jesus says, ***"If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."***

Preoccupation with God – When people dabble in spiritually dark and dangerous things, even out of their own naivety, we open ourselves up to Satan's attacks. For more on this, see my essay called "Satan and Demons." You've heard the expression, *"An idle mind is the devil's playground."* Essentially, if you're not preoccupied with something that is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, or worthy of praise, (Philippians 4:8), then you're going to be under constant bombardment from the enemy meddling in your heart and mind. Preoccupy yourself with the Lord. Set your heart on living a life with Christ at the center. Satan's just waiting for your mind to wander!

Make the devil flee – James 4:7, ***"Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."*** Who holds a place of authority in your life? Is Jesus sitting on the throne, or are you? If you're submitted to Jesus, then there's no opportunity for the devil to hold sway over you; he'll move on to someone who merely professes Christianity. In short, the devil can only hold a place of authority and power in your life if you let him. James says that submission to God is resisting the devil. Here's a key to being able to offer yourself in submission to the Lord; be of sober mind. If you're not in control over your mind, you cannot submit control to the Lord, and Satan will infiltrate and defeat you with the opening that you've given him. 1 Peter 5:8-9, ***"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith."*** Again, we see that resistance comes by standing firm in the faith, and having a mind that is submitted to God. Ephesians 5:18, ***"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit."*** Paul tells us here in Ephesians that when our minds are not fully under our control, then we are incapable of submitting ourselves to the Lord. In the example given here, the reason for that lack of submission is alcohol, but that's just one example of many that could be given. The bottom line, you resist the devil when you submit yourself wholly to the Lord.

Pray for deliverance – Matthew 6:13, ***"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil."*** God isn't going to tempt us, but Satan will. This prayer asks God to give us the strength to have victory today, to be alert to the enemy's schemes, and to have godly wisdom to navigate the day. This prayer basically says, *"Don't let times of my testing, turn into occasions for temptation."* Are you prayed up and ready for a day of spiritual warfare?

Arm yourself for battle – Ephesians 6:11-17, ***"Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."*** Regarding the *"belt of truth"*; gird yourself with truth, as God's Word holds you up and holds you together, like a belt tightly wrapped around your body. Regarding the *"breastplate of righteousness"*; righteousness can only be found in Christ. Righteousness is like a breastplate for the vital organs of the body, and the righteousness of the saint assures that he will endure unto eternal life, having the ability to have victory in daily battles. Without righteousness, one is naked and exposed; already dead to

sin. Regarding the ***“shoes of the gospel”***; the gospel is a message of truth, hope, and love, that should ready to be deployed and proclaimed whenever the Spirit directs. Satan hates truth, hope, and love! Regarding the ***“shield of faith”***; one’s faith is what provides him the confidence to move forward, even head-on into the oncoming arrows of the enemy. Faith repels and protects. Regarding the ***“helmet of salvation”***; salvation is the hope in which one places their security. Salvation secures the soul, just as the helmet secures the head. In the head, one sees, knows, thinks, reasons; above all else the head should be protected, and the absoluteness of salvation assures that the greatest protection, our eternal life, is secure. The weapon of all weapons against the enemy, is the ***“sword of the Spirit”***, the Bible, the Word of God. Truth defeats the enemy! Know it, live it. Speak truth over your family. Pray the Scriptures over your life. Renounce Satan’s lies by claiming the truth of God’s Word. Revelation 12:11, ***“And they overcame him (the devil) because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.”***