

THE SPIRITUAL MIND AND THE WILES OF THE DEVIL - Biblical Lessons for Victory Over Darkness - Part three - Sunday, January 7th, 2024 - Sanctuary Class
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The theme text for this series of studies is **2 Corinthians 2:11** - "...so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes." Then, in the light of that text, we looked at those wonderful words from the Apostle John in **1 John 4:4** - "You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world." So we're to stand in hope on those great words from John, yet heed the warning of the admonition from Paul. We are not to *nullify* the tremendous advantage we have been given - the great power of the Spirit of Christ in us - by walking in ignorance of the Devil's schemes.

5) **SCHEME NUMBER FIVE - The Devil schemes to persuade the tempted soul that repentance is an exclusively human work, easily attained whenever we need to use it.**

It would be hard to count the number of times I've heard these words in one form or another: "Pastor Don, I know what I'm doing isn't exactly right. But everyone else is doing it. So it can't be all that bad. Besides, If and when I *do* need to be forgiven, I can always repent of these sins *afterwards* and receive God's forgiveness *then*."

This raises a crucial question: ***Can I, as a serious follower of Jesus, willfully enter into a course of sin, while trying to pre-book my forgiveness for those sins later on down the road?*** Can I ***pre-book forgiveness*** the way I ***pre-book seats*** on an airplane? The Devil wants us to think we can, and for a very good reason. While he's not interested in repentance at all, he knows he can still comfort us by using the *term* while changing its *meaning* (remember our lesson on the importance of meaning in our words?). He knows it is very unlikely we *will* genuinely repent later on. The Devil knows it is far more likely I will become ***hardened and bogged down*** in the sins I pursue. Repentance isn't as easy as we think. This is what makes this scheme so effective.

REMEDIES AGAINST THIS SCHEME:

a) ***Seriously consider that the work of repentance is a mighty and spiritual work, not turned on and off merely at the impulse of human whim.***

Before you commit *any* sin, there are two consequences of that sin the Devil wants to hide from you:

- i) ***He wants you to minimize the serious guilt all sin brings before the throne of God.*** We've already studied some of his scheme to accomplish them.
- ii) ***He wants to hide the bondage sin produces.*** He works hard to make repentance and grace easily manufactured on our schedules. This is really the focus of today's study. The Scriptures constantly warn us away from such a trite concept of repentance:

Jeremiah 13:23 - "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil." My chances of turning from evil to righteousness aren't good. They're about the same as the leopard changing his spots into stripes. In terms of the effectiveness of sheer will power, once you grow accustomed to evil, you usually *stay* there. You come to justify it and like it. See again **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..." This is the *normal* progression into sin. It leads in the *opposite* direction of repentance.

- b) ***Seriously consider that repentance, while reaching and involving the human will, is shallow, powerless, and lifeless unless the Holy Spirit empowers it to the human***

mind and heart.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 - "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, [25] correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, [26] and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will."

- i) **People are quickly "captured" by what they think are totally free choices.**
 - ii) **God must actually grant repentance to those so held captive by sin.** People can't *wish* their way out of sin. They must be *delivered*.
- c) **Learn, and frequently call to mind, the nature of true, Biblical repentance**

- i) **Repentance involves a deep personal shame for sin.** Many people seek the Lord for grace only when they've been broken by the *pain* of the **consequences** of their sin. Such repentance will only bring temporary relief from the repetition of those same sins later on. **Romans 6:21** - "But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death." Real spiritual transformation can never have a pleasant beginning. Only *shame* for sin put the person on the road to renewal.
- ii) **Repentance involves a cutting out of the life the sins repented of.** **Isaiah 55:7** - "...let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

These verses capture beautifully the heart of Scriptural, fruitful repentance. True, God loves to pardon. In fact, He loves to **abundantly** pardon. But we must understand what is involved in **coming to the Lord** for pardon.

See also **Luke 3:8-17**. These verses describe John's message of repentance as he prepared people for receiving the kingdom life Jesus was coming to bring.

- d) **Always remember repentance brings a permanent change to the repentant heart.**

I can't truly repent while planning and indulging in present and future sins. Repentance doesn't just **change my standing with God**. It fundamentally **changes my attitude toward sin**. Paul talks plainly about this in **2 Corinthians 7:10-11** - "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. [11] For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter."