

THE SPIRITUAL MIND AND THE WILES OF THE DEVIL - Biblical Lessons for Victory Over Darkness -
Part two - Sunday, December 10th, 2023 - Sanctuary Class
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2 Corinthians 2:11b - “....so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.” Even though it is true that, “*greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world,*” Paul still says *human ignorance will give the Devil the advantage in our lives.* In other words, human ignorance about the Devil’s schemes can nullify the upper hand the Lord’s presence would normally bring. Such is the importance of this study. Today we continue with a look at a third and a fourth “design” of the Devil.

3) **DEVICE NUMBER THREE - To make some sins look small by comparing them with others that seem more serious.**

He usually does by acknowledging something improper in my life, but then quickly pointing out other people who do **worse** things - things I would **never** do. In this manner, Satan constantly works hard to make our sins appear as little more than **common vices**, or **innocent weaknesses** when compared to the horrendous evils we read about in our newspapers. His plan is to leave a person feeling **narrow-minded** and **prudish** for allowing his mind to be so agitated over his petty sin.

REMEDIES AGAINST THIS SCHEME:

a) ***Seriously and deliberately consider the deadly consequences of seemingly “small transgressions” in the Scriptures.*** In God’s eyes, the sinfulness of any act is measured by the **heart behind it.** Adam and Eve (and the whole human race was affected by this too) were banned from the garden and the tree of life because they ate a piece of fruit. But the sinfulness of that act was rooted in something much deeper than dietary disobedience. All sins, even seemingly small violations, are always rooted in human pride and willfulness against God.

This is why, in spite of the fact that there are **degrees of punishment** for different sins (see **Luke 12:47-48, Hebrews 10:29**), **all** sin receives severe punishment and separates the soul from its Maker and Redeemer.

b) ***Always remember that Satan’s plan is to soften the will against greater sins by accustoming our conscience to smaller ones.*** The Devil never plans to take your life over in an instant. He conquers by **encroachment.** He cools your attachment to Jesus by **gradual degrees.** It is always a **step by step** process.

Ecclesiastes 10:12-13 - “The words of a wise man’s mouth win him favor, but the lips of a fool consume him. [13] The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness, and the end of his talk is evil madness.”

Psalms 1:1 - “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....”

Psalms one describes the **progression of wickedness** from the stage of merely **listening** to the words of the wicked, to the stage of **acting on their wicked words**, to the final phase of actually **laughing at - mocking - the very standards once held precious.**

c) ***It is important to remember that “small transgressions” actually betray Christ in the greatest way.*** Consider what I mean. It would be a terrible thing to betray a friend for a million dollars. But it would be even **more** degrading to betray him for a dollar seventy-five. The Christian who would betray Christ afresh for a **“lesser sin”** shows the smallest possible love and value of Jesus Christ. In short, the **smaller** the transgression, the **greater** the betrayal.

d) ***Fill your mind with the great examples of saints in the Scriptures who chose to suffer***

terrible consequences than allow even the slightest deviations from God's will. There are so many examples of this. Daniel would rather be thrown to lions than bend his knee before a statue. He would risk his life before he would altar his prayer habits. All he had to do was pray with his windows closed!

- 4) **DEVICE NUMBER FOUR - To present God to the uninformed mind as being SO merciful, He is nothing BUT merciful.** This is Satan's scheme to those of us who have had enough religious experience and instruction to have already **received** God's mercy and are **filled with thanks** for the mercy we have received. Rather than **deny** the reality and power of God in our lives, Satan works to **distort and deform** the nature of the God we actually worship.

REMEDIES AGAINST THIS DEVICE:

- a) ***Seriously consider God is as JUST as He is MERCIFUL.*** It is helpful to call to mind that God's love has never yet **cancelled out his justice** in the record of the Scriptures. Examples abound:
- i) **2 Peter 2:4-10** - In His goodness, He created a host of angels, yet still cast out of heaven and into eternal darkness all who followed Satan in disobedience.
 - ii) **Genesis 3:23-24** - He created Adam and Eve and blessed them with an environment of paradise, yet cast them out of the garden when they disobeyed His will.

These examples are required reading for all disciples. The teaching is, God is abundant in mercy. He is gracious to all who call upon Him. But mercy is never offered to those who **persist** in disobedience. The richness of God's mercy is offered to all who **forsake sin**. Not to those who **persist in sin**.

- b) ***Remember, sinning against mercy always brings more severe judgment in the Scriptures.*** Jesus makes this point especially clear:

Matthew 11:20-24 - "Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. [21] "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. [22] But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. [23] And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. [24] But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you."

- c) ***Those closest to God's heart will always use mercy as the strongest incentive to purity of life - Psalm 26:3-5*** - "For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness.[4] I do not sit with men of falsehood, nor do I consort with hypocrites. [5] I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked."

Mercy, properly understood and appreciated, promotes **holiness**, never **indifference**. See also **Romans 12:1**, and **1 John 2:1-2**.

"There is nothing in the whole world that renders a man more unlike to a saint, and more like to Satan, than to argue from mercy to sinful liberty. This is the Devil's logic, and in whomsoever you find it, you may write, 'This soul is lost'" - Thomas Brooks