

**THE SPIRITUAL MIND AND THE WILES OF THE DEVIL - Biblical Lessons for Victory Over Darkness -**  
**Part five - Sunday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024 - Sanctuary Class**  
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**2 Corinthians 2:11** - "...so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs." In order to trip us up spiritually, the Devil knows he must **gain** an advantage over us that he would not normally possess. That's because, under all normal conditions, the One living in our hearts is **greater** than the one in the world (1 **John 4:4**). This means the Devil can't simply **force** his entrance into our minds and hearts. He must resort to **plying his schemes on our ignorance**. That is what makes this such an important study. The Devil simply does not want Christians knowing his schemes. Remove the ignorance and you remove much of the Devil's destructive power. We've studied seven of the Devil's schemes. Today we will consider two more, along with some corresponding remedies.

8) **SCHEME NUMBER EIGHT - The Devil works to cause us to consider ourselves more holy than we are, only because he lures us into comparing ourselves with those more obviously unholy than ourselves**

We sometimes think the Devil's only tactic is to cause us to **deny** the existence of our own sin. This is simply not true. He can achieve much the same end by simply fostering in my heart a **less serious** view of my sin by drawing my mind away from how terrible my own sin is, to how horrible someone else's sin is. This lessens my perception of my own guilt.

Human pride is fed, and repentance made less likely, when we **compare ourselves with others more wicked than ourselves**. This is why the Bible constantly warns of the danger of **"thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought"** (**Romans 12:3**). And the most common way of thinking more **highly** of ourselves than we ought is to think **lower** thoughts about someone else. Jesus gave a stark portrait of how common this habit was, even in religious people: **Luke 18:9-11** - **"He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: [10] "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. [11] The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector."**

Imagine, the Devil is at work even in this Pharisee's prayer! That's how blind we can become to his schemes in our lives. That's the kind of ignorance Paul was warning about. This Pharisee was never going to come to repentance. All the Devil had to do was provide the presence of one visible sinner beside himself. Once there are **two** sinners, comparison will serve the Devil's purposes just fine.

**REMEDIES AGAINST THIS SCHEME:**

- a) ***Remember, it is the ultimate form of sinful hypocrisy to use the wickedness of someone else to excuse my own sin***

This is the very sin Jesus exposed so pointedly: **Matthew 7:3-4** - **"Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? [4] Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?"**

- b) ***Fill your life with God's Word and make it your only standard of righteousness.***

**Psalm 119:26-31** - **"When I told of my ways, you answered me; teach me your statutes! [27] Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works. [28] My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word! [29] Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law! [30] I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me. [31] I cling to your testimonies, O Lord; let me not be put to shame!"**

See also **James 1:22-25** - **"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving**

yourselves. [23] For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. [24] For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. [25] But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.”

- c) *I must constantly remember that each sinner will be punished for his own sins, and that punishment will not be lightened in any way just because others are punished, perhaps even more intensely, for their sins.*

9) **SCHEME NUMBER NINE - Satan constantly points out the effort required to walk in God's ways. He works to discourage our efforts by reminding us of how hard it is to take up our cross and follow Jesus in this world**

Such is the scheme of the Devil. He would be there to remind the finder of buried treasure in Jesus' parable of how hard it is to dig such a hole on such a hot afternoon! He works to focus attention on the **digging** - not on the **treasure**.

**REMEDIES AGAINST THIS SCHEME:**

- a) *Focus on the value rather than the difficulty of the walk of discipleship.*

**2 Timothy 2:3-7** - “Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. [4] No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. [5] An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. [6] It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. [7] Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.”

In each of those three images (soldier, athlete, and farmer) there certainly *is* hard work. Yet in each, the **value** of the result makes the work fruitful and joyful.

- b) *Remember that all the tasks and challenges of discipleship will bring reward and joy if they are persisted in consistently.*

This is true both in this life and in the life to come. You don't enjoy **learning** to ride a bike. You enjoy **riding** the bike. The joy comes **after you have persisted in the discipline of learning to ride**. In fact, the joy is the **fruit** of the effort. And the Christian can trust in this same principle even more because we know our God is a **“rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”** Learn to trust in the Scriptural principle of reward. Never view the **cost** in isolation from the **reward**.

- c) *Learn to develop patience by keeping your mind focused on eternity.*

**Hebrews 12:2** - “...looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

We are told to more than merely **worship** Jesus. We are to **learn** from Jesus. Then we are to **live** like Jesus lived. He constantly filled His mind with the reward of the Father. The promise of reward is the **counterweight** to the discouraging schemes of the Devil.