

THE SPIRITUAL MIND AND THE WILES OF THE DEVIL - Biblical Lessons for Victory Over Darkness - Part one - Sunday, December 3rd, 2023 - Sanctuary Class
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2 Corinthians 2:6-11 - "For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, [7] so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. [8] So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. [9] For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. [10] Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, [11] so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs."

The study of the designs of the Devil was basic early church curriculum. Paul wanted to dispel **ignorance** about how the Devil planned and orchestrated his schemes among people. This is important for the church today because, while we are witnessing a real revival of interest in **spiritual warfare** in its more dramatic forms (binding and loosing, spiritual mapping, territorial spirits, generational curses, and the like) there is very little interest in the most **common**, and **destructive** operations of the Devil among believers.

Our text is a classic example of this. A member of the church had been disciplined for misconduct. Now, after some period of time, he had come to the Lord in repentance. Paul reminds the church to receive this person back into fellowship and friendship, lest he become overwhelmed by remorse and discouragement. Then, as if to remind these Christians, Paul says **there was more than just a human factor involved in this whole process**. The Devil wanted to get his hand into this whole situation to turn a positive process into a destructive one. And Paul says these Christians needed to be **aware** of Satan's plan to do so.

1) **SCHEME NUMBER ONE** - *To weaken people's resolve against temptation by showing only the side of sin that appeals to our immediate desires*

The Christian who has been trained by the world (or even the church) to live life on a quest for **personal fulfillment** will never stand against the schemes of the Devil in the race for holiness. The Devil **preys** on people with a misdirected craving for personal satisfaction and fulfillment. He never **delivers** those things. But he loves to use that **desire** in our hearts to quench spiritual life on God's terms.

Genesis 3:4-5 - "But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. [5] For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' This was how Satan baited Eve. He couldn't care less about Eve or Adam. He knows they will never find what they are looking for on his terms. It's their **desire** for these things that interests him. He offers them the bait, while hiding the hook.

SCRIPTURAL REMEDIES AGAINST THIS SCHEME:

- a) ***Make the glory of God the only dominant motive in your Christian walk.*** Remember you were put here to satisfy **Him**. Only as you and I do that will we find **self-fulfillment as a by-product**.

This principle is at the heart of Paul's oft quoted words in **1 Corinthians 10:31** - "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." God's glory is the **only safe motive** for any activity. This principle must be remembered - **kept vivid** - in the most ordinary, mundane activities of every day. Even in things like eating and drinking.

- b) ***Keep the greatest distance possible from things that can pollute or distract your soul.*** Give the Devil as little to work with as possible. As clever and industrious as he is, he will take and use whatever we carelessly give him. This is the wisdom behind the oft quoted opening verses of Psalm 1 - "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; [2] but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night."
- c) ***Think long and hard on the deceitful nature of sin and the cleverness of the Devil's approach in temptation.*** - **Hebrews 3:13** - "But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

The implication of those words is clear. I am not **spiritual** enough, and I am not **smart** enough to avoid Satanic entrapment by myself. We need the influence of **“one another”** to stay spiritually clean and sharp. Safety against the enemy increases in direct proportion to involvement in the local church.

- d) ***Don't rely on your own judgement at the point of temptation.*** This follows from the previous point. The Devil works to cloud your reasoning process **before** the actual point of temptation comes. He **prepares** you for the direction he's going to pull your heart. Don't rely on **last minute good sense** to keep you from sin. Store up God's Word in your heart every day, even if you don't see the immediate application for it yet - **Psalm 119:11** - **“I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.”**

2) **SCHEME NUMBER TWO** - ***To make our revulsion of sinful practices seem prudish and narrow-minded by renaming old sins with more attractive, up-dated and socially acceptable names***

The Devil knows that if sin were presented **unmasked** it would have no appeal to sane people. He must always present sin in a gilded form. He has **two purposes** in this:

- a) ***If possible, he would like to entice Christians into sins they would normally find repulsive in stark, Biblical terminology.*** This is why it is important to study a Biblical translation that trains the mind in alertness to the softening influence of our culture in naming immoral activities. Tolerance must never be used as an excuse for changing the basic meaning of words.
- b) ***If he can't lead Christians into these sins, he still wants to silence their voice against them by intimidating them into bashfulness.*** By softening the tone of the **world** against sin, he knows he can make it harder, and more costly, for **Christians** to go against the current of the world.

REMEDIES AGAINST THIS SCHEME:

- a) ***Christians must remember (they know, but they must remember) that an activity is no more transformed by a name change than a medicine is changed by switching its label. 2 Corinthians 11:14 - “And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”***
- b) ***Discipline your mind enough to always take a long view of sin's effects.*** Take each moral situation out of its **immediate** context and place it before the judgement seat of Christ. **2 Corinthians 5:9-10** - **“So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. [10] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”**
- c) ***Keep your life full of the Word of God.*** How easy to forget that the Word has power to shape my life long after it has been studied and digested. In other words, you don't have to experience **immediate** delight in study to be greatly benefitted by it. - **Psalm 119:105** - **“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”** The path that most needs lighting is the **moral** path. The light God's Word gives us is a **moral/spiritual** light.