

# WHAT GOD'S WORD SAYS ABOUT...

## How Much Power Does Satan Have?

This is a question that needs our attention because we live in a time when more and more people are being polarized between two thoughts concerning Satan. First, there are those who joke about Satan as though he was a comical character, someone dressed in a red suit with pointed horns, a tail, and carrying a pitchfork. The object of many stand-up comedians is to make Satan a mythological figure that is good for a laugh. Secondly, there are those whose very lives have come under the power and control of Satan and his demons. "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

We must ask the question, "who is Satan?" When we read the word of God, we find that the word "Satan" in the Old Testament literally means "adversary," or "opponent." In the New Testament, you find the word "devil" more often. The Greek word "diabolos" means "the slanderer," or the "accuser." The New Testament also refers to Satan as "the enemy," "the evil one," "a liar," "the father of all lies," "a murderer," "a deceiver of the whole world," "the great dragon," "the ancient serpent," "the tempter," "the prince of the power of the air," and the most frightening name of all, "the destroyer." Satan then, is the great source of evil in the universe and we can be assured that he does not work alone. Paul wrote, "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 [spiritual realm]" (Eph. 6:12).

Satan, known as "the destroyer," has the power to destroy the human soul. One way his power is limited is by human choice. One of the most powerful scriptures that reflect this choice is found in Joshua 24:15. "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The most powerful word in this verse is the word "choose." Paul wrote, "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death [separation from God], or in obedience resulting in

righteousness?” The theme of this verse is that we have two choices. We can either chose to be a slave to sin or a slave to obedience which leads to righteousness. Some of the best news that we can gather from this verse is that the power of Satan is limited by human choice.

The vast majority of this world’s population choses slavery to sin (Matthew 7:13-14). They can also influence family and friends to join them in evil practices. Paul wrote that although they may know the ordinances of God, “that those who practice such things are worthy of death” and that they “give hearty approval to those who practice them” (Romans 1:32).

This past week America witnessed the largest mass killing in its history, by a man who was intent on killing as many people as possible, including himself. The question becomes, “Is it God’s will that this tragic event happened?” Absolutely not! But it is His will that people on earth have the power of free choice, and many will make evil choices that affect innocent people. Jesus said, “You are of your father the devil and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him” (John 8:44). The wisest man to ever live wrote, “There is an evil which I have seen under the sun and it is prevalent among men” (Eccl. 6:1). It has always been that the innocent suffer because of the decisions of others. Jesus said, “the blood of righteous Abel still cries out” (Matt. 23:35). Wicked Cain’s decision to murder affected not only innocent Abel, but Cain’s descendants. Often, the problem of human pain and suffering does not lie in any place other than man himself. We don’t understand why there are horrific events such as we saw this past week. But as Christians we are called to minister against evil wherever we see it.

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