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## How Satan Gains Access to Work in our Lives

### Part 15: Love of the World

On the surface “the world,” as often used in Scripture, would seem to be an expression of man’s way of life without God. More accurately, however, it reflects the way man lives not only without God but also under the insidious influence of Satan (John 14:17; 17:25; Eph. 2:2; 1 John 2:16; 3:1). Satan has had direct access to man’s inner being ever since the Fall, when he gained dominion over him (Rom. 6:16; Col. 1:13). I believe his inner domain is represented by what came to be called “the flesh” in the New Testament, as it is described as being without any good, hostile towards God, and totally incapable of pleasing Him (Rom. 7:18; 8:7).

By working covertly through the flesh of every person who is not surrendered to the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16), Satan is also able to exert significant dominion over the moral environment of the world as well as its political maneuverings (Dan. 10:13, 20; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 1 John 5:19; Eph. 2:1-3). The only deterrent to this dominion is the presence and work of the Holy Spirit within the children of God and the competing kingdom which He is establishing in their hearts (Luke 17:20-21; 2 Thes. 2:1-10). Satan can never usurp the ultimate authority that Jesus Christ has over all of heaven and earth or that the Holy Spirit has in hearts that are yielded to Him (Mat. 28:18; 1 John 4:4).

Satan’s initial ploy within his sphere of dominion seems to be to draw man’s focus away from God and onto self and pleasure. This is readily seen in the self-centered, materialistic bent of the world, which is characterized by the lust of the flesh (what feels good to self), the lust of the eyes (what looks good to self), and the pride of life (what lifts up self) (1 John 2:16; cf. Eph. 2:1-3). While this hedonistic way of life may have a façade of glory (Luke 4:6) and even a measure of wisdom (Luke 16:8), its glory is transient (Isa. 40:6-8) and its wisdom lacking (1 Cor. 1:20; 3:19-20). In the end it leads to death (Prov. 14:12).

While believers have been redeemed from Satan’s dominion, we must unfortunately still live within it. Jesus, who lived and walked in the world Himself, understood its pervading darkness and the spiritual battle we would daily confront as we carry on His work on earth. He prayed not that God would remove us from the world but that He would protect us from its ruler, the evil one (Mat. 28:19-20; John 12:31; 14:30; 15:19; 17:15, 18; Eph. 6:11-12; 1 Peter 5:8).

God has indeed given us everything that we need to triumph over the world and the underlying hand of Satan that wants to entrap us in it (2 Cor. 10:4; 2 Peter 1:3-4; 1 John 5:4-5). Our first and foremost resource is the Holy Spirit imparted to us at salvation (Rom. 8:9; Eph. 1:13). His union with our own spirit gives us the awesome potential to experience His own divine nature within us! To the extent that we allow Him to have pre-eminence in our hearts and to transform our lives to manifest the character of God, we will be able to overcome the desires of the flesh and escape the corruption of the world (Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 6:17; Gal. 4:19; 5:16; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 2 Peter 1:4). By walking in truth, righteousness, peace, and faith, the character traits which God designed to serve as our spiritual armor, we will also be protected from the schemes of the devil (Eph. 6:10-16).

In addition to this vital internal submission, our success is also crucially dependent on our external actions. Just as a soldier engaged in active service for his country separates himself from the affairs of life, so our calling as

ambassadors for the kingdom of God requires a diligent separation from the things of the world (2 Cor. 5:20; 2 Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11-12; James 1:27). Paul tells us to consider ourselves dead to them (2 Cor. 5:14-15, 17; Gal. 6:14; Col. 3:5). The reason for such a strict call to separation is that even by dabbling around the periphery of worldly activities, whether in real life or vicariously through the TV, internet, or fantasies of our own minds, we enter Satan's playground. Once our appetite is whetted to desire more, Satan has won a victory and gained a stronger inroad into our lives (James 1:14-15). We have essentially defected into enemy territory, choosing Satan's deceptive pleasures over the pure and genuine love of God. We cannot enjoy both (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15).

The time will come when God will dramatically intervene and put an end to Satan's dominion, but in this age He has chosen to allow the battle between His kingdom and Satan's to be waged within the hearts and minds of mankind, always ready to respond positively to their faith, prayers, and effective use of the spiritual weapons he has given them to triumph over evil (Josh. 24:15; Mark 11:24; John 16:23-24; Rom. 8:5; Gal. 4:29; 5:16-17; 6:8?; Heb. 4:16; James 1:6-7; 1 John 5:4).