

Why does God allow Satan to live?



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“You were blameless in your ways
from the day you were created
till wickedness was found in you.”

- Ezekiel 28:15

Restoration Movement Literature

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When answering the question above, we must first realize that God *could* destroy Satan (1 John 3:8); He has instead chosen not to destroy him *yet* (Romans 16:20). In fact, we are told his destruction is coming (Revelation 2:10). So the only question we are really asking is, “Why does God allow Satan to live *presently*? Why doesn’t God just get rid of him now?”

The primary reason is that God – when he created both angels and man – gave them free will. “Free will” implies the ability to choose and do both right and wrong; below, it will be demonstrated that both angels and man have this choice, and both have chosen both right and wrong, with the consequences of each choice either having been rendered and/or will be rendered at a predetermined time.

This is what is meant by God’s “justice” – what is right will be rewarded, and what is wrong will be punished (Psalms 37:28). God’s grace is not incompatible with His sense of justice, because in grace sin is still punished; but instead of our legal debt of sin (Colossians 2:14) was put on Jesus (1 John 2:2; 4:10). What an unbelievable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:15)

There are many other Scriptural reasons given as to why God allows Satan to live presently. Other reasons listed out below show God’s superior wisdom in waiting, God’s present “leash” on Satan, Jesus’ handling of temptations by the devil and the flesh as an example for us, the devil’s defeat is timed to maximize the glory of God, God cannot and will not lie, and finally do we trust God knows what He is doing? Faith demands we must!

Let us start with the greatest gift God ever gave man or angel, which also means it is the gift with the greatest potential for abuse: “free will.”

1) Humans are not the only created beings with free will; angels have free will as well (2 Peter 2:4). Throughout the Bible, there are instances of angels doing good or choosing wrong, and the consequences follow (Jude 1:6). Satan’s initial evil ambition is recorded in Isaiah 14:13+14, of course made manifest in his temptation of Eve in Genesis 3. Proverbs 26:28 tells us that “a lying tongue hates those it hurts”; Satan’s lies to Eve showed his disdain for God’s creation, and it was his chosen in the garden that made him the malicious, spiteful, and hateful entity he has been since (1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:12).

a) The flip question might be, “Why does God allow any man, woman, or child who opposes him to live?” This question is directly answered by 2 Peter 3:19 – God wishes every man to repent, and is willing to be patient with them to give each that opportunity.

b) The Parable of the Tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43) answers this for us also – the owner of the field (God) tells the harvesters (angels) not to uproot the tares (evil people) as it would uproot the wheat (faithful Christians) with it: imagine if God uprooted every opposed mother, father, husband, wife, scientist, farmer, utility operator, or contractor upon their opposition to him? Where would that leave those left behind? To raise their children alone or to leave children orphaned, to live without their inventions or to plant and reap all of their own food? No, God knew it was wise not to uproot the tares until the end of time, when He could “store” the harvest of wheat under His own permanent care and burn the tares in isolation.

It should also be noticed that the “Parable of the Tares” directly contradicts the popular theory called “the rapture.” The word “rapture” is never found in the Bible and this parable directly teaches that at the end of time that the tares will be gathered **first**; so tell me, do you want to be “raptured” or “reaped” first? **NO!**

Any theology that teaches terms that are not Biblical, with ideas that contradict Scripture, should be thrown out as “tares” themselves!

2) God **does** have Satan on a leash; God does have a “governor” on Satan, so to speak, that limits how far he can tempt us; Satan is not allowed to tempt us beyond what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). The book of Job (the oldest book of the Bible) deals with this reality directly, where Satan actually has to ask permission to tempt Job (Job 1:12, 2:6), and to what degree.

God is still in control at all times (Psalms 2:1-4; Proverbs 19:21; Isaiah 45:6+7; Matthew 19:26; Hebrews 2:8). Therefore, Satan is still ultimately subject to God, which undeniably is a punishment in and of itself for Satan now.

3) Mankind deals with temptations born of both the flesh (Matthew 26:41; James 1:13+14) and the devil (2 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; Revelation 12:9). Jesus dealt with the same temptations we do (Hebrews 4:15).

As well, Jesus dealt with both kinds of temptations *at the same time* when he was tempted by the devil in the wilderness (Matthew 4 and Luke 4): He was both hungry and tempted by the devil to exercise his power; He was both destined to the cross while tempted by the devil to take a shortcut to temporary riches and earthly power. He was destined

for humiliation and beatings but tempted to exercise infinite power at his disposal.

By allowing Satan to survive, God demonstrated to man - past, present, and future - that Jesus as a man, tempted in the harshest of ways, was able to live without sin. Jesus' triumph over temptation is an inspiring example of how our flesh is only hopeless without Him!

4) God's glory is made even more manifest when men flee the devil and choose God's way instead: Joseph's incident with Potiphar's wife – where he literally fled from sin (Genesis 39:12; also see James 4:7) – resulted in a temporary, earthly unjustness (Genesis 39:20) – but God had a much greater plan that would result from it (Genesis 50:20).

Sometimes we view our temptations and failings as nothing but failures, but God always has and still sees opportunity in every broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17; Romans 8:28). God *has always been in the business* of saving man from sin, unto good and better things! (Ephesians 2:10)

5) Undeniably, Satan's final defeat will result in a maximum demonstration to all people of God's unlimited might and ability. If God just "shot Satan in the head," Satan's defeat would be a blip on the pages of spiritual history. If God allows Satan to live for awhile, tempt, and even "build an army" to fight God in an epic battle and Satan *still* loses, then God's power is indisputably greater than any angelic force with any degree of reinforcement. This is the direct idea behind Revelation 20:8-10. Satan's defeat will be absolute, final, and show God's victory over all opposed to him in every way!

6) The Bible tells us that Satan will be defeated permanently at a later, predetermined time (Revelation 20:10). If God chose to do it now

instead, He would be contradicting Himself, lying in effect, and would render both His own character and His own Word as inaccurate.

Scripture tells us God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19; Hebrews 6:18; Titus 1:2) so therefore, He will not defeat Satan before He said He would.

a) Some would argue that when God makes a prediction like this, He is necessarily “pigeon-holing” himself (limiting his options, not being sovereign). Truthfully, however, God has been doing this since the beginning of time with prophecy – when God said that Messiah Jesus would be born of the race of Shem (Genesis 9:26), this was now an immutable fact that would not be changed. When He said that Nineveh would be destroyed and remain that way forever (see the entire book of Nahum), this has been true since that time and is still true today. God will not allow Nineveh to be rebuilt (the most recent failed attempt was by Saddam Hussein from 2000 to 2003, until his defeat and capture).

b) When God makes a prediction, He is the one making the prediction – otherwise by His own authority and power, He voluntarily and solely surrenders a degree of sovereignty to accomplish a specific purpose. For example, Jesus did this very thing by becoming man (Philippians 2:1 ff), “not considering equality with God something to be grasped” (Philippians 2:6). Jesus was and is God; the idea behind the verse is that because he is God, He alone can temporarily, voluntarily – without compulsion – surrender part of that sovereignty to accomplish a specific purpose (for God “in the flesh” to die for the sins of the world – 1 John 2:2).

When Jesus became a man born in the tribe of Judah, by nature He could not be a priest in Israel (Hebrews 7:14), as they were only of the tribe of Levi (Numbers 18:1 ff). Jesus, being a man, also gave up the

ability to be in more than one place at once, or to do more than one thing at a time, like any other human being. Otherwise, God, in the flesh as Jesus, limited Himself – *through His own* sovereignty and power, *limited His own* sovereignty and power, to accomplish a specific purpose – namely to live as the perfect human example – to die a perfect sacrifice – as the perfect eternal priest (after the order of Melchizedek – Psalms 110:4; Hebrews 5:10), so to bring forgiveness to all who would believe in Him (John 3:16). Ultimate power is not limited; Jesus demonstrates His infinite power as God by being able to have it, surrender it, and take it up again, at His sole will (John 10:17+18).

7) If we disagree with God how He is running the universe, we have to ask ourselves by what knowledge or authority can we assume that we have the better solution in smiting the devil now?

There are secret things of God we are not told in Scripture (Deuteronomy 29:29), and so even if no other answers satisfy us, this one must – that we are not God, and we must trust He knows what He is doing. If we do not, it is truly questionable if we have any faith in God at all! Hebrews 11:6 – “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” May we trust the Lord; He knows what He is doing! (Proverbs 3:6)