

Satan's Schemes

Spiritual Warfare, Session 4

Warm-up Question: If God granted you the ability to rid the world of just one type of evil, which one would you choose to eradicate? (For example; greed, lust, envy, etc.)

Demonic Deception

In the spring of 1925, Count Victor Lustig, who worked for the French Ministry of Works in Paris, and an American, Daniel Collins, met with five businessmen in a Paris hotel and explained that the famous Paris landmark, the Eiffel Tower, was in a dangerous condition because of rust. It was being sold for scrap and would have to be pulled down quickly to avoid the public outcry that would surely come about. Victor explained that the Ministry of Works was looking for bids from companies to sell the scrap to. Within a week the bids were in and Monsieur Poisson's bid was accepted. Then Count Victor shared that there was only one problem, he and his secretary required a bribe to help the deal go through the official channels of the French government. A large amount of cash was exchanged and the deal was on. Within twenty-four hours Lustig and Collins were out of the country with the cash. It was a big con! Embarrassed and humiliated, Poisson kept the big con to himself, and carried on as if nothing had happened. Encouraged by their success the con-men returned to Paris and repeated the con again on someone else.

Deception is a powerful tool of the enemy and if I could, I would love to take that tool out of his bag. Satan is a master at deception and his big con is being perpetuated all over the world. He is the ultimate clever con-man deceiving the world and the Church. Scripture tells us that he deceives the whole world (Revelation 20:3). Jesus warned us that his minion, Antichrist, will deceive many when he comes to power, claiming that he is the Christ (Matthew 24:5; 11). I believe that we are in a period of time that the Bible calls the Later Times (New International Version) or the Last Days (King James Version) and that a characteristic of the time period is that of deception by demonic forces:

¹ The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow **deceiving spirits and things taught by demons** (1 Timothy 4:1).

How does a person know if they are being deceived and taught by demons?

I have never heard a demon teach but demons use people to get their message across. How does a person know that the things that they are being taught are demonic in origin? Scripture tells us to evaluate everything by the written word of God:

²⁰ To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn (Isaiah 8:20).

The Law and Testimony refers to the Bible. Do you search and examine the scriptures to verify what is taught?

¹¹ Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and **examined the Scriptures every day** to see if what Paul said was true (Acts 17:11).

If what is taught lines up with the Word of God in its context, then it is safe to trust what is taught and let the Holy Spirit speak to you from His testimony about God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Demons seek to take you away from the simplicity of trust in Christ and His Word to listening and obeying false teaching that is not based on the Bible. How does Satan deceive the saints? (The Bible calls everyone who is born again of God's Spirit a saint) Is it possible? If Satan were to deceive a child of God, he would do it in a subtle manner. He would come as a counterfeit, an angel of light. A clever counterfeit must look very similar to the original article in order to be effective. That is why it is important to know and to follow the Word of God and let it be your "plumb line" for evaluating what you hear, especially if it is different and takes you away from the centrality and simplicity of the message

of Christ. False teaching can sound godly and appealing, but put it to the test. Does it glorify God and His Son Jesus, or does it glorify the person who is teaching? Does it follow the way of the cross, or is there another message that prevails throughout the teaching? False teaching will lead you away from the centrality of Jesus Christ and his message. Often false teachers have a message of exclusivity. They like to think that they are superior and that the truth resides with them alone. You can see this in many cults. This isolates the members and creates an “elite” mentality. The followers begin to believe that they have an exclusive message that is only being revealed to a small group, and they are “it!” How different Jesus was! Jesus sought to include everyone, and made his message so simple, that his teachings appealed to all different types of people in society. He did not disqualify anyone, and He personally sacrificed His life for all mankind. The attitude in Christ Jesus clearly counters some of the teaching heard in the church worldwide today, especially in our affluent western society. The scripture warns us there will be men who teach false doctrine, who do not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ, who:

⁵have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. ⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs (1 Timothy 6:5-10).

Jesus came to represent His Father and demonstrate the love of the Father, accomplishing His mission which was our redemption. He did not seek to promote Himself, but He did whatever the Father told him to do. Remember that Satan used scripture when he tried to deceive Jesus into acting independently of His Father in the temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:6). There are those who will sometimes use scriptural principles but distort it to be out of character to the person of God, “Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:30). Doctrines of demons refer to people the enemy is using in the day we live in. Paul the Apostle wrote about such men in his day:

¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. ¹⁵ It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

In what ways do you think that Satan has continued masquerading as an angel of light since the early days of the Church when this scripture was written?

What would be an example today of belief systems that have an outward show of serving God but lead people away from the knowledge of God?

Satan’s Schemes

Just like a master con artist, Satan has planned and schemed in order to separate as many people from God as he possibly can. It is imperative that we are aware of his strategies:

¹⁰ If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, ¹¹ **in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes** (2 Corinthians 2:10-11).

The context of this passage is about the forgiving of a believer who had been disciplined by the church after being caught in sin. Paul is emphatic that the church should forgive him and welcome the man back into fellowship in order that Satan does not get the better of us by superior ingenuity or cleverness—to outwit us. Unforgiveness and resentment causes a spiritual cancer of bitterness to grow within us. Satan is very well acquainted with the distance that unforgiveness puts between a man and his God. He strategizes as to how to separate people from one another with a wall of unforgiveness. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins (Matthew 6:15). If there is someone in your life that you find difficult to forgive, and if you find that it is hard to ask God to bless them and really mean it, you may have a problem with unforgiveness that hinders you from being aware of God’s forgiveness in your life. Unforgiveness of others will place unseen chains on your spirit that will result in a spiritual decline and prevent you from experiencing the healing or deliverance you might otherwise receive from God. A man named John Oglethorpe, in talking to John Wesley, once made the comment, “I never for-

give.” Mr. Wesley wisely replied, “Then, Sir, I hope that you never sin.”¹ We are seriously deceived if we think that we are walking in God’s forgiveness and yet have a grudge against another person. Paul the apostle, in carrying on his letter to the Corinthians says, “For we are not unaware of his schemes” (Verse 11).

I have to be honest and say that many times in my Christian life I have been totally unaware of Satan’s schemes and perhaps you have been too. That is why Jesus taught us the prayer that is called The Lord’s prayer, for the Father to deliver us from evil. You will also notice that in that same prayer, we are taught to ask for forgiveness as we forgive those who have sinned against us. These two things are connected, I believe, in a way that is far bigger than we can comprehend. It is to your advantage to forgive, and be released from any invisible chains that surround your heart and keep you from receiving all that God wants to give to you and do through you. Unforgiveness is, without a doubt, one of the most powerful tools that Satan uses.

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate yourself on awareness of Satan’s schemes of attack against you?

In what specific ways have you sensed Satan’s schemes of attack against you? What tools do you see him using in your life?

One of the chief ways that Satan and his demons can impact the life of a person is to gain an entrance into your thoughts which can affect your emotions, and ultimately your will. Your mind is a seedbed that receives seed thoughts from three different sources, God, Satan and your own spirit, the real you. Satan would love for us to be convinced that our thoughts are our own and that we should act on every thought that comes to us. Those that have suicidal tendencies may be suffering from demonic oppression. We know that the enemy comes to kill, steal and destroy. Jesus came that we may have life and life more abundantly. Satan will try and convince someone that there is no hope, and cajole them into self-destruction. Of course, demons are not content with just destroying individuals, in many cases they just want to express their personalities or use people as a tool or as ‘food’ (We will further explore this thought later in our study).

Satan’s Tools

We have many examples from the scriptures of the enemy using individuals, even Christians, as a tool of Satan. We have already looked at Peter’s attempt to turn Christ aside from going to the cross. Peter, at the time, was totally unaware of what he was doing. Jesus abruptly spoke to the spirit using Peter saying, “Get behind me, Satan” (Matthew 16:23). Certainly Judas also was a good example of someone who was being used as a tool of demonic activity. The sin that overcame him was greed:

⁶ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but **because he was a thief**; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it (John 12:6).

All the demons had to do was supply plenty of reasons to Judas’ mind over a period of time, slowly corrupting his heart and mind until there came a point where Satan had an access point to enter him and use him as a tool to betray the Master. Judas had plenty of evidence to convince him that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, God in the flesh, but he chose to harden his heart and remained unwilling to believe. Even after three years of walking in ministry with Jesus he was still an unbeliever: ⁶⁴Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him (John 6:64). We are specifically told that Satan entered into him:

² and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. ³ Then **Satan entered Judas**, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. ⁴ And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus (Luke 22:2-4).

When the act was over and Judas saw how he had been duped into being Satan’s tool, all that Satan had to do was suggest that he was now an enemy and beyond forgiveness. He more than likely had terrible oppressive thoughts after selling Jesus to His enemies, driving him to suicide. We don’t know if Judas was demonized or if Satan entered him as a one time event to use him, but it seems highly likely that the enemy had gained entry using Judas’ love of money and the deception that went along with stealing out of the money

¹ 1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching, Edited by Michael Green, Published by Baker, Page 152.

bag. Of course, we have to ask the question, why didn't Jesus cast out any spirit that had managed to gain an entrance into Judas? Judas had been stealing out of the money bag for a while and had set his heart and will to sin. He had seen instances of Jesus knowing people's thoughts. He witnessed Jesus' miracles along with the others. Jesus knew supernaturally certain individual's names, men such as Zacchaeus, in the instance when Christ called him down from the tree by name even though he didn't know him (Luke 19:1-8). Jesus also knew intimate details of Nathaniel's life when he saw him under the Fig Tree (John 1:48), supernatural knowledge that turned Nathaniel from being an unbeliever to an ardent follower. Judas knew that Jesus had insight into people's hearts and their secret sins, such as when He ministered to the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar. He heard Christ tell the woman that the man she was with was not her husband and that she had already had five husbands (John 4:17). Can you believe that Judas still carried on dipping his hand into the bag, knowing that Jesus knew personal details of people's lives? Judas had chosen his course to sin and Christ will not violate a person's will. Judas was not open to the power of God at work in Jesus to liberate him from his sin. He was making a choice day by day, while keeping company with the small band of believers who followed Jesus. The fact that Judas could walk the road and observe the life of Jesus close at hand, and yet remain an unbeliever, shows the depth of hardness of his heart. Was his final act of suicide one of contrition, remorse, or simply an act of despair? We cannot be sure, but if we are to observe his life, it was not the life of a believer. It appears that after Satan had finished with him, he disposed of him simply as a tool that had served its purpose. In seeking a person to use as a tool, Satan could have used anyone. There was a point of entry that made Judas vulnerable, to be that vessel of betrayal. Through his choices and through acts of his own will, he made himself available to Satan. Of course, there is always the question of predestination versus free will, but ultimately, the Bible teaches us that we are responsible for our sins, and that if we continue in sin and refuse to repent we make a larger home for the enemy to reside in the temple of our heart. Repentance and forgiveness will wipe the slate clean before God, but it doesn't mean that sin doesn't exact a price in our lives. Of course, not all sin will result ultimately in demonization, but what I'm saying is that continual sin and a refusal to repent will bring pain and discipline from God if you are a Christian. If you are a slave to sin

in your life, you will open yourself up to oppression. In the life of an unbeliever a strong stubborn will against God will ultimately end in disaster (Proverbs 29:1).

What examples from modern times come to mind of others that have been a tool of Satan's work?

Certainly some of the obvious are Adolph Hitler, Charles Manson, Pol Pot, Stalin, people who emanate evil when you look at their lives and their evil deeds. Others seem to look quite normal, but are driven to evil actions by voices inside them. Mark Chapman, the man who shot and killed John Lennon, had delusions from his childhood. In his early teens he heard voices that he attributed to "Little People" who lived in the walls of his bedroom. Later in life, his disturbed mental state led him to attempt suicide, and by early 1980, he was receiving psychiatric counselling for severe depression and was battling against paranoid schizophrenia. Although I am no expert on such things as schizophrenia, I do believe that Chapman was motivated by demonic activity, he testified that he had heard voices in his head telling him to kill the world-famous musician.

On March 14, 1980, Dennis Sweeney walked into a law office in Rockefeller Plaza and shot dead Allard K. Lowenstein, the former congressman whose liberal passion helped shape a decade of civil-rights and antiwar activism. Mr. Lowenstein had been his friend and mentor. But after his arrest, Mr. Sweeney told psychiatrists that he was convinced by voices in his head that Mr. Lowenstein was part of a Jewish plot to destroy him. After a quick diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia, Mr. Sweeney was found not guilty by reason of insanity and packed off to a state mental hospital. He was so oppressed by voices inside his head that he gouged the dental crowns out of his mouth with a hacksaw blade in the early 1970's -- in an attempt to silence the voices. These are just two examples of people that, in my opinion, were suffering not simply from a medical condition, but from a spiritual condition of being oppressed by demons. I am not saying that these individuals were not mentally ill, but I am saying that I believe that demonic oppression played a part in the acts of murder that they carried out. I do think that there are conditions that medical science cannot cure with drugs alone. Since medical science only seeks to treat the mind and body, it is not equipped to treat man's spiritual needs. I believe that at some point in their lives both these men had given legal right to demons to live within them.

This legal right can come through continual willful sin as when one is tempted to obey the dictates of evil thoughts sown in our minds, or by the dictates of our own sinful desires. I don't think Satan gained entry into Judas' life for the first time on the evening of the Last Supper. It was likely that it happened over a period of time, perhaps many years before he met Christ, in which he gave way to his desire to thief his way ahead in life.

Satan gains a foothold through some small sin, but he never stops there. If a sin is not confessed and repented of, it can become a stronghold that is difficult to break with merely self willpower alone. Confession to God and repentance breaks the legal right of the enemy and uproots the thought and act from becoming more deeply entrenched or rooted in the soil of our lives. Marcus Aurelius said, "A man's life is what his thoughts make it." Take care over your thought life and your soul will prosper. Whoever is prompting your predominant thoughts will govern your immediate action. If you sow a thought you will reap an act. If you sow an act you will reap a habit. If you sow a habit you will reap a character. If you sow a character you will reap a destiny. Good thoughts that are allowed to take root in the soil of your character will progress to good habits and ultimately will bring great peace to the soul and character change to a Christ ruled life. A progression of evil thoughts that are not rejected, resisted or cast down will become habits that give power to unseen demonic forces that seek to ultimately destroy your life. Whatever a person bows down to and gives permission to, cedes territory to demonic spirits to control and manipulate them. It is as if we give demonic spirits 'food' to eat which for them makes them stronger. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to **devour** (1 Peter 5:8). The Greek word here translated as devour, means to "drink down, gulp entirely and swallow up".² C.S. Lewis writes about Satan's aims in his fictitious account of an elderly demon, Screwtape, training his nephew, Wormwood, in the undermining of the mind, will and emotions of Christians. He writes:

"To us a human is primarily food; our aim is the absorption of its will into ours, the increase of our own area of selfhood at its expense."³

Demons can only express themselves on earth by people who respond to their temptations. The more a human being obeys the direction or bidding of an evil thought from demons the stronger their hold over a person. God told Cain, "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it" (Genesis 4:7). We are to master sin in all its various forms for sin is crouching at the door of our lives, desiring to have us and rule over us. Here's the biblical principle:

¹⁶ Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:16-18 Emphasis mine).

What was the sin that caused the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden? The fruit that Adam ate was not a magical food that poisoned his heart. The first sin was that Adam willingly chose to obey Satan rather than listen and obey God's voice and direction. He opened the door and gave opportunity, territory to rule over, and place to Satan. The Apostle Paul in writing on this theme said, "In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" (Ephesians 4:26-27). Paul is saying by implication that if you allow yourself in your anger to carry a grudge, or you harbor unforgiveness toward someone, it can give territory and ground to the devil. It becomes first of all a foothold, but if not checked by confession, repentance and forgiveness, it can become a stronghold in your life that will seem to have a power all its own. The English word 'foothold' is translated from the original Greek word *topos*, which means 'place,' but it can also mean, as in the Ephesians passage, that we can give a possibility, opportunity, or chance for Satan to gain a foothold in our lives if our anger goes over the top to be resentment, bitterness and unforgiveness.

Can you think of a habit that started out quite innocuous yet became a deep-seated root or habit in your life that was destructive to you?

² E-sword.com, searching on 1 Peter 5:8.

³ The Screwtape Letters, C.S.Lewis, HarperSanFrancisco, Zondervan, Page 38.

Again I refer to C.S. Lewis' book called *The Screwtape Letters*. The elderly demon, Screwtape advises his junior apprentice Wormwood:

“You will say that these are very small sins; and doubtless, like all young tempters, you are anxious to be able to report spectacular wickedness. But do remember, the only thing that matters is the extent to which you separate the man from the Enemy. It does not matter how small the sins are, provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards will do the trick. Indeed, the safest road to hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.”⁴

Some helpful hints that have helped me in the midst of spiritual warfare.

1) **Dedicate your home to God.** More than twenty years ago, when we lived in England, we rented an old house in the country that was the servant's quarters for a large house next door. The first night, my wife Sandy and I had to sleep apart for there were only two single beds in different rooms, and we did not yet have our double bed moved in. During the night I had a terrible dream that seemed so lifelike that I knew it was satanic in nature. I immediately went and prayed with Sandy, who had also had trouble sleeping, and sensed an evil presence in the house. We took authority in prayer that night until we felt that we could sleep. The next morning, we took some olive oil, as a symbol and went through the house, room by room, praying and taking authority over any demonic forces that had been there, making a sign of a cross with the oil in each room, dedicating our home to the worship of God. We never had a problem since we did that, and each house we have moved into we have cleansed and dedicated it to the worship and presence of God as a family.

2) **Do the opposite of what the Devil wants.** Jesus put it this way, “love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). The enemy of our soul would hope that we respond with hate toward those that are mistreating us, but Jesus told us to do the opposite of what the enemy would expect us to do. We are to love our enemies by finding practical ways to bless them. Agree with God's Word.

3) **Praise God in the midst of being oppressed in your thought life.** Never underestimate the power of praise in the midst of oppression and darkness. When King Jehoshaphat was attacked by an enemy much larger than Israel, he went before God and pleaded for His help. God told him he would not have to fight this battle. Jehoshaphat's strategy from the Lord was to send out the worship team at the head of his army and the enemies of Israel fought against one another (2 Chronicles 20). Demons cannot stand prayer, intercession or worship.

4) **When Satan reminds you of your past, remind him of his future.** ‘Nuf said!’

5) **If fear ever assaults you during the night (or at any other time) call on the name of Jesus!** It is not that the actual name has any magical power; it is the authority in the name of Jesus that we trust in, knowing what His name represents. Sandy, my wife, has had a number of times when she has been spiritually attacked during the night by nightmares or night terrors. More than once she has been frozen in fear, unable to move. When in trouble like that, speak forth the name of Jesus, if you can't talk, say it in your mind. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:13). “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Philippians 2:10).

6) **If hopelessness comes your way seeking to depress you as to your situation, count your blessings to God.** There have been dark days in our lives as a couple, where we have not known what to do. During such times when we have undergone all kinds of difficulties, we have found it helpful to write down all our blessings that we are thankful for. Don't just write them down though; express your gratitude to God for the things you have been blessed with.

7) **Meditate (think, ruminant or ponder) on scripture daily.** Highlight it in your Bible. Here is the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. If it was good for Jesus to quote the scriptures in the midst of dark times (Matthew 4) it will do the same for you.

8) **Dedicate your children to God.** You don't

⁴ The Screwtape Letters, C.S.Lewis, HarperSanFrancisco, Zondervan, Page 60.

have to do that in Church, although if your kids are young I would certainly recommend it. You can do that in the privacy of your bedroom in prayer to the Father. I believe that there is principle of giving up ownership of all we are and all that we have, including our children. In some way I believe it undercuts Satan's attempts to get at us through attacking our family.

9) **Agree with the devil when he points out things that are sin in your life (Matthew 5:25).** Agree that you are a sinner but right away confess your faults to God, taking steps to correct sinful actions. It breaks the power of guilt. Then remind yourself who you are in Christ and receive His forgiveness.

What's the difference between accusatory guilt from Satan and conviction that comes from God?

When Satan drops a guilty thought your way it never points out the way of escape. It just brings a condemnation that hangs over us making us feel dreadful. Conviction from God points out something that is wrong but also reminds you that the cross is the remedy for all past, present and future sin. The Holy Spirit, when He convicts us of sin, always points to Jesus and His substitutionary finished work on the cross for us.

8If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-9).

10) Keep short accounts before God. Jesus taught that anytime we come to worship and remember that someone has something against us, we are to leave our gift at the altar, go and make things right with the person and then come back and offer our gift (Matthew 5:24). I would recommend each evening going over the days events, asking God to search your heart so that you may get things right with God. King David prayed: Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts (Psalm 139:23). You might also need to get things right with another individual, sometimes making restitution for what you have done.

It would be wise to break up your group into two's and three's and pray for one another, especially for those that sensed they were in the cross-hairs of Satan's schemes of attack.

Prayer: Father, come close to those that are sensing that they are in the midst of spiritual warfare. Let your grace overflow in their lives. Protect them from the evil one. Amen.

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