

Spiritual Practices for Thriving Life

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Know Your Enemy

Can you recall a time when it felt all the world opposed you?

What feelings did that situation provoke? How did you respond to those feelings?

Take seriously the concept that Satan's only use for you is to worship him. How does this change your plan for responding to the circumstances of life?

Isaiah 14:12-14 – ¹²How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! ¹³You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit on the mount of assembly on the heights of Zaphon; ¹⁴I will ascend to the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High."

I) His Nature...

You're feelings are correct, the world is against you. God is not—He is always for those who love Him. There is another heavenly being who opposes us. The devil, Satan, Lucifer, the evil one...he is known by many names. The Bible treats him seriously and we should too. God's wisdom would have us first know our enemy, who he is and what he wants. As we seek to know him, we will learn how to defend ourselves against him and live victoriously. As we will see, we are not his end. We are the primary means to his end. This insight turns us toward Jesus's sure path into the kingdom of heaven.

◆ **Radiant:** When it feels like the world is against us, it comes in forms large and small. Minor inconveniences we ignore to insurmountable confrontations causing despair. Some opposition is passive. Others are intentional acts of an enemy of some sort. Most of us intuitively take all this into account in deciding how seriously to take a situation. Our spiritual enemy is formidable. God Himself respects him. He is

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described as the “Day Star, son of Dawn (Isaiah 14:12),” names used by idolatrous nations to refer to their gods as radiant beings. Ezekiel writes about him that “Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor (Ezekiel 28:17).” Satan is a worthy adversary, one we disregard at our peril.

◆**Wise and beautiful:** Satan is no outsider, no obvious opponent. He is the most dangerous kind of enemy. He is a traitor who knows our ways and those of our God. He is a corruption of splendor, “the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty (Ezekiel 28:12).” He was “in Eden, the garden of God (Ezekiel 28:13).” He uses this knowledge to our harm, being the one “who laid the nations low (Isaiah 14:12)!” He is a terrible force who shames and destroys us for the sake of his splendor. For this treachery he is “fallen from heaven (v12),” and “cut down to the ground (v12).” It took God casting him down and Jesus’s obedience unto death to defeat him. He is a mighty, one we should fear if not for the protection of Jesus.

II) His Desire...

Made splendid, beautiful, and wise, Satan’s heart is convinced that he is worthy of worship. He is discontent as the signet of perfection. He aspires to be a god, one who is independently glorious. God denies this desire as absurd. So, Satan turns to the rest of creation in pursuit of being raised up as a god. His desire depends on other created beings denying the truth that all glory belongs to God the creator. This is the great lie, the deceit that incited our original sin. Here we see the necessity of our demise for the sake of his aspiration. To identify Satan as a god is to reject truth, become idolaters, and forsake God for his creation. This is the essence of the confrontation between the devil and God. The devil’s desire requires opposing the will of God, which means opposing our good.

◆**Worship me:** The devil is wise. He understands we will refuse him if he reveals his will to us. Instead, he acts with cunning. He knew us at the beginning and subtly uses this knowledge to tempt us away from truth until we lose all memory of the One True God. Once we enter this state of confusion, we are vulnerable to Satan’s command that we worship him. We would have no means to resist if not for the grace of God. Our God does not leave us unprepared for the battle we must face. He reveals to us what He declares to Satan, “You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven (v13).’” His heart’s only desire is to ascend to heaven as a god. This is his only reason for engaging with us. He plans to keep the nations laid low, living in sinful deceit, so that

he may be lifted high. Satan’s desire depends upon us, but he does not love us.

◆**Insatiable hunger:** He is not content to be lifted high among mortals. He does not want to be known as a created being whose existence glorifies God. He says, “I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit on the mount of assembly on the heights of Zaphon (v13).” Satan refuses to complacently serve God. He chooses the glory of being worshipped as a god, even if temporarily, over an eternity of being loved as a faithful servant. That’s the purpose Satan desires for us to fulfill. He demands our worship. But as many of us have learned, lies do not satisfy. Being worshipped as one of many false gods leaves him hungry. He craves the ultimate fame.

III) His Blindness...

We flatter ourselves if we believe Satan is interested in us for our being. His purpose for us goes no further than as the basis of comparison with God. He perceives existence as a competition for fame, one he believes he can win. We are Satan’s scoreboard. God reveals that in his heart Satan believes that the nature of a true god depends on worship. If he can compel enough of us to worship him, he will become the true god. Interesting, isn’t it, that this is the source of our fall, too (Genesis 3:5).

◆**Relentless:** The devil is insatiable. He will relentlessly pursue each of us regardless how many he has vanquished. His objective requires him to cause each of us to worship him, the essence of our defeat, so that he will “ascend to the tops of the clouds (Isaiah 14:14).” For this reason, each of us can anticipate countless kinds of attacks throughout our life as he seeks some undefended way to our heart. We are wise to remember that for Satan, existence is a competition for worshippers.

◆**Deceived:** His quest for worshippers betrays his blindness to God. The Bible reveals over and over that God creates and destroys. His being was not threatened when He flooded the earth and destroyed nearly all humans. Nor was His sovereignty overthrown as Israel disobeyed Him. God is God by His eternal existence. He is I Am. The devil was created and will be destroyed, regardless how many are deceived into worshipping him. We plainly see his self-deception in the idea that he can “make myself like the Most High (v14).” We cannot make ourselves other than we are—we can only corrupt ourselves from God’s original design. And that is the only end Satan has planned for us. Choose victory by glorifying God as you rejoice in your being regardless the external attacks of the devil.