

Satan's MO (*Modus Operandi*)

While on earth and as a result of His ministry and work on the cross, Jesus has “bound” Satan, meaning that Satan’s abilities are severely limited now at least with reference to believers (see Luke 11:14-22; cf. Col 2:15). Satan cannot own or possess or inhabit or indwell believers whose bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit. But he does still have three very powerful weapons in his arsenal and of these we must be aware.

1. Lies to deceive.

“1Now 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’?” 2The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3but 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.’” 4The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! 5For 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.” 6When 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.” (Gen 3:1-6)

“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.” (2 Cor 11:3; cf. 11:14)

“You are of your father the devil Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (John 8:44)

“And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world.” (Rev 12:9)

2. Temptations to derail.

See again Gen 3:1-6 (above)

“1Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. 3And the tempter came and said to Him ...” (Matt 4:1-3) *It is hardly a coincidence that Satan's first appearance in the NT is so similar to his first appearance in the OT.*

“come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” (1 Cor 7:5)

“when I could endure it no longer I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you and our labor would be in vain.” (1 Thess 3:5)

3. Afflictions to Discourage

See the Book of Job chapters 1-2.

“Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!” (2 Cor 12:7) *Most NT scholars see this as a reference to Paul’s bodily illness, possibly eye disease.*

“For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan hindered us. (1 Thess 2:18). *Satan does not do this in person but through evil men and evil societies that persecute believers.*

“Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev 2:10) *Again, Satan does not do this in person but through evil men.*

How does Scripture tell us to deal with all of this? Not by binding or rebuking Satan. Not by casting Satan or demons out of believers. Such things are nowhere taught in Scripture. We counter Satan’s lies by the truth of God’s Word, which is the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17). We counter Satan’s temptations with the truth of God’s word (just as Jesus did when tempted in the wilderness) and with prayer (“lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”). And all the while we “resist” (Eph 6:13; James 4:7; 1 Pet 5:9) and “stand firm” (Eph 6:13-14), having put on the full armor of God which, being God’s, is invincible!

We do this in confidence—not in ourselves—but in Jesus Christ who has already defeated Satan and whose glorious victory we share.

- I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. (John 17:15)
- But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. (1 Thess 3:3)
- You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. (1 John 4:4)
- He who was born of God [i.e., Jesus] keeps him [i.e., the believer], and the evil one does not touch him. (1 John 5:18)