

# Giving Satan the Advantage

By Mark Mayberry

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## Introduction

Satan is a subtle enemy, using various strategies to deceive us; accordingly, we should not be ignorant of his devices. He is also a watchful adversary, always ready to take advantage; we should be cautious lest we give him any occasion to do so (2 Cor. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

*2 Corinthians 2:10 Any one whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, 11 to keep Satan from gaining the advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his designs. (RSV)*

*2 Corinthians 2:10 If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven-- if there was anything to forgive-- I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, 11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. (NIV)*

*2 Corinthians 2:10 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, 11 lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices. (NKJ)*

*2 Corinthians 2:10-11 (NASB95) — 10 But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, 11 so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.*

*1 Peter 5:8-9 (NASB95) — 8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.*

## Ignorance

Over several generations, we have witnessed the “dumbing down” of the secular education curriculum. Even more tragic is the spiritual ignorance that pervades this land. Those who are ignorant of the lessons of history are doomed to repeat it. Satan exploits such ignorance to gain the upper hand (Isa. 5:13-14; Hos. 4:1, 6; Mal. 2:7-9).

*Isaiah 5:13-14 (NASB95) — 13 Therefore My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge; And their honorable men are famished, And their multitude is parched with thirst. 14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged its throat and opened its mouth without measure;*

*And Jerusalem's splendor, her multitude, her din of revelry and the jubilant within her, descend into it.*

*Hosea 4:1 (NASB95) — 1 Listen to the word of the Lord, O sons of Israel, For the Lord has a case against the inhabitants of the land, Because there is no faithfulness or kindness Or knowledge of God in the land.*

*Hosea 4:6 (NASB95) — 6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.*

*Malachi 2:7-9 (NASB95) — 7 "For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. 8 "But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi," says the Lord of hosts. 9 "So I also have made you despised and abased before all the people, just as you are not keeping My ways but are showing partiality in the instruction.*

## **Indifference**

When a garden is neglected, weeds take over and choke out the vegetables. What happens when you neglect your soul? Weeds take over and choke out the word (Mark 4:18-19). The devil will always exploit indifference. Bad habits and vices, if left unchecked, tend to multiply (Luke 11:24-28). Let us avoid the dangers of drifting and neglect (Heb. 2:1-3).

*Mark 4:18-19 (NASB95) — 18 "And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, 19 but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.*

*Luke 11:24-28 (NASB95) — 24 "When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' 25 "And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. 26 "Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first." 27 While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed." 28 But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."*

*Hebrews 2:1-4 (NASB95) — 1 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, 3 how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, 4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.*

## **Over-Confidence**

Pride and arrogance are the precursors of disaster (Prov. 16:18). Peter was over-confident regarding his faith and commitment to Christ in time of trial (Matt. 26:31-35). In like manner, we must also avoid thinking too highly of ourselves (1 Cor. 10:6-12).

*Proverbs 16:18 (NASB95) — 18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.*

*Matthew 26:31-35 (NASB95) — 31 Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.’ 32 “But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” 33 But Peter said to Him, “Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.” 34 Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” 35 Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.” All the disciples said the same thing too.*

*1 Corinthians 10:6-12 (NASB95) — 6 Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.” 8 Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. 9 Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. 10 Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.*

## **Flirtation**

Many people want to see how close they can get to sin. They push the limits of modesty and decorum. They are thoughtless in their entertainment choices. They use euphemisms in the place of curse words. They get as close to the edge as possible. Unless Christians maintain their distinctiveness, Satan will get the upper hand (Luke 16:13; James 4:1-5; 1 John 2:15-17).

*Luke 16:13 (NASB95) — 13 “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”*

*James 4:1-5 (NASB95) — 1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”?*

*1 John 2:15-17 (NASB95) — 15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.*

## **Excuse-Making**

Many people make excuses for not obeying the gospel (Luke 9:59-62; 14:16-24; Acts 24:24-27). However, excuses will not suffice. It's like the man whose neighbor always borrowed tools, but did not return them. One day the thoughtless neighbor said, "Can I borrow your ax?" "No," the man answered, "My cow just died." The neighbor scratched his head a moment, looked up with a puzzled expression on his face and said, "What connection is there between your cow dying and my wanting to borrow your ax?" "None!" answered the man. "I just don't want to loan you my ax, so one excuse is as good as another!"

*Luke 9:59-62 (NASB95) — 59 And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." 60 But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God." 61 Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." 62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*

*Luke 14:16-24 (NASB95) — 16 But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; 17 and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' 18 "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.' 19 "Another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.' 20 "Another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.' 21 "And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' 22 "And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' 23 "And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. 24 'For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'*

*Acts 24:24-27 (NASB95) — 24 But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. 25 But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you." 26 At the same time too, he was hoping that money would be given him by Paul; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and converse with him. 27 But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.*

## **Conclusion**

Christians need to wake up (Rom. 13:11-14). In order to deal with Satan's tricks, we must put on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10-17). Lest there be any doubt of the folly of siding with the devil, remember his ultimate destiny (Rev. 20:10-15).

*Romans 13:11-14 (NASB95) — 11 Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*

*Ephesians 6:10-17 (NASB95) — 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 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. 13 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. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 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. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

*Revelation 20:10-15 (NASB95) — 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. 11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*