

The Unregenerate Walking According to Satan

Text: Ephesians 2:2

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Ephesians 2:2 teaches that the unregenerate walk “according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” This verse, together with verses 1 and 3, gives one of the most profound descriptions of the sinner’s state outside of Jesus Christ.

Man is dead in trespasses and sins. Yet this spiritual death is not inactivity. The unregenerate walk, lust, and desire; the devil works in them so that they disobey God. They are alive to sin but dead to God. They live in trespasses and sins and are entirely governed by three related powers: the world, the devil, and the flesh. Their whole existence is defined by disobedience, and they are called “children of disobedience.”

They do not serve God but another master—the devil, whom they follow willingly. This is total depravity. It is not that they cannot move or speak, but that their whole being is estranged from God and fixed in rebellion against Him. The wrath of God is upon them because of their spiritual state. They are in bondage to sin and Satan. Though hard to believe, this is the clear teaching of God’s Word. Faith receives the truth about sin, Satan, and salvation. And only through acknowledging our bondage can we be brought to trust in Christ for deliverance.

The Subjects of Satan’s Kingdom

Satan has a kingdom, more real and powerful than any earthly one. Colossians 1:13 refers to it as the “power of darkness,” and Ephesians 6:12 mentions the “rulers of the darkness of this world.” The devil is a prince—a singular, personal monarch. His kingdom is not a democracy where the ungodly vote or rule together. It is not anarchy. It is a monarchy with Satan ruling alone. He does not share his throne. He is the prince of the power of the air. That realm is his; he governs his subjects with real power. It is a personal kingdom because Satan is a personal being—he thinks, wills, deceives, and accuses. He even takes people captive at his will (II Tim. 2:26). He is not an abstract force. He is a living spirit, the originator of lies, and the sworn enemy of God and man.

His first subjects are the *demons* – fallen angels who chose to follow him. They are his willing servants, and he is the prince over them. But Satan’s kingdom also includes all *unregenerate humans*. Men, women, and children outside Christ are the children of disobedience. They are not neutral. They are born sinners, fallen in Adam, and by nature under the dominion of sin and Satan. This includes every child of unbelieving parents from conception. And Satan hates his own subjects. He encourages abortion and promotes their destruction. He wants them in hell as quickly as possible.

God’s judgment for man’s sin is that he is *born* into Satan’s kingdom. We were no different before our conversion. We were, says verse 3, “by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” We were not slightly better. We were just as fallen, guilty, and depraved. God’s grace alone makes the difference. Satan’s seat is described as “the air.” He does not rule from heaven, for he is cast out and has no access (Rev. 12). He does not rule from earth either, for God gave the earth to man. And he does not rule from hell, which is not a dominion but a place of punishment. The world lies when it presents hell as Satan’s throne. No – hell is the place where God punishes Satan.

The air is fitting for Satan’s dominion. It is not heaven, not earth – it is *in between*. Satan is a spirit, and the air is the domain suited to spirits. He is not omnipresent, but he moves about. His throne is mobile. Scripture teaches that good angels are around us (Ps. 34:7), and I Corinthians 11:10 says angels are present in church worship. Likewise, evil angels are near. Elisha saw angels surrounding him as horses and chariots (II Kings 6), and by analogy, the evil angels encircle the ungodly. The Greek word translated “air” in Acts 22:23 refers to the atmosphere just above the earth. I Thessalonians 4:17 also uses the word to describe the region where we meet the Lord. The devil is near to men, close as the air they breathe.

Satan’s kingdom is *spiritual* – not in the good sense usually attached to the term “spiritual,” but in the evil sense. Ephesians 6:12 calls it “spiritual wickedness in high places.” His kingdom is not made up of cities, armies, or parliaments. It consists of the rule of sin through demons and ungodly men. Satan is more interested in promoting wickedness than wealth. Though he may use riches as tools of temptation, sin is his goal. His kingdom has unity in evil. He unites men and demons in rebellion. All demonic power is one great power under his leadership. His subjects are all coordinated in sin and opposition to God.

This kingdom is the opposite of Christ’s. Ephesians 1:20–23 describes Christ’s exaltation: He is raised above all principality and power, and all things are put under His feet. God gave Him to be Head over all things to the church. Satan rules temporarily in the air, but Christ rules over all. He is King not just by grace

in the church but by power in providence. Even Satan's realm is subject to Him. Christ brings His elect out of Satan's kingdom, transferring them into His own. The question is therefore urgent: which kingdom are *you* in? If you obey God, you belong to Christ. If you disobey Him and go your own way, you belong to Satan. The unbeliever finds this doctrine too spiritual, too invisible—but that unbelief proves the point. Faith believes what God reveals. The child of God believes in both kingdoms and knows that Christ rules for the church's good.

The Objects of Satan's Working

The unregenerate are not only in Satan's kingdom—they are also the objects of his working. Satan doesn't merely rule over them from a distance. He works *in them*. Their conduct is "according to" him. Their lives match his wishes. They speak, act, and think in ways agreeable to him. There is a diversity of sins, but all are rebellion. They each go their own way, but never God's way. If Satan were incarnate, unbelievers would mirror his moral character. He was a murderer, and they hate. He was a liar, and they reject the truth. They cannot love or believe.

Jesus said of some: "The lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44). The unregenerate do not resist Satan. They follow his will. He leads, and they obey. They are captives, taken at his will (II Tim. 2:26). They may not know it. Most do not call themselves Satanists. But they still serve him. They are enslaved, willingly or unwittingly.

Satan works in the hearts of unbelievers. Christ, in the parable of the sower, said that the devil snatches away the Word (Luke 8:12). When the gospel is preached, he comes like a bird and steals the seed. Judas Iscariot had Satan put an idea into his heart (John 13:2). Ananias had his heart filled by Satan to lie (Acts 5:3). Satan deceives (II Thess. 2), provokes (I Chron. 21), and entices (I Kings 22). He works through lies and wicked thoughts. He can possess, inflame, and direct people. He acts internally, not merely externally.

Before the Fall, Satan could not work in Adam or Eve. Nor could he enter Jesus Christ, who was sinless. But in the unregenerate, Satan works in their sinful nature. He does not force them in the sense of compulsion. They sin freely because they love it. Their will chooses sin. One prefers pride, another envy, another immorality. But they all love sin. That is their shared bond.

This is terrifying for those who understand it. If you realize this describes your state, it should drive you to Christ. But if it all seems too fantastic or invisible,

then the devil likely has already snatched the truth from your heart. You do not believe because you are of your father, the devil.

The good news is that Christ delivers. He is stronger than Satan. He binds the strong man and sets captives free (Matt. 12:29). He redeems some—brands plucked from the fire. If you begin to see your sin and Satan's grip, it is the work of grace. The believer hears all this and says: that was me! I served sin. I didn't want to be free. I thought Christ's yoke was slavery and Satan's was liberty. I thought I was living the good life. But I was dead in sin, deceived. And Christ delivered me by His cross. I now know I was a child of wrath, no better than others. But God's grace translated me into Christ's everlasting kingdom. The believer gives thanks for this unspeakable gift and longs for the day when Satan's kingdom is destroyed forever and all the elect are brought into eternal glory.

Our Father in Heaven, grant us the blessing of a strong faith that receives Thy word. Help us, Lord, to incorporate this aspect of Thy teaching, too, into our own lives, that we understand light and darkness, the Kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of Belial, that we and our children find all of our safety in the reign of good King Jesus. Forgive afresh our sins and renew us, this day, and thy worship. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.