

Remember, the Devil does his **best** work when he is **least** detected. Paul hints at this in our theme text: **2 Corinthians 2:11** - “....so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.” By **ignorant** Paul probably means **unaware**. He doesn't mean these people were simple or stupid. Rather, they were ignorant of the Devil's work in the sense of being **unaware of his involvement** behind their own thoughts, reactions and ideas. Satan does his best work when he can slip in and out of our daily routines undetected. So Paul warns of the kind of **mindlessness** that can come over people, even very bright people, as they assess their plans and reactions to daily events.

10) **SCHEME NUMBER TEN - The Devil labors to take Scriptural truth - truth with which he knows we will quickly agree - but apply it to our own situations in an unbalanced fashion**

Matthew 4:5-7 - “Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple [6] and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,'and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.' [7] Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'”

Here the Devil accurately quotes **Psalms 91:11-12** to our Lord. But he uses these wonderful words to an ungodly end. Jesus said the Devil was using these words to **“tempt God.”** The Devil was using righteous words to encourage unrighteous actions. This happens a great deal with some of the key doctrines of our faith. Consider how the Devil fosters erroneous ideas around the Scriptural truth of justification and redemption by God's grace. How many people have you met who have said something like this: “Jesus died on the cross to save us. What wonderful love He has shown! It is an insult to struggle against impurity and sin by human effort. Jesus paid it all! He died for all the sins in your past, and all the sins still in your future! So we don't have to do anything. Just relax and enjoy the day. Eat drink and be merry!”

Of course, there is much that is true in that package of thoughts. Jesus **did** pay it all. Salvation isn't by works, but by grace alone. So far, so good. But there's a snag in this whole process of thinking. True, we are **justified** by grace alone. The new birth is by the Spirit, not by the flesh. It is not a matter of works. But **sanctification** (the process of growing in daily obedience and holiness) **does** take a great deal of work and effort. And while it is true that I cannot, by my own effort, produce the fruit of the Spirit in my life, it is also true that the Holy Spirit will do nothing without my disciplined obedience and cooperation. So always be on the look-out for ways in which the Devil **uses one Scriptural truth to conceal another.**

REMEDIES AGAINST THIS SCHEME

- a) **In all your study of the Scriptures, give equal time to the study of promises to inspire faith, and commands to keep you diligent in duty.** Promise and precept must both be used in equal balance and proportion.

For examples of this see **Hebrews 10:23-25** - “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. [24] And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

See also **1 Peter 2:9-12** - “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. [10] Once you were not

a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. [11] Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. [12] Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evil doers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."

- b) ***Constantly remind your own soul that true saving grace is known by the diligence of devotion it produces.*** See Titus 2:11-14 for one of the best definitions of saving grace in the whole Bible - "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13] waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14] who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."

11) **SCHEME NUMBER ELEVEN - *The Devil works to distract your mind with empty, random, and even wicked thoughts just when you are trying your best to concentrate on prayer and meditation of God's Word***

This is one of his most successful ploys for discouraging Christians. We end up thinking how horribly unspiritual we must be that we would find our minds all gummed up just when we are anxious to be at our most spiritually alert and useful.

REMEDIES AGAINST THIS SCHEME:

- a) ***However thoughts enter your mind, you are not the owner of them until you host their life in your own mind.*** Here are two simple tests to apply to these times of distraction:
- i) Do these thoughts come most frequently when you are setting yourself for ***spiritual pursuits?*** The ***timing*** of these distractions can tell you much about their ***purpose***.
 - ii) Ask yourself ***why*** you find these thoughts so troubling. The very fact they are ***annoying*** to you should encourage you that they are not your own welcomed thoughts. If they had their origin purely in your own will, you would embrace them, not be bothered by them.
- b) ***Once you have detected the source of these thoughts, take steps to divert your attention and affection away from them.*** The worst thing you can do is wallow in false guilt. Here's some ideas: I frequently ***walk and pace*** when I have a hard time with distracting thoughts. Somehow it keeps me more alert and focused. I also find it helps, at least occasionally, to say your prayers ***out loud***. This keeps your mind focused on the words of your prayers. Also, shift the focus of your prayer time from intercession to praise and thanksgiving. This too, will help realign your concentration.
- c) ***Always comfort yourself by remembering that, even when our hearts are disturbed and agitated, Jesus knows the intent we have toward Him over the long haul of our lives. 1 John 3:18-20 - "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. [19] By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; [20] for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything."*** Our Lord measures our lives by the ***direction of our wills***, not the ***random thoughts*** that come and go. God is a better judge of my own heart than I. And usually He's more gracious too.