

Understanding Satan

Lesson 6: Satan's Limitations

Throughout this study, we have seen much about the power and influence Satan is using to defeat us. However, it is a great mistake to see Satan as having unlimited power. For, if Satan is not limited, then there is no assurance that we can be victorious over him (contrary to passages like 1 Corinthians 15:57). While Satan does not want us to recognize his limitations, these are key to finding the path to victory!

1) Satan cannot do what only God can do.

Satan is a created spiritual being who does not possess the nature of being God. Satan is *not* eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever-present. For example, compare how God's presence is everywhere (Psalm 139:7-12), while Satan is pictured as roaming around specific places on the earth (Job 1:6-7). Also, compare how God can do anything (Job 42:2), while Satan is seen as being bound (Revelation 20:1-3). Therefore, Satan is always inferior to God and simply unable to match up with God! Notice how Satan was not even able to prevail when fighting Michael and his angels (Revelation 12:7-12) and was seized and bound by an angel (Revelation 20:1-3). If an angel (who is inferior to God) can do this, then God is far greater than Satan! While Satan is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), he did not come to this position because he defeated God. Rather, it was because God allowed him to exercise his free will and tempt others to do the same. So, God is greater than Satan in every respect (1 John 4:4)!

2) Satan cannot do whatever he wants to do. There is an interesting scene in Job 1:6, as spiritual beings present themselves before God. Interestingly, Satan is also there to present himself before God (also 2:1). Despite not knowing all the details of how this works, it demonstrates that Satan is accountable to God and limited by God in what he does! He is not, therefore, some rogue enemy of God who God has no control over or knowledge about.

Similarly, consider Luke 22:31-34, which pictures Satan as having asked/demanded of God to sift Peter and the other apostles as wheat. Therefore, we can see that God imposes limits on Satan he cannot cross. In the Job 1-2 account, God is seen limiting Satan on two different occasions. In the first (Job 1:12), God allowed Satan to touch Job's possessions and children, but not touch Job himself (Job 1:13-19). In the second, (Job 2:6), God allowed Satan to touch Job's health, but not take his life (Job 2:7). Satan had to abide by the limitations God put in place! The same thing can also be inferred from Revelation 20:1-3.

3) Satan cannot make anyone sin. God being able to limit Satan means that Satan cannot attack us in relentless ways that are greater than we can endure (1 Corinthians 10:13)! We are always able to choose the right path, despite Satan's temptations. For, he is only the tempter and whether we sin is our own decision (James 1:14-15). Notice how Adam and Eve's attempt to blame others (including Satan) failed to justify their sin (Genesis 3:11-13) and they were individually held accountable (Genesis 3:14-19). Just as Jesus resisted Satan's temptation (Matthew 4:1-11), God promises those who submit to His will and resist the devil will have Satan flee from them (James 4:7). For, Satan has no weapon or tactic in his arsenal that can penetrate the armor God has provided for people to overcome him (Ephesians 6:10-18). Furthermore, as Satan cannot make anyone sin, he is incapable of stealing anyone away from God without their consent (John 10:28-29; Romans 8:31-39). While Satan tempts us through various means so that we choose to leave the safety of God's love, he cannot rip us away from God contrary to our consent!

4) Satan cannot escape his fate. God is fully aware of the sin Satan has committed (John 8:44; 1 Timothy 3:6; 1 John 3:8) and he will suffer the consequences for them. God knows how Satan is

trying to work against the people God has created in His image – and Satan’s deeds will not go unpunished. The end of Satan’s attempts to destroy people are pictured in Revelation 20:7-10. While this passage is *not* speaking of a literal thousand years or an earthly battle that will take place, it does depict Satan’s attempt to fight against God’s people before Jesus comes again. Yet, despite all Satan’s efforts, God wins – and Satan and those with him are defeated to spend eternity in Hell (Matthew 25:41)! Therefore, Satan cannot be saved. The Bible never depicts Satan or any other angelic being as having access to the grace and mercy of God, having seen God but rebelled anyways. Satan and his entire kingdom *will be* defeated (Revelation 20:10, 11-15; 21:8, 27). Those who serve God faithfully will be forever delivered from Satan’s attacks eternally in Heaven, while Satan and his allies will suffer eternally in Hell!

While Satan is a powerful spiritual being, he is no match for God – and it’s not close! Although God allows Satan to work in various ways to provide tests for people today, Satan has no chance of emerging victorious over God and those who faithfully serve God. Therefore, as you consider how you can prepare your defenses against Satan, you can use all these lessons to know Satan is greatly limited in what he can do and determine to follow the blueprint God has given you in the Scriptures to defeat him (i.e. Matthew 4:1-11; Ephesians 6:10-18; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9)! For, in the end, you must realize that God wins and will deliver victory to His kingdom, while the devil and his kingdom will be defeated (Colossians 1:13-14)!

Discipleship Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What did you learn from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correcting: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God’s service?