

**“Our Biblical Worldview;
(7) Our dealings with the devil”**

Introduction:

Last Lord’s Day we addressed the entrance of sin into God’s world which resulted in the fall of man from his privileged and responsible position as God’s coregent in His creation. We were introduced to the source of Adam and Eve’s temptation, that being a serpent, who was animated by the devil. In one wrong step Adam transferred the willing submission of all of God’s creation from God its Creator unto the devil. With Adam’s sin, satan became the king over a kingdom, the kingdom of darkness. Our biblical world view recognizes this reality of a malevolent, powerful opposer to God and His people. This knowledge renders us conscious and vigilant of his power, presence, and practices in this fallen world. And so, we live knowing that there is a spiritual realm in addition to the physical world, which coexist and intermix with one another. And within this spiritual realm there are two kingdoms, the kingdom of satan and the kingdom of God. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, all of their physical offspring have entered this world as subjects to the devil as their “god”, whom they follow all their days unless and until God sets them free by Jesus Christ, bringing them into His kingdom. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Colossae of the debt Christians owe to God the Father for His mercy and grace, for “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:13f).

We have referred to a verse several times recently, Genesis 3:15, which is commonly called the *protoevangelium* (“the first gospel”). It contains the first promise of redemption from sin for the people of God. Here God pronounced His judgment upon the “serpent” (the devil), declaring,

“And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.”

Here are the words of **Matthew Henry** (1662-1714) respecting this glorious promise of salvation:

A gracious promise is here made of Christ, as the deliverer of fallen man from the power of Satan. Though what was said was addressed to the serpent, yet it was said in the hearing of our first parents, who, doubtless, took the hints of grace here given them, and saw a door of hope opened to them, else the following sentence upon themselves would have overwhelmed them. Here was the dawning of the gospel day. No sooner was the wound given than the remedy was provided and revealed. Here, *in the head of the book*, as the word is (Heb. 10:7), in the beginning of the Bible, it is written of Christ, that He should *do the will of God*. By faith in this promise, we have reason to think, our first parents, and the patriarchs before the flood, were justified and saved and to this promise, and the benefit of it, instantly serving God day and night, they hoped to come.

In one sense the word “seed” in this verse is to be understood in a collective sense. It is speaking of both the offspring of satan and the offspring of the woman. These are two peoples. One is all people who live and die in their sin--these are the seed of the serpent. The other are all of the people of God that God redeems from their sin, here identified as “the seed of the woman.” The story of Genesis forward speaks to these two peoples and the hostility between them. Here is the footnote from the Reformation Study Bible regarding the words of this verse, “your seed and her seed”:

Humanity is now divided into two communities: the redeemed, who love God, and the reprobate, who love self (John 8:33, 44; 1 John 3:8). The division finds immediate expression in the hostility of Cain against Abel (ch. 4). This prophecy finds ultimate fulfillment in the triumph of the second Adam, and the community united to Him, over the forces of sin, death, and the devil (Dan. 7:13f; Rom. 5:12-19; 16:20; 1 Cor. 15:45-49; Heb. 2:14f). The rest of Genesis traces the woman's offspring, beginning with Eve's son Seth, and ending with the sons of Jacob. Ultimately this line of descendants leads to Jesus Christ (Luke 3:23-38).¹

This verse alludes to both spiritual kingdoms, the first being the devil's dominion, which is defeated by the promise of the seed of the woman, that is, Jesus Christ, who is the ruler over His kingdom. This prophecy not only declares the deliverance of the seed of the woman, but it pronounces the deposing of the devil from his position of authority over the seed of the woman. First, it declares that God Himself will cause a distinction and separation between these two "seeds", or peoples. God said, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her Seed." God then pointed to one particular "seed" or offspring of the woman, saying to the devil, "He shall bruise your head." This speaks of a fatal blow that results in the utter defeat and deposing of the devil over God's people, the seed of the woman. God then foretold how this would be accomplished, "And you shall bruise His heel." This is a prophecy of the devil's successful effort to injure, but not totally vanquish, the individual seed of the woman, who is Jesus Christ. It is a veiled prophecy of the devil's successful effort to crucify Jesus Christ, putting Him to death on the cross. But in that very effort and act to conquer Him, Jesus would through that event deliver the fatal blow which deposes the devil from his former dominating reign over the Lord's people. Here are more comments on this promise by **Matthew Henry**:

Notice is here given them of three things concerning Christ:-- (1) His incarnation, that He should be *the seed of the woman*, the seed of *that* woman; therefore His genealogy (Luke 3) goes so high as to show Him to be the son of Adam, but God does the woman the honour to call Him rather her seed, because she it was whom the devil had beguiled, and on whom Adam had laid the blame; herein God magnifies His grace, in that, though the woman was first in the transgression, yet she shall be saved *by* child-bearing (as some read it), that is, by the promised seed who shall descend from her (1 Tim. 2:15). He was likewise to be the seed of a woman only, of a virgin, that He might not be tainted with the corruption of our nature; He was sent forth, *made of a woman* (Gal. 4:4), that this promise might be fulfilled... (2) His sufferings and death, pointed at in *satan's bruising His heel*, that is, His human nature. Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness, to draw Him into sin; and some think it was satan that terrified Christ in His agony, to drive Him to despair. It was the devil that put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ, of Peter to deny Him, of the chief priests to prosecute Him, of the false witnesses to accuse Him, and of Pilate to condemn Him, aiming in all this, by destroying the Saviour, to ruin the salvation; but, on the contrary, it was by death that Christ *destroyed him that had the power of death* (Heb. 2:14)... (3) His victory over satan thereby. Satan had now trampled upon the woman, and insulted over her; but the seed of the woman should be raised up in the fulness of time to avenge her quarrel, and to trample upon him, to spoil him, to lead him captive, and to *triumph over him* (Col. 2:15). *He shall bruise his head*, that is, He shall destroy all his politics and all his powers, and give a total overthrow to his kingdom and interest. Christ baffled satan's temptations, rescued souls out of his hands, cast him out of the bodies of people, dispossessed the strong man armed, and divided his spoil: by His death, He gave a fatal and incurable blow to the devil's kingdom, a wound to the head of this beast, that can never be healed. As His gospel gets ground, *Satan falls* (Luke 10:18) and is *bound* (Rev. 20:2). By His grace, He treads satan under his people's feet (Rom. 16:20) and will shortly cast him into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). And the devil's perpetual overthrow will be the complete and everlasting joy and glory of the chosen remnant.

For anyone who believes the Bible to be the Word of God, denial of the existence and the personality of the devil is not an option. This is a main feature of a biblical worldview. The Word of God reveals the devil to be a personal, fallen, spirit being, who is altogether evil, who possesses and exerts great authority in

¹ Theological note in R. C. Sproul, gen. ed., **The Reformation Study Bible** (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), p. 19.

this fallen world, who is opposed to God and His kingdom in the world. The fate of the devil and his cohorts is certain. We read in the Revelation that the day will come when he is removed from God's (new) creation, to be consigned forever in punishment in the lake of fire that burns forever. The Lord Jesus spoke directly of this when He pronounced the fate of the damned on the Day of Judgment. "Then He will say to those on his left, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Matt. 25:41).

Let us consider this foe and his kingdom from which we have been delivered through Jesus Christ.

I. Who is the devil?

The Bible identifies the devil by many names. These include Satan, Beelzebub, Belial, Adversary, Dragon, and the Serpent. He is also referred to as "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2), "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4), and "an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). There are at least 174 references to these names and titles in the Bible. These names suggest a personal being, not a mere force or symbol of evil. The names of the devil reflect his evil nature and intention toward everything good and righteous in God's creation. **Arthur Pink** (1886-1952) wrote a rather short book on the subject, "Satan and His Gospel." He wrote of the names of the devil and their meaning:

Thirty-five times he is denominated "The Devil," which means "The Accuser" or "Slanderer"—accusing the saints before God and traducing (misrepresenting) the character of God before men. Fifty-two times he is called "Satan," which means "Enemy" or "Adversary." He is God's enemy and man's adversary. "Satan" refers to his *character*: the malignant Adversary of all good—in God or His creatures. "Devil" refers to his *mode* of carrying out his evil designs: by lying slanders, false accusations, evil traducings (misrepresentations). He is termed "The Prince of this world" (John 14:30), which defines his position in relation to our earth. He is named "Beelzebub" (Matt 12:27), which regards him as the head of the demons. He is spoken of as the "Wicked One" (Matt 13:19) which refers to him as the prime mover of *all* wickedness. He is styled "Apollyon," that is "Destroyer" (Rev 9:11), which links him with the Bottomless Pit. He is referred to as "The prince of the power of the air" (Eph 2:2), which points to his present home and sphere of operations—cf. Eph. 6:12. He is termed "Lucifer" which means "Morning Star" (Isa 14:12), a title which seems to have belonged to him before his apostasy. He is called "the god of this world" (II Cor 4:4) because he is the inspirer and director of all spurious religion. He is termed "liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44) because he is the inveterate opposer of the truth. These and other titles of satan are meaningless unless he is a personal being.

The characteristics of satan that are set forth in the Scriptures present him as a being of great *power* and *capability*. However, satan is not as God, for God is infinite; satan is *finite* (limited). Satan is *powerful*, but he is not all-powerful (omnipotent) as God is. Satan is *wise*, but he is not all-wise (omniscient) as God. But the Scriptures do speak of him as one "who deceives the whole world" (Rev. 12:12). He is an intelligent, powerful, malevolent spirit being.

Satan is able to *perform miracles*. It was satan who enabled the "magicians and sorcerers" of pharaoh to mimic many of the miracles that God wrought through Moses. We read in Exodus 7:11, "Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts." Paul wrote that the man of sin would be "according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9). Satan is able to enable some to foretell future events. We read of Paul casting out a demon that enabled a young woman to prophesy, that is, to foretell the future (see Acts 16:16-19). Satan has the power to cause *sickness* and *other physical infirmities*. There was a woman who had a physical malady for 18 years, who was healed when she touched the hem of Jesus' garment. Jesus said of her that satan had "bound" her with this physical condition (Luke 13:10ff). Satan had afflicted Paul with some form of physical malady, or so it seems. God allowed this in his life to prevent him from becoming puffed up with pride. We read of this in **2 Corinthians 12:7-9**.

⁷So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, *a messenger of Satan to harass me*, to keep me from becoming conceited.

⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, "My grace is

sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:1-10)

II. Satan’s authority over the fallen world

Satan is called “the god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4). He is “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2). Satan is the ruler of all unregenerate people. They are born as subjects of his kingdom. They do his bidding. Paul expressed the reality that all natural born people are subjects to the devil in his kingdom unless and until God saves them by His grace. Of the Christians in the church at Ephesus he wrote these words:

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:1-7)

When God converts a sinner to Jesus Christ, God snatches that soul out of the kingdom of the devil and translates him into the kingdom of God’s Son. This is what Paul stated of God the Father in **Colossians 1:13f**,

“He has delivered us *from the power* (dominion) *of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son* of His love, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

Satan works through unbelievers to accomplish his will in this world. We read in Ephesians 2 that the devil controls all unconverted people. But in addition satan is the ruler over a vast army of evil spirits, who are fallen angels, who rebelled against God and chose to serve the devil. Although satan is a spirit being, he is not omnipresent. He can be only in one place at a time. But he extends the rule of his kingdom through multitudes of evil spirits, or demons, who do his bidding.

Satan is the father of lies. The Lord Jesus said of him: “When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44). All error respecting religious beliefs ultimately owes their origin and spread to the devil. All false religion, all false doctrine, owe their origin, their appeal to people’s minds, and their continuance, to the devil. Paul wrote to the Christians at the church at Corinth: “I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons” (1 Cor. 10:20). And Paul wrote to Timothy, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1).

Satan is the ruler of darkness. This conveys the idea that he is the author of error and falsehood and keeps his own captive and helpless. He blinds unconverted people to the gospel so that they cannot understand the truth of the gospel and so that they will not be able to respond to it. But the Lord in His sovereign grace defeats satan’s efforts to blind His people to the truth by which the Lord intends to save them from sin. Paul wrote of his own confidence in the gospel because satan was powerless to prevent it from saving the Lord’s people when the Lord purposed to save them by it. We read of this in 2 Corinthians 4:

²But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. ³But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴*whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.* ⁵For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the

Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. *6For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* (2 Cor. 4:2-6)

And so, we have addressed **satan's authority over the fallen world**. Let us now consider...

III. Satan's origin

Probably Revelation 12 speaks of the original rebellion of angels that joined forces with the devil. There we read these words,

³And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. ⁴His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. (Rev. 12:3-4)

Ezekiel 28 records evidence to suggest satan's origin. Here God through his prophet was denouncing the king of Tyre, which was an ancient maritime kingdom on the Phoenician coast. However, the manner that Ezekiel describes the king of Tyre seems to speak of more than the historic king. The king is described as one who was in the original Garden of Eden, but fell through pride. It is apparent that Ezekiel was describing satan, the evil power behind the king of Tyre. It was satan who had rebelled against God in the beginning. Here is **Ezekiel 28:11-19**:

¹¹Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ¹²“Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD:

“You were the seal of perfection,
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
¹³You were in Eden, the garden of God;
Every precious stone was your covering:
The sardius, topaz, and diamond,
Beryl, onyx, and jasper,
Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold.
The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes
Was prepared for you on the day you were created.

¹⁴“You were the anointed cherub who covers;
I established you;
You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.

¹⁵You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created,
Till iniquity was found in you.

¹⁶“By the abundance of your trading
You became filled with violence within,
And you sinned;
Therefore I cast you as a profane thing
Out of the mountain of God;
And I destroyed you, O covering cherub,
From the midst of the fiery stones.

¹⁷“Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;
You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor;

I cast you to the ground,
I laid you before kings,
That they might gaze at you.

¹⁸“You defiled your sanctuaries
By the multitude of your iniquities,
By the iniquity of your trading;
Therefore I brought fire from your midst;
It devoured you,
And I turned you to ashes upon the earth
In the sight of all who saw you.

¹⁹All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you;
You have become a horror,
And shall be no more forever.”””

God had created this holy angel and had given him authority over the world which God had created. When the fall of this foremost angel occurred, God did not immediately remove his authority over the world; rather, it continued. Since that time, the devil has sought to frustrate the purposes and plans of God in His creation. God in His sovereign rule over the fallen world uses even the evil of satan to glorify Himself in saving His people from this great enemy and slave owner, and God will one day glorify Himself greatly in satan’s final defeat and consignment to eternal hell.

When did satan instigate this rebellion against God, when did this glorious cherub become satan? Although the Bible does not speak directly of this event, it can be concluded quite clearly that satan had originally sinned against God after the creation week recorded in Genesis 1. God had created the heavens and the earth. And then, over the course of six days God created all that exists in the physical world, and we would say, also in the spiritual realm. After God created all things and when He rested on that first Sabbath, it is said of the creation, “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Gen. 1:31). God could not, He would not, have pronounced “everything that He had made” as “very good”, if the devil and his minions were within His creation at this time. Satan fell into sin, I suspect, even as he sought to tempt Eve to transgress God’s law in the Garden.

IV. God’s authority over satan

There have been some in history and some today who believe that God and satan are two coeternal beings, God being all-good and satan being all-evil. This is heresy. As we already asserted, God is the infinite Creator, but satan is finite, but a created being. A similar and common idea is that God’s will desires one thing and that satan’s will desires what is opposite, and that sometimes God wins and the devil is defeated, but at other times the devil wins and God is defeated. This is blasphemous. God always wins. The devil always loses, though it may not appear to be so. As Luther once said, “The devil is God’s devil.” Ultimately God is sovereign over all that He allows the devil to do, though God is not the chargeable author of the evil satan does. An example of this may be seen in the parallel passages of 2 Samuel and 2 Chronicles. Of the same sin that King David had committed it is said:

“Again the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, ‘Go, number Israel and Judah.’” (2 Sam. 24:1)

And,

“Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel. (1 Chron. 21:1)

God cannot and would not tempt people to sin (Jam. 1:13), but He will in His sovereign purposes permit the devil to tempt them, and in doing so God tests His people to reveal and manifest the true nature of their hearts before Him.

The Holy Scriptures clearly display the devil as being subject to God. Though satan is an evil creature, he was not so when God first created him. God had created him as holy, but then he fell into sin through his own pride and rebellion. But though the devil is opposed to God and has attempted to thwart the glory of God in history and particularly through mankind, made in the image of God, the devil remains under the authority of God. Satan must gain the permission of God to act within this world. The account of Job is proof of this. We read in **Job 1:6-12**.

⁶Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. ⁷And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?"

So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

⁸Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"

⁹So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

¹²And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person."

So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Satan could only act against Job to the degree that God allowed him. And though satan meant only evil for Job, God used satan's assault to glorify himself. This can be seen in round two of God's interaction with satan. We read in Job 2 similar words that we read in chapter 1.

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. ²And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?"

Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

³Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause."

⁴So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

⁶And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life."

⁷So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ⁸And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes.

⁹Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

¹⁰But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

We see again the limitation that God placed upon the devil. The devil could only do what God allowed him to do. God said in effect, "This far and no farther." (Job 2:1-10)

V. Satan's ability to influence and torment people

It is clear that the authority that God has given unto satan is far greater than any authority that he has given to a man or woman. The exception to this, of course, is the superior authority that God the Father has given unto His Son, Jesus Christ. And by extension, the Lord Jesus gave authority to His apostles over all the forces of the devil and his demons that they would encounter. Now thankfully, because the Christian is

in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is in the Christian, every Christian is protected and preserved from destruction and ruin that the devil would bring upon them. The Scriptures declare,

By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,³ and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.⁴ You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, **because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.** (1 John 4:2-4)

We also read in 1 John 5:18f,

We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and **the wicked one does not touch him.**¹⁹ We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

When the Scriptures say of the Christian that the **wicked one does not touch him**", it is referring to satan's ability to direct that soul into a state of damnation. "The wicked one touches him not." It is not a declaration that the devil does not afflict or trouble the Christian, for we know that the Scriptures indicate that he does so in many ways. **John Gill** wrote of this verse:

He (the wicked one) cannot come at him so as to wound him to the heart, or destroy that principle of life that is in him, or so as to overcome and devour him; he may tempt him, and sift him, and buffet him, and greatly afflict and grieve him, but he cannot touch his life, or hurt him with the second death; nay, sometimes the believer is so enabled to wield the shield of faith, or to hold up Christ the shield by faith, and turn it every way in such a manner, that Satan, who is here meant by the wicked one, because he is notoriously so, cannot come near him, nor in with him; cannot work upon him at all with his temptations, nor in the least hurt his peace, joy, and comfort: the saints know their perseverance from the promises of God and declarations of Christ. (John Gill)

We are to be wise in recognizing and responding biblically to the devil's wicked and deceptive ways. The biblical command is to "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). Paul wrote that he was not ignorant of satan's wiles, but that it is important that Christians respond in faith and obedience lest the devil take advantage of us. Paul wrote:

Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices. (2 Cor. 2:10f)

In what ways does the devil afflict people? A number of details may be presented from the Scriptures:

(1) The devil is able to place evil thoughts into our minds.

"Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him... (John 13:1f)

(2) The devil is able to cause forgetfulness of the Word of God that has been taught to us. Jesus taught, "Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." (Luke 8:12)

(3) The devil is able to move people to do what he desires for them to do.

“You are of your father the devil, and *the desires of your father you want to do*. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” (John 8:44)

This is also true of professing Christians. Paul in equipping Timothy for pastoral ministry wrote,

“In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, ²⁶and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, *having been taken captive by him to do his will.*” (2 Tim. 2:25)

(4) The devil is able to oppress people. Acts 10:35 records, “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.”

(5) The devil is able to cause one to experience disgrace or reproach. Sometimes this is called a snare of the devil. Of a potential church elder it is said, “Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” (1 Tim. 3:7)

(6) The devil is able to lead a person to practice sin. John wrote, “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” (1 John 3:8)

(7) The devil is able to persecute Christians through the use of civil authorities, but we should not fear what they might do to us. “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days.” (Rev. 2:10)

(8) The devil is able to deceive people, even the whole world. Revelation records, “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” (Rev. 12:9)

(9) The devil is able to entice (tempt) people to sin. He tempted Jesus (Matt. 4; Luke 4)

(10) The devil is able to exalt people in the world system, making them rich and powerful. (Luke 4:6)

(11) The devil has power over physical death, from which the Lord has delivered his people. (Heb. 2:14; 1 Cor. 5:5)

(12) The devil distorts truth and promotes error.

(13) The devil is able to cause sickness in people. Jesus said of a woman who suffered physical infirmity: “So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom satan has bound-- think of it-- for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?” (Luke 13:16).

(14) The devil is able to cause physical disasters (Job 1)

(15) The devil is able to cause the people to lose faith, if the Lord did not prevent him from doing so. The Lord said to Peter, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Lk. 22:31).

(16) The devil can lead people to covet, to lie, and to steal. Acts 5 records this event: “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?’” (Acts 5:3)

(17) The devil is able to deceive people by presenting himself as an “angel of light.” Paul warned of those who seemed to be true preachers: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.” (2 Cor. 11:13f).

(18) Similarly, the devil is able to produce and promote false shepherds, false pastors of churches. Paul wrote, “Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:15). The Lord has His ministers in His churches. The devil has his ministers who are also in churches. Arthur Pink wrote, “The apostles of satan are not saloon-keepers and white-slave traffickers, but are for the most part ordained ministers.”

(19) The devil is able to hinder the noble plans of Christians. He may hinder our work for the gospel, the noble plans of Christians.

“But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. ¹⁸Therefore we wanted to come to you-- even I, Paul, time and again-- *but Satan hindered us.*” (1 Thess. 2:17f)

(20) The devil can enable men to perform miracles. Of the antichrist Paul wrote, “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, *with all power, signs, and lying wonders...*” (2 Thess. 2:9)

(21) The devil is able to incite people to commit murder. “We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous.” (1 John 3:12)

VI. The devil’s doom

At the cross Jesus Christ vanquished the devil. Our Lord’s obedience unto death resulted in Him as the God/Man to be raised from the dead and ascend into heaven at which time God the Father enthroned Him over all creation. We read in 1 Peter 3:22 of the Lord Jesus, “who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.” And those angels and authorities included the defeat and subordination of the devil to the rule of the Lord Jesus. The devil continues to plague and frustrate the people of God, but he cannot destroy them. Rather, we are assured of our victory over him. We need not fear the devil, though we should be wary of him. And we may have confidence that we will come forth victors regardless of all of his efforts to defeat and discourage us. Paul wrote to the church at Rome: “And the God of peace will crush satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen” (Rom. 16:20).

God is Sovereign over the devil and his forces

In **Arthur Pink's** classic book, *The Sovereignty of God*, he set the matter before his readers in quite a clear manner in his Introduction. He wrote:

Who is regulating affairs on this earth today-God, or the Devil? That God reigns supreme in Heaven is generally conceded; that He does so over this world, is almost universally denied-if not directly, then indirectly. More and more are men in their philosophizing and theorizing relegating God to the background. Take the material realm. Not only is it denied that God *created* everything by personal and direct action, but few believe that He has any immediate concern in *regulating* the works of His own hands. Everything is supposed to be ordered according to the (impersonal and abstract) "laws of Nature." Thus is the Creator banished from His own creation. Therefore we need not be surprised that men, in their degrading conceptions, exclude Him from the realm of human affairs. Throughout Christendom, with an almost negligible exception, the theory is held that man is "a free agent," and therefore, lord of his fortunes and the determiner of his destiny. That Satan is to be blamed for much of the evil which is in the world is freely affirmed by those who, though having so much to say about "the responsibility of man," often *deny* their *own* responsibility, by attributing to the Devil what, in fact, proceeds from their *own* evil hearts (Mark 7:21-23)...

Who is regulating affairs on this earth today-God, or the Devil? What impression is made upon the minds of those men of the world who, occasionally, attend a Gospel service? What are the conceptions formed by those who hear even those preachers who are counted as "orthodox?" Is it not that a *disappointed* God is the One whom Christians believe in? From what is heard from the average evangelist today, is not any serious hearer *obliged* to conclude that he professes to represent a God who is filled with benevolent intentions, yet unable to carry them out; that He is earnestly desirous of blessing men, but that they will not let Him? Then, *must* not the average hearer draw the inference that the Devil has gained the upper hand, and that God is to be pitied rather than blamed?

But does not everything seem to show that the Devil *has* far more to do with the affairs of earth than God has? Ah, it all depends upon whether we are walking by faith, or walking by sight. Are your thoughts, my reader, concerning this world and God's relation to it, based upon what you *see*? Face this question seriously and honestly. And if you are a Christian you will, most probably, have cause to bow your head with shame and sorrow, and to acknowledge that it *is* so. Alas, in reality, we walk very little "by faith." But what does "walking by faith" signify? It means that our thoughts are formed, our actions regulated, our lives molded by the Holy Scriptures, for, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing *by the Word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). It is from the Word of Truth, and that alone, that we can learn what is *God's* relation to this world...

Who is regulating affairs on this earth today-God, or the Devil? What saith the Scriptures? If we believe their plain and positive declarations, no room is left for uncertainty. They affirm, again and again, that God is on the throne of the universe; that the sceptre is in His hands; that He is directing *all things* "after the counsel of His own will." They affirm, not only that God created all things, but also that God is ruling and reigning over all the works of His hands. They affirm that God is the "Almighty," that His will is irreversible, that He is absolute Sovereign in every realm of all His vast dominions. And surely it *must* be so. Only two alternatives are possible: God must either rule, or be ruled; sway, or be swayed; accomplish His own will, or be thwarted by His creatures. Accepting the fact that He is the "Most High," the only Potentate and King of kings, vested with perfect wisdom and illimitable power, and the conclusion is irresistible that He must be God in fact as well as in name.