

# Overcoming the Adversary

We recognize that there is a great spirit power which exists that represents good, but also that there is a great power that represents evil. We read in I John 4:4-5 of two “great” powers: *“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.”* These two great individuals are, of course, our heavenly Father and Satan the Devil. The greatness of both of them is not disputed. Yet, we are strongly admonished throughout Scripture to flee the wiles of Satan and cling to the Father and to Jesus Christ His Son.

## The Greatness of Satan

Let us not minimize the greatness of this powerful spirit individual whom Peter says *“... walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”* (I Peter 5:8). This spirit being has several names, and his names tell us what he is.

**Satan** (as in Revelation 12:9). Greek *Satanas*, “an adversary, opponent, enemy.”

**Devil** (as in Revelation 12:9). Greek *Diabolos*, “slanderer, a treacherous informer, traitor.”

**Great dragon** (as in Revelation 12:9). Greek *Drakon*, “a dragon or large serpent.”

**Old serpent** (as in Revelation 12:9). Greek *Ophis*, “a serpent, or serpentine character.”

**Adversary** (as in I Peter 5:8). Greek *Antidikos*, “an opponent in a lawsuit, an adversary.”

**Beelzebub** (as in Matthew 10:25 and Luke 1:18). Greek *Beelzeboul* “the ruler of the demons”; demon = Greek *daimonion*, a heathen god, deity, demon, evil spirit.”

Possessing all of those titles, it is clear that Satan is the enemy of us all, and since he is a “great spirit” is essential that we *know this enemy*, and know him well, not to practice what he is trying to advance in us and the world but to identify his personage so we may resist him.

Some Bible scholars claim there are several “grades” of evil spirits, citing Ephesians 6:12 as a source:

**Principalities.** Greek *arche*, “a beginning.”

**Powers.** Greek *exousia*, “authority.”

**Rulers of the darkness of this age.** Rulers = Greek *kosmokrator*, “rulers of this world”; darkness = *skotos*, “blackness (opposite of light).”

**Spiritual hosts of wickedness.** Wickedness = Greek *poneria*, “wickedness, i.e. lawlessness.”

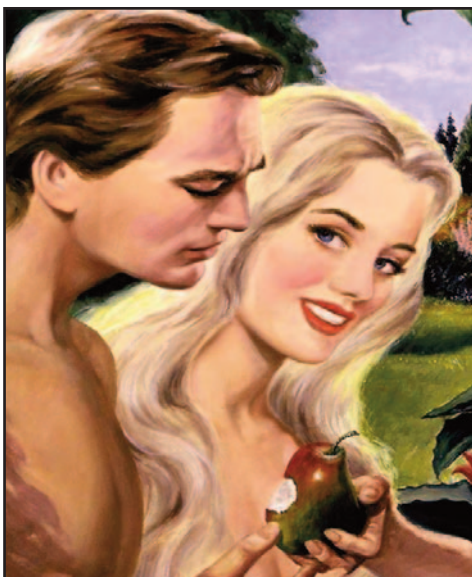
I personally do not ascribe to this graded meaning of spirits in Ephesians 6—though there likely are different ranks and levels of power and authority within the dark demonic realm—but rather I believe these terms reveal generally the responsibilities and authorities within the lawless world of demons. According to A.T. Pierson ([www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com)), there are ranks of evil spirits analogous to the government in a city or state—police, educators, businesspeople, etc.—and after the revolt depicted in Revelation 12:4 they carried over the ranks they had before, with Satan, the chief demon, masterminding the entire rebellion.

This evil demon also has marvelous wisdom and knowledge, in particular of how to penetrate into the human heart and mind, if allowed to do so. He knows how to deceive and mislead. Besides, Satan is a “civil engineer” in constructing fortifications to make the evil strong—which he does so well in this present evil world—and to repel the good, and with his great familiarity with evil (lawlessness) he can cast arguments and misquote Scripture that may tempt even the most mature Christians. Note how he tempted Jesus in the wilderness with subtle arguments that even included offer-

ing authority over the world's nations (Matthew 4:1-10).

### He That Is in You Is Greater

Let us return to I John 4:5, which states, ***“He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world.”*** Do you comprehend that? The spirit of Jesus Christ, and of our heavenly Father, which resides within us, is GREATER than that of Satan the devil! Jesus Christ in His glorified state is all knowing (John 16:30), possesses all power (II Chronicles 20:6), has perfect wisdom (Daniel 2:20), contains unmatched holiness (Leviticus 19:2), and is destined to rule the nations to replace Satan from his current throne on the earth, and obliterate this arch-rival (Revelation 19:16). The spirit, the nature, the character of this Champion of ours today rules within our hearts! The devil can never replace that spirit unless we let him ... and we will discuss how to prevent Satan's inroads into our lives a bit later.



### We Must Overcome

One basic message of Scripture is that we must “overcome” to be with God's Kingdom. Jesus' message to the seven churches of Asia Minor made this abundantly clear:

***Ephesian church.*** Overcomers will eat from the tree of life in Eden (Revelation 2:7).

***Smyrna church.*** Overcomers will not be hurt by the second death (Revelation 2:11).

***Pergamum church.*** Overcomers will be given hidden manna, and a white stone with a new name written on it (Revelation 2:17).

***Thyatira church.*** Overcomers will be given power over the nations (Revelation 2:26).

***Sardis church.*** Overcomers will be clothed in white garments, will not have their

names blotted out from the Book of Life, and their names will be confessed before the Father and His angels (Revelation 3:5).

***Philadelphia church.*** Overcomers will be pillars in God's temple, will go out no more, and will have written on them the name of God, of God's holy city (the New Jerusalem), and Christ's new name (Revelation 3:12).

***Laodicea church.*** Overcomers will sit on Christ's throne alongside the Father (Revelation 3:21).

Since these incredible rewards are only given to the “overcomers”, we must ask what is to be overcome. The word **overcome** comes from the Greek *nikao*, and means “to conquer, overcome, vanquish, and subdue.” It is the same root used to describe the Nicolaitanes, who were a notorious lot noted for their proclivity to rule by force and domination over the ecclesia (Revelation 2:6, 15), much like governments of men do over their citizens to maintain control.

control.

The answer to overcoming is given in Revelation 12:11: ***“And they overcame him [the ‘accuser of the brethren’, verse 10] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death.”*** It is Satan the Devil who must be overcome, the same powerful being who confronted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and deceived them into sinning. Our battle is like theirs was, only we must not succumb to the Devil's wiles and be denied entry into the beautiful Garden that is coming to this earth, a Garden akin to the one that our first parents were thrust out of about 6,000 years ago.

Our quest in overcoming is really no different than the purpose for which Jesus came to this earth: ***“The Son of God was manifested that***



*He might destroy the works of the Devil*" (I John 3:8). We are following in the footsteps of our Elder Brother, who has set the example for us. We, like the disciples in Christ's day, have the power to cast out demons in His Name (Mark 16:17).

One may question whether Satan is the only entity we must overcome. We know from James 1:14-15, *"...but every man is tempted by his own lust; he covets and he is enticed. Then when lust has conceived it brings forth sin; and sin, when it has matured, brings forth death."* Yet, this tendency to exercise human nature and sin has been passed down to us through all generations, from Adam after he sinned in the Garden (Psalm 51:5), so while man made the decision to sin, yet it is Satan who was responsible for tempting Adam and Eve in the first place. On his head rests the burden of sin, and this reality is captured in the personification of the "scapegoat"—the Azazel goat—on the Day of Atonement rituals, where the sins of Israel were placed on the goat's head before being led out into the wilderness, where he was let go far from the camp of Israel (Leviticus 16:21-22).

### **The Character of the Evil One We Must Overcome**

This arch-enemy of Jesus Christ and of the elect is indeed a powerful being, but he is limited in what he can do by the Father's word. Note that reality in Job 1 and 2. Let's closely examine his nature.

**1. Satan and the demons' character.** These

spirits are notorious for exhibiting and encouraging the "lusts of the flesh", which Paul outlined as follows in Galatians 5:19-21.

- Adultery
- Fornication
- Uncleanness
- Lewdness
- Idolatry
- Sorcery
- Hatred
- Contentions
- Jealousy

The list could go on even further. Moreover, Satan is the father of lies (Genesis 3:4-5; John 8:44), as well as a murderer (John 8:44), and his tactics are brutal (I Peter 5:8).

### **2. Satan and his henchmen rule over the world's nations.**

*"... whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe ..."* (II Corinthians 4:4).

*"Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out"* (John 12:31).

*"... in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience..."* (Ephesians 2:2).

### **3. Satan and demons want to retain control of the world rather than have his throne replaced by Jesus Christ and the saints.**

When Adam appeared in the flesh on earth, Satan did everything he could to subvert the newly-installed keeper of Elohim's Garden and government on earth. He did so in the subtle ways only he could devise, first lying to a gullible Eve and then have Eve coerce Adam into eating of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:1-6). Satan told Jesus in the wilderness temptation that all the nations of the world were his to give Jesus if He would bow down and worship him (Matthew 4:8-9). When the end of the age arrives, the nations under Satan's dominion will fight Jesus Christ and His armies to the death, but he will not prevail, and will be shut up in the abyss for 1,000

years (Revelation 19:19-21; 20:1-3). After the 1,000 years he will be released, only to foment war again, and be utterly destroyed in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-10).

**4. Satan wants to be worshipped** (Matthew 4:9; Luke 4:7). He wants to be equal with our heavenly Father, at the top of an authoritarian pyramid that he has constructed in his own mind (Isaiah 14:13-14). He does not understand love, which constructs no authority hierarchy.

### How Do We Overcome?

This malevolent arch-enemy of ours must be overcome, and as we have read in I John 4:4-6 we overcome Satan by the power of Elohim within us: *"... greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."* The same spirit by which our Creator fabricated the universe, this earth, and all that is in it now resides within us! Only by this means can the elect confront and overcome the Devil who is lurking stealthily in secret places trying to destroy us.

**We must battle Satan and his demons head-on!** Our calling is not for the squeamish or faint of heart. As he seeks to gain our allegiance, to include us beside the vast majority of mankind that has been lulled to sleep by his devious means of education, sports, the internet, and any other means at his disposal, we must exercise the spirit of God He has placed within us to its maximum. Take, for instance, the lesson of David when he confronted Goliath.

*"Then David said to Saul, 'Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.' And Saul said to David, 'You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.' But David said to Saul '... Your servant has killed both lion and bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God'"* (I Samuel 17:32-33, 36).

We know very well the rest of the story. Replace the name of Goliath with the name of Satan the Devil, for Goliath epitomizes evil and Satan in these verses.

*"Then all the assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear, for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands.' So it was, when the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, that David hurried and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. Then David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone; and he slung it and struck the Philistine in his forehead ..."* (I Samuel 17:47-49).

Like David did with Goliath, and like Jesus Christ did with Satan in the wilderness, we must meet the enemy head-on and not fear him, but like Jesus Christ answered when offered the world's nations,

*"Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve'"* (Matthew 4:10).

The spirit of God in us gives us the power to confront and put down the Adversary. We must resist this powerful spirit, as James 4:7-8 makes clear. Resist is from the Greek *anthis-temi*, meaning to "oppose, resist, stand out against."

*"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded."*

The formula for resisting Satan is given in these very verses of James, as three points.

**1. Draw near to God and He will draw near to**



**you.** How is this done?

II Chronicles 15:2. You must *seek Him*, and *stay close to Him*.

Isaiah 66:2. God is close to those of a *poor and contrite spirit*.

Psalms 34:18. God draws near to those who are *contrite of heart*.

Psalms 145:18. He is near to them who *call upon Him*.

Isaiah 57:15. God draws near to him who has a *contrite and humble spirit*.

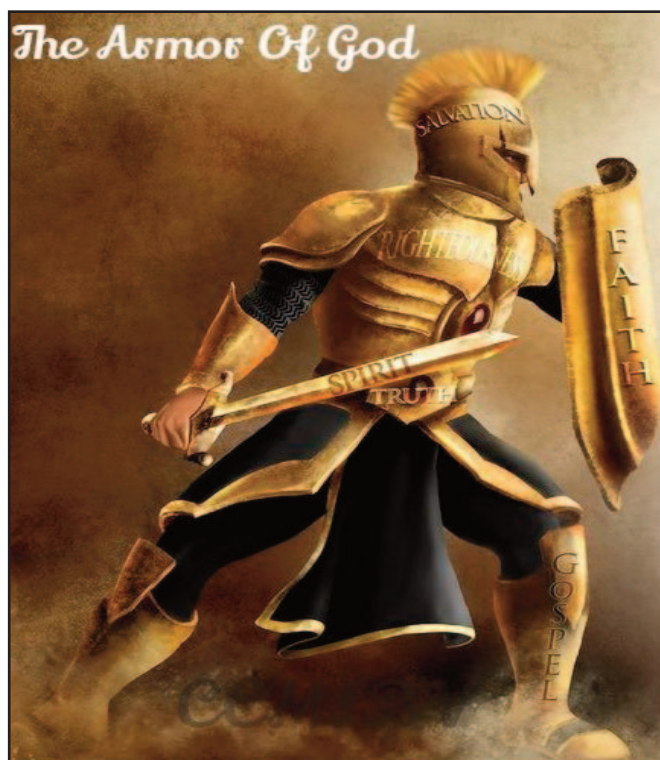
**2. Have clean hands. Cleanse** comes from the Greek *katharizo*, meaning “to cleanse, render pure, purify.” This implies being free of sin, and while we sin daily we are cleansed continually by the blood of the Lamb when we discover our sin, and come to Him asking for forgiveness.

I John 2:1. If we sin we have an advocate in Jesus Christ.

I John 1:7. We are cleansed by Christ’s blood.

I John 1:9. We are cleansed from sin when we confess them to our Father in heaven

Hebrews 9:14. Christ’s blood cleanses our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.



**3. Have a pure heart. Purify** in James 4:8 comes from the Greek word *hagnizo*, meaning “to purify, purify morally, reform, live like one under a vow of abstinence”. Such a meaning implies directly that we are to abstain from the lusts of the flesh, or sin in any form.

### More Solutions

We have a great arsenal at our fingertips in this process of overcoming. We have **God’s word**, and we know that **prayer** and **meditation** are to be a part of our daily lives, keeping our minds focused on what is really important while living day to day, moment to moment. We also have the **fellowship** of God’s brethren to serve as a focus of our overcoming, to give us encouragement within a discouraging world, a darkened society because of its darkened author.

Here are some further thoughts to help us conquer this evil, sinister being who tries to destroy us.

**1. When facing temptation, get out into the natural world.** Take a walk amongst the flowers, trees, plants, and other greenery, beneath the azure blue sky and stately clouds. Watch the butterflies and bees, feel the breeze in your face, drink in of the sun in its might. In the winter bundle up and see the beauty of a canopy of white covering the land, the intricate artistry of snowflakes and frost, and the awesome power of blizzards and snowstorms. These are all powerful evidences of almighty God, assurances that He is present within

you and will not let you down so you can resist the Destroyer.

**2. Memorize scriptures so God’s word is ever-present in your mind**, so in times of testing you can recite them, and send Satan fleeing from you, as Jesus did when He said, **“Away with you, Satan! For it is written ....”** You can fill

in the words.

**3. Avoid situations, if you can, that you know are going to trigger evil thoughts, words, or actions.**

If you are prone to consuming too much wine, don't keep the bottle too handy. If you are prone to watching pornography, put blocking software in your computer ... or better yet just resolve to not look at it. If you find it hard to stay focused on your prayers, try different approaches and learn to walk with God all day, as Enoch did (Genesis 5:24). Avoid reading ungodly books, about witches and demons, and avoid ungodly television and radio programs. Note what Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 33:14-16: those who will dwell with the Almighty will avoid oppressing others and bribery, will close their eyes from seeing evil, and will stop their ears from hearing of bloodshed.

**4. Sing psalms—God's word set to uplifting music—or listen to such music.**

Righteous music is a delight to the spirit, and caused the evil spirit to leave Saul when David played on the harp (I Samuel 16:14-23). Do not be deceived into listening to modern so-called Christian music which is patterned after rock and roll, jazz, rap, and other ungodly genres that will drive your mind in Satan's direction.

**5. Express thanks for all that God has done for you.**

By diverting one's attention to God in thanks, the Adversary can find no room to enter in. We are told, "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Jesus Christ concerning you" (I Thessalonians 5:18).

**6. Wrap your existence in serving others,** for in so doing Satan cannot find a point of entry into your mind and spirit. When you are intent on doing good towards all, especially towards

the household of faith, and selflessly seek to understand and fulfill the needs of others, and do not reward evil with evil, there is no room for Satan's attitudes in your life (Matthew 7:12; 25:31-46; Galatians 6: 9-10; Romans 12:14-21).

Take on the whole armor of God, which is indicated in Ephesians 6:11-18 immediately after verse 12, which mentions the evil spirits against whom we fight.

- \* Waist girded with truth
- \* Breastplate of righteousness
- \* Sandals of the gospel of peace
- \* Shield of faith
- \* Helmet of salvation
- \* Sword of the word of God

With these tools we can truly overcome the forces of Satan the Devil and his henchmen. But, we must take action, using the energy of the spirit within us to move forward, to take territory away from Satan who is trying desperately to make inroads into our minds and spirits.

While writing this message I was making good progress when suddenly a fly began pestering me, causing distractions as if it was a messenger of Satan himself to defeat and confuse my thoughts. As the fly continued to afflict me, I finally decided to take action. A fly swatter was procured, and with a mighty swat the pesky insect was smitten to the ground!

We likewise can strike out against the Adversary though the power of God's spirit, and like David running toward Goliath with a sling strike a devastating blow to Satan's attempts to distract us from living righteous lives. We have the tools, and we have the spirit to drive us forward, for "*... He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world!*" (I John 4:4).

