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Satan in Perspective

Reflections [Prayer, Repentance and the Spiritual Life](#) 18 July 2013

[Matthew 18:20](#)

[Ephesians 6:11](#)

We congregate in Church as part of the corporate body of Jesus Christ. We do so primarily to worship Him, and to thank Him for upholding us in times of joy and sorrow. We gather together in the firm conviction of the promise of Jesus Christ: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). We seek fellowship in one another's company, to share and to unburden ourselves; we also learn the Scriptures in depth from our pastors and elders. Can Satan also be in the midst of us?

At the end of it all, we are required to lead our lives reflecting Jesus Christ in every action — at home, at the workplace, in society, and at Church. It becomes a matter of serious concern, then, when others claim to see the reflection of Satan in us. It is a concern for both parties, and needs to be dealt with promptly. The problem may not lie with us, or with the person who perceived the reflection of Satan in us; it cannot be as simple as that. Satan is deception incarnate. He stays in the background, and quietly does his dirty work.

The question before us is whether the evil one can possess our minds in a physical sense. Perhaps we are overstretching the point in thinking along those lines. We may be overrating the capabilities of Satan by supposing so. Having said that, I would also add that we may be underrating Satan in believing that he has no access to our minds at all! He has such access, and he exercises it in a very clandestine manner. Satan can certainly influence our thoughts. When we are weak in faith, when our motives are self-centred rather than Christ-centred, when we have failed to put on the full armour of Jesus, Satan promptly settles upon our shoulders, and begins to murmur into our ears, ruling our minds. Paul prescribed the safeguard thus: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).

We hear of satanic forces prowling among Church congregations, at home, and elsewhere, influencing the minds of people and rendering them destructive forces in many ways. I have heard people speak of the presence of evil forces in our midst, even during worship services. My first response was a reactive one, but this talk set me thinking, and I undertook some research on the subject from a biblical perspective. There are many schools of thought on the matter, and it would be stretching things somewhat to attempt to discuss them all in this brief reflection.

I said that Satan gains access to our minds through his constant murmurings. This murmuring is not physical; we do not hear him speak. Yet it can pierce into our minds, and it is then that we lose control of our composure, and our actions become unpredictable and irresponsible. We hurt ourselves, and those around us. Here is a quotation from an article by Hank Hanegraaff: "The whisper cannot be discerned with the physical ear; it can, however, penetrate 'the ear' of the mind. We cannot explain how such communication takes place any more than we can explain how our immaterial minds can cause the physical synapses of the brain to fire; but that such mind-to-mind communication takes place is indisputable. If it were not so, the Devil could not have tempted Judas to betray his Master, seduced Ananias and Sapphira to deceive Peter, or incited David to take a census."

This can happen to anyone, without exception — laypeople as well as clergy. When we see an intricate design in the trouble around us, we should recognise that Satan has probably begun his work some way back in time. Before we realise it, we are under attack from the evil one. He works through all those who are unmindful of the warnings Scripture gives us; he afflicts those who fear him. This can become contagious, in the sense that Satan will use the most influential among us to influence others in turn.

If there is one thing Satan hates, it is people congregating in fellowship and love for one another, for the sole purpose of worshipping Jesus. If we go unguarded, without the armour of God, he quietly begins his work of dividing us in every way he can. Soon we see disagreements, quarrels, politicking, blackmail, abuse of the pulpit, and more. We may point fingers at one another, without realising that the one influenced by Satan is standing aside, allowing the discord to escalate. Look closely, and you will find him with his deceptive smile, standing aloof, pretending to be righteous. I found this fitting, from the same article by Hank Hanegraaff: "No doubt much to the Devil's delight we often depict him as either a cartoonish clown with an elongated tail, red tights, and a pitchfork — or as a cultural caricature. Far from silly or stupid,

however, Satan appears as a cosmopolitan angel of enlightenment. He knows full well that without our spiritual armor we are but pawns in a devil's game. In the final analysis, the whole of Scripture informs us that spiritual warfare is the battle for the mind."

We must unite against the formidable force of Satan, with prayer and supplication, putting on the ever-protective armour of Jesus. Amen.

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