

When the Enemy Attacks

Part 1 - Why Satan Attacks

One truth in the life of every believer is that at some point in our spiritual walk with Christ, we are going to engage Satan. Whether it is in the garden of Eden or in the garden of Gethsemane, the bible is replete with stories of men and women of God that, while committing to serving the LORD, are approached by the cunning devices of Satan. If we are not equipped to understand the strategy and intent of our enemy, we will poorly prepare ourselves for and/or against those moments of Satanic engagement. This study is designed to help us prepare ourselves proactively to be effective in defending ourselves and our faith journeys against the attack of the adversary.

Why does Satan attack at all? What is the intent of his attack?

Satan attacks believers for the primary reason of **preventing the move of God to be completed in the world**. Each person that gives his or her life to Christ has a divine assignment to do in this world for the kingdom of God. If they miss the work that they are called to do, then the move of God in the lives of others that would have resulted from their obedience will not be done.

Satan primarily attacks to produce two results: **deception** and **devouring**. Satan's first desired outcome is that the believer actually be deceived into not opening themselves to those truths that would lead to a healthy relationship with the LORD. His desire is to blind them from both the truth of the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:3-4) and the truth of God's word (Ephesians 4:14-15). Satan will attempt to prevent us from receiving the truth that will allow us to become fruitful and productive believers (Luke 8:12).

Satan second desired outcome is that the believer has his or her ministry work and/or witness devoured (1 Peter 5:8). Satan attempts to guide the believer into behavior that would cause them to lose their effectiveness to complete the calling upon their lives. His intent is to cause them to be ineffective in their work (1 Timothy 6:10). They are in such a state of existence that they lose their fruitfulness and ability to produce ministry (John 15:5, Romans 6:22) that would be beneficial to the faith and lives of others. Also, Satan attempts to damage your walk to the extent that you lose your witness (1 Corinthians 10:31-33) and cause others to not give their lives to Christ.

1. Have you ever noticed that Satan attacks most when you are about to be used by God for ministry?
2. Have you ever experienced Satan twisting the truth of a situation so that you did not reflect the character of God in how you responded to it?
3. Has there ever been a time in which you noticed that you were not as effective or operative in ministry after you had a negative spiritual experience? Have you noticed how scared you are to be used by God when you commit a sin?
4. How would your walk of faith benefit from knowing Satan's motive for attacking you?
5. How should you respond from this point forward when Satan attempts to attack you?
 - a. What's going on in my life and ministry?
 - b. What is the truth?
 - c. How will this response affect the work that God is calling me to do and the witness that I need so that others will see presence of Jesus Christ in my life?

When the Enemy Attacks

Part 2 – How Satan Attacks

We will often miss the attack of Satan because we have been trained to think of demonic attack as some overt assault of a dragon-like or monster-like figure pursuing us. Though the attack and the pursuit are just as real, they are not going to be encountered in that form. We usually don't recognize the attack because it is designed to be portrayed in a manner that is more likely to be accepted into our lives. In many cases, we don't even realize that we have experienced Satanic attack until we are left reconstructing our lives after the attack is over. This second part of the study is to open our eyes to the method used when Satan attacks.

“Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil.” -Ephesians 6:11

Paul, in his letter to the church at Ephesus, closes this letter with a conversation on the realities of spiritual warfare and how to find success in such moments of warfare. Included in this passage is this verse reminding Christians to prepare themselves spiritually with the “armor of God” so that they can withstand the “tactics” of the Devil. This word “**tactic**” is also translated “**schemes**.” What it suggests is that when Satan attacks, he is very methodical in his approach. He doesn't just randomly attack, he schemes and carefully plans a successful attack against you. Paul also calls him “the Devil.” This name for the enemy points to him as **a liar, slanderer, and deceiver**. Our enemy ultimate strategy is to develop and craft an effective plan that will misguide you through deception.

How is Satan so effective? Shouldn't we see an attack of Satan coming from a mile away? The key reason that we usually miss satanic attack is that it is a covert operation. Listen to Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:3:

“But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your minds may be seduced from a complete and pure devotion to Christ.” -2 Corinthians 11:3 (HCSB)

The reason we often miss the attack of Satan is because of the nature of his attack. His attack is not designed to be overt, it is a “**cunning**” approach. He specializes in being “**crafty, deceitful, clever**” in his attack. His goal is to appear as an “angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14) and ultimately trick the believer into adopting practices that are outside of the will of God. Paul reminds them that the battleground that Satan uses is the mind. The Devil's primary motive is to “**seduce**” or “**corrupt**” our **minds** (more specifically, our **thoughts**). The understanding of the word “corrupt” suggests that Satan guides something into a place of **depravity** and **harm**. Satan intention is to move our thoughts from being devoted to Christ (Philippians 4:8) to entertaining things that are not in line with the will of God and will cause our behavior to become corrupted in a way that will bring harm to ourselves and others (Mark 7:20-23). Paul uses this example of Eve (Genesis 3:1-6) and reminds the believers that in the same way that Eve was deceived to enter a sinful decision, we can also be guided away from the truth of God's word and ultimately out of line with Gods will if we are not careful.

How do I protect myself against Satanic attacks? I would recommend three things:

1. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit when He brings scriptures to your remembrance as a way of encouraging you to follow Christ.
2. Ask yourself if following through on a given thought is going to be harmful or helpful to your fellowship as a Christian.
3. Consider whether or not the behavior that follows the thought reflects the word of God, if not then it is not of God.

When the Enemy Attacks

Part 3 – When Satan Attacks (1 Peter 5:8)

The enemy is primarily effective because he is a very strategic foe. One of the greatest strategies is that the enemy knows when to begin an assault on the believer. He specializes in finding the opportunities with a “high success rate” of defeat. Therefore, this study is designed to give us a revelation concerning when the enemy is most likely to attack our lives.

There are usually five times that you can expect Satan to attack:

1. *When we're taking significant steps for spiritual growth*
2. *When we're invading enemy territory (evangelism, mission trips, reaching out to people in the community)*
3. *When we're exposing Satan for who he really is*
4. *When we repent and make a clean break with the world, a long-held pattern of sin, or an unholy relationship*
5. *When God is preparing us individually or corporately for a great work for His glory*

As an individual believer, the Word of God shows us three distinct times when we are more highly targeted for Satanic attack:

1. When we are hungry - Matthew 4:1-4 - We see that Jesus is led to the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. However, the “Tempter” didn't come to Him until after He was hungry from fasting forty days. We, as humans, have a different level of vulnerability when we are hungry. According to Healthday News, research shows that when we are hungry, our serotonin levels are affected. Serotonin is the hormone in the brain that allows us to control our behaviors. When we are hungry, the levels drop and we are less able to control our actions, including our responses. The enemy targets this time because our “guard is down” and we are more likely to act on impulses that encourage ungodly behavior.

2. When we are tired – 1 Peter 5:8a – Peter reminds the church to be sober and vigilant because of the potential for satanic attack. This command seems to suggest that satanic attack is more likely when you are sleepy or tired. Is this true? Think about when you are the most argumentative. Isn't it usually when you are tired or sleepy. Our resistance seems to be down when we are more tired. Research shows that when we are tired, the amygdala (the part of our brain's limbic system that causes intense emotions, such as aggression and fear) is over exaggerated our fear and anger. Thus, we are more likely to respond with an ungodly fear or anger when we are sleep deprived. This creates the perfect platform for Satan to introduce corruptive impulses into our lives.

3. When we are angry – Ephesians 4:26-27; James 1:20 – In the first passage, Paul reminds the church at Ephesus that there are going to be moments that cause us to become angry at something or someone. However, it is necessary that we not allow that anger to cause us to do something that is outside of God's will. Paul goes on to remind us that we are to be very careful to not allow our anger to linger in our hearts and in doing so, give place to the devil. Because the natural response to anger is to do respond aggressively, we must be very careful to not house anger in our hearts for an extended period of time. When anger stays entertained by our hearts or thoughts, there is the greater chance that it can become a platform for Satan to operate in our lives. It becomes the basis for dissention, malicious behaviors, and other higher levels of interpersonal conflict. James reminds us that the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. Our aggression is never going to be able to produce righteousness. Therefore, we must be very careful to allow the Spirit of God to show us how to handle our anger through healthy expression, suppression, or calming.

As a Christian, be attentive to your faith journey by making sure that you eat, rest, and do your best not allow your anger to linger. By doing this, you will keep your guard up and become vulnerable to satanic attack.

When the Enemy Attacks
Part 4 – Weakness of Satan’s Attacks

RESISTANCE

James 4:7b - “...Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

If we are to experience victory in the moments of potential satanic attack on our lives, it will only happen when we are able to resist the temptation of the enemy. How do we resist the attack of the enemy?

FAITH

1 Peter 5:9a – “Resist [the Devil] and be firm in the faith.

Peter reminds us that if we are to have an effective resistance against the onslaught of the enemy it will require that we are **firm in the faith**. What is it that our faith does that allows us to resist the attack of the enemy?

Ephesians 6:16 – “In every situation take the shield of faith, and with it you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”

The shield in this passage was about four feet high and two and a half feet wide. It had hooks on the sides to link it to other shields in a line so that an entire row of soldiers could advance without exposing themselves to incoming arrows. It was common for enemies to dip their arrows in pitch, light them, and then pelt the opposing soldiers with thousands of destructive, flaming missiles. So the Romans made their shields with iron and two layers of wood, wrapped them in linen and covered it all with leather. But they would leave a gap between the layers so flaming arrows could penetrate far enough into the shield to be quickly extinguished.

This ability to quench arrows that have the potential not only to pierce but also to start destructive fires is what faith does for us. **Faith** in this context means **absolute confidence in God**, his promises, his power, and his program for our lives. This kind of faith refers to our present trust in Jesus for victory over sin and demonic hosts. Claiming God’s promises in the Word by faith, trusting in his unchanging character, and holding up his truth will deflect and extinguish all of the enemy’s lies.

If we are to defend ourselves against the attack of the enemy, it will require that we allow what we know about God (and our enemy) to be the faith that uncovers the deception of the Devil and positions us to remain faithful in our worship of God.