

Ephesians: What's God Saying to You? What are You Going to Do About It?

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I. Introduction

Does Satan really exist? If he does, who is he and what is he like? Why is he considered God's enemy? Is he our enemy? Does he really seek our destruction? Just how powerful is he? Is there any way to defeat him? God says that ultimately the fight is not against each other but Satan. There's a battle raging behind the evil we see; it's a battle between Satan's forces and God.

II. Ephesians: What is God Saying to You and What are You Going to Do About It?

Chapter 6

From the beginning of Ephesians God told us that we're no longer fighting on Satan's side but His. That is, we used to be controlled by Satan, the prince, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 2:2, but that's not us anymore. We are now united to His Son Jesus Christ, 2:4-10, and therefore should not give Satan any foothold in our lives, 4:26-27. Instead of living by Satan's spirit, we should live according to the Lord's Spirit which dwells in us, 2:18, 22; 3:16; 4:4-6. We must not go back to the former life we had with Satan, 4:17-19. We must instead live as God's children and copy Jesus' behavior, 5:1-2, allow ourselves to be controlled by His Spirit, 5:18. As God closes the letter of Ephesians, He reveals just how much of a threat Satan is to our lives. But at the same time, He shows us just how easy it is to defeat him, 6:10-18.

6:10, the first thing we have to realize about defeating Satan is that we don't have to fight him. All the fighting will be done by the Lord. It will not be our strength but His which will defeat our foe. We have to ensure that we are "strong in the Lord." That is, we have to live life as though we were standing inside Jesus so that when we see, it's His eyes we see through. When we hear, it's His ears that hear. When we think, it's His mind that's doing the thinking for us. It's interpreting all of life around us through what He says instead of us, or Satan. The power that will defeat him will be Jesus'; it will be the "power of His might" which will defeat our enemy.

6:11, the second thing we must realize is that we're engaged in a war, which is why God tells us to put on His whole armor. Armor is for battle and as we'll see this battle is fierce. He'll explain further what He means by "whole armor," but for now we must realize that we have to be wearing it. Why? So that we'll be "able to stand against the wiles of the Devil," i.e., Satan has crafty schemes designed to deceive us (deception is one of his key weapons against us). And God again reminds us that it won't be us doing the fighting; all we have to do is "stand," put the armor on and stand. He uses this word over and over in this passage; all we have to do is stand wearing His armor.

6:12, life may seem hard sometimes. But there's something going on underneath what we see with our eyes. Life is not just hard or full of unrelated ups and downs. It's a war; there's a battle raging between God's forces and Satan's. Everyone's involved in this battle, everyone, not just Christians. But if you're a Christian, you're supposed to be clued in to what's going on all around you. You should have your eyes wide open to what's happening every minute of every day. And our enemy is not human; he's invisible and so are his forces; it is Satan and his demons.

6:13, if we're wearing God's armor, we'll be able "to withstand" Satan's attacks "in the evil day," i.e., Satan is the one in control now, which is why there's evil all around us. His influence is everywhere. All the evil that men do is driven by him. And the Lord again tells us that we don't have to worry about doing the battling. If we've done all that He told us to do, then all we have to do is stand. We will be fighting, but not the way we may think. Jesus will do the work through us. But being able to stand hinges on whether or not we're wearing His armor.

Is Satan real? If he is, what can we do about it?

Who is Satan? Many think that Satan is not real. When it comes to the evil that's in this world, they believe in evil but not beyond the evil that humans do. In their minds Satan doesn't exist; the only evil forces at play are human, not supernatural. Others think that Satan is not an actual entity but a force present in all of nature and every human, which can drive them to do good or evil. Still others do believe in Satan. In fact, the Barna Group did a survey earlier this year which found that more Americans believe in Satan than in God: in 1991 73% of Americans believed in God. Today, only 51% believe God exists compared to 56% who believe that Satan exists.¹

Does Satan exist; if he does, who is he really? Satan was the #1 "anointed" cherub² created by God; he was the wisest and most beautiful of all the angelic realm (Ezekiel 28:12, 14). His job was guardian of God's throne until iniquity was found in him and he rebelled against God: he wanted to sit on God's throne, to replace God, to be god (Isaiah 14:13-14). He is the head of all the fallen angels (demons), a third of which he took with him when he rebelled against God (Ezekiel 27:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:4). And as Ephesians 6 shows, Satan's on the attack all the time; he and his minions are constantly trying to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10), to devour us (1 Peter 5:8), to set a trap for us (1 Timothy 3:7), to take us captive to do Satan's evil will (2 Timothy 2:26). He's the father of lies (John 8:44) and the accuser, who accuses us before God night and day (Revelation 12:10). Now, the question of whether or not Satan exists doesn't depend on what we believe about him or what others say. It comes down to one simple issue, what does God say? He clearly spells out who he is and what he's about. But there are many Christians who don't believe what God says. A Barna survey done in April 2009 revealed that 40% of Christians believe that Satan is not a living being but a symbol of evil. An additional 19% said they agree somewhat with that perspective.³

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRYVEdnWKWY>

² Some believe that there's a hierarchy in the angelic realm: cherubs are the highest, next are seraphs, and at the bottom of the hierarchy are angels. If this is correct, then Satan is the most powerful of all angelic beings, which is how Scripture seems to portray him.

³ <https://www.barna.com/research/most-american-christians-do-not-believe-that-satan-or-the-holy-spirit-exist/>

How powerful is Satan? Very powerful, but NOTHING compared to Jesus. Satan did, does, and will continue to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). From the beginning of creation when he deceived Adam and Eve to the present day, Satan continues to wreak havoc on humanity. There is evil in this world because of man's wickedness but man's sinfulness is guided and aided by Satan; mankind is under his sway (Ephesians 2:2; 1 John 5:19). He is the ruler and god of this world (John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4). You can see a glimpse of what Satan can do in the 2011 film *The Rite* starring Anthony Hopkins which is loosely based on the life of Father Gary Thomas. I contacted Father Thomas and asked him if the things portrayed in the film were accurate. He said that none of the cases in the film were actual cases, but the events or effects portrayed in each possession were all in the realm of possibility. The scene of the room covered in frogs never happened but it's a visual portrayal of something internal, i.e., demons do things to scare you. Two of the worst effects Father Thomas saw happen are: a man's hands contorted into the hooves of a bull, he got on all fours and started to snarl like a bull. In another case, he saw a man's face contort into a snake and the man coiled on the floor like a snake.

However, as powerful as Satan is, and he is powerful, he is a microscopic gnat with no real power compared to God (e.g., in Luke 13:10-16, Satan has the power to bind a woman for 18 years. How long does it take Jesus do undo this 18-year curse? About 5 seconds). A few points on Satan's power compared to the Lord's: First, God foretold nearly 3,500 years ago that Satan would be crushed by Jesus (Genesis 3:15—the picture is of Jesus about to crush the serpent's head and as He does, the serpent bites His heel, which is a reference to Jesus' death on the Cross. It killed Jesus but He didn't stay dead because you can't kill the One who is life itself). That's why Jesus spoke of Satan the way He did (John 12:31; 16:11). That's why He's able to defeat Satan and his forces: notice how terrified the demons are of Jesus (Mark 1:23-27). Second, Jesus has taken Satan's power of death away; Jesus now owns death (Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 1:18), which is why those who have partaken of Jesus' eternal life through simple faith will live again after they die; they will have a resurrection body like Jesus' (1 Corinthians 15:35-57). It is why those who are Christ's cannot be touched by the second death, which is the Lake of Fire, (Revelation 20:14). In fact, they won't even show up at the Final Judgment because it's only for the dead (John 5:24; Revelation 20:12). Third, therefore, though Satan is very powerful, He is absolutely NO match for the Lord (1 John 4:4); Jesus came precisely to destroy the works of the Devil (1 John 3:8). It is super easy to defeat him; all we have to do is submit to God's Truth and resist the Devil's lies (Matthew 4:1-11; James 4:7). Look at what the Lord says to the young men John is writing to in his first epistle regarding defeating Satan (1 John 2:13-14). Fourth, Satan cannot do whatever he wants; he can only do what God allows him to do (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6). Thus, Satan is powerful, but nothing compared to Jesus.

III. Conclusion

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.