

6. Satan's Schemes and Attack Plans

The War Against Satan and Demons

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 businesspeople 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 had to be pulled down quickly to avoid the public outcry that would inevitably occur. Victor explained that the Ministry of Works was looking for bids from companies to sell the scrap. Within a week, the submissions arrived, and Monsieur Poisson's proposal 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 significant amount of cash was exchanged, and the deal was on. Lustig and Collins were out of the country within twenty-four hours with the money. It was a big con! Embarrassed and humiliated, Poisson kept the big scam to himself, and he carried on as if nothing had happened. Encouraged by their success, the con men returned to Paris and repeated the fraud on someone else.

Deception is a powerful tool of the enemy; in fact, you could say that it is the cornerstone of his operations. Satan is a master of fraud, and his big con is being perpetrated worldwide. He is the ultimate, clever conman deceiving the world and the Church. Scripture tells us that he deceives the whole world (Revelation 20:3).

The trouble with being deceived is that people are unaware of the deception! After all, people who are in darkness cannot see! Jesus warned that the Antichrist would deceive many by claiming that he is the Christ (Matthew 24:5; 11). I believe we are in a period that the Bible calls the last days and that a characteristic of this time is deception by demonic forces:

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).

Of course, none of us have heard demons teach, but these evil spirits plant their thoughts into willing slaves and influence their behavior. How can a person discern that the things taught are demonic in origin? Scripture tells us to evaluate everything by the written word of God: **“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).** If teaching lines up with the Word of God **in its context**, then it is safe to trust a speaker's words and let the Holy Spirit speak to you.

Question 1) If you believe we are close to or in the end times, what things are being taught that are demonic and designed to cause people to abandon faith in God?

Satan's Schemes

Just like a master con artist, Satan has planned and schemed how to separate as many people from God as he can. We must be aware of his strategies:

¹⁰If 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 the passage above is about the forgiving of a believer after he had been disciplined by the church when he had sinned. Now that the man had repented, Paul counseled the Church to forgive him and welcome the man back into fellowship so that Satan would not get the better of the people of God by superior ingenuity or cleverness—to outwit them. Unforgiveness and resentment cause a spiritual cancer of bitterness to grow within a church. Satan is very well acquainted with the distance that unforgiveness puts between a man and God. He strategizes how to separate people from one another with a wall of unforgiveness. Jesus warned that if we want the Father's forgiveness, we must forgive others. **“But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins”** (Matthew 6:15).

I have to be honest and say that I have been unaware of Satan's schemes many times in my Christian life, and perhaps you have been, too. Satan uses many plans and strategies to gain a foothold in a person's life to corrupt their mind and heart slowly. It is often some small sin, but he never stops there. He looks for an entrance through a sin that is not acknowledged, e.g., an area in our lives where we disagree with God. It is often a progression of sins that become habit-forming and a stronghold that is difficult to break with 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 of your thought life, and your soul will prosper. Wherever they come from, 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 will ultimately bring great peace to your soul.

A progression of evil thoughts not rejected, resisted, or cast down will become habits that can give power to unseen demonic forces that seek to enslave and try to destroy your life. Whenever a person says yes to sin, he gives power and territory to demonic spirits to control and manipulate. It is as if we give demonic spirits “food” to eat, making 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). What does it mean to prowl? The picture is of a lion, perhaps unseen, hiding in the shadows, going back and forth with its eyes fixed on its prey, trying to find the right time and a weakness whereby he might attack. The Greek word translated above as *devour* means "drink down, gulp entirely, and swallow up."¹ C.S. Lewis, in his fictional account of an elderly demon, Screwtape, training his nephew, Wormwood, in the undermining of the mind, will, and emotions of Christians, writes:

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

"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."²

Demons express themselves on Earth by using 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 that person.

Different Degrees of Attack by Satan:

The religious people of Jesus' day went through an elaborate ritual of washing their hands before eating anything, thus showing off their cleanliness and self-righteousness from eating anything that would corrupt them, but Jesus spoke about what truly corrupts a man, saying:

¹⁴Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ¹⁵Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, **it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'**" ¹⁷After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. ¹⁸"Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'? ¹⁹For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.") ²⁰He went on: "**What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.'**" ²¹**For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts,** sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²²greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³**All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean'**" (Mark 7:14-23).

Question 2) In your opinion, what is the essence of Jesus' teaching in this passage? How can the expression of evil from inside a person corrupt them? How can someone be made clean?

One of the primary ways that Satan and his demons can impact a person's life is to sow thoughts into his mind, thus affecting his emotions and, ultimately, his will. Your mind is a seedbed that receives seed thoughts from three different sources: God, Satan, and your spirit, i.e., the real you that occupies the tent of your body (2 Corinthians 5:4). Satan loves it when we act on the thoughts and impulses that come to our minds without thinking from where the thought came. Those who have suicidal tendencies may be suffering from demonic oppression. The enemy comes to kill, steal, and destroy, but Jesus said that He came that we "**may have life, and have it to the full**" (John 10:10). Satan tries to convince a person that there is no hope and cajole him into self-destruction. Of course, demons are not content with just destroying individuals; they express their personalities by using people as a tool or as "food" or to acquire a beachhead or foothold in their lives.

In writing on this theme, the Apostle Paul 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 says that if you carry a grudge or harbor unforgiveness toward someone, you give territory and ground to the Devil. First of all, it becomes a foothold, but if not checked by confession, repentance, and forgiveness, it can become a stronghold in your life that seems to have a power

² C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, HarperSanFrancisco, Zondervan, Page 38.

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 evolves into resentment, bitterness, and unforgiveness. We must remember that the Lord said to his enemies, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin” (John 8:34), so give no territory to the enemy, lest we become slaves to sin.

Let’s now look at the different degrees of bondage or slavery to sin.

1) Foothold. Demons tempt people with lures that draw them away, hoping they will bite on the temptation. What is a lure? It is a temptation to do something that we usually would not do, but the bait offers some form of reward that appeals to our base nature as humans. A temptation to one person might not appeal to another. From the unseen realm, demons observe a weakness as to what things appeal to us or tempt us, and they can manipulate the situation to offer us the reward. Temptation can be resisted and rejected. Failure to resist and reject the enemy’s temptations will allow the enemy a foothold to ramp up his attack on a person’s soul to the next level. The demon will often wait until a habit is formed but not supply the expected high or fulfillment.

Often, a person will not realize that he is under spiritual attack by Satan until the accusations bring guilt and shame. When under spiritual attack and tempted, I sometimes form a picture in my mind of taking Satan to the end of a pier and booting him off the end! Other times, I have merely said, “Get out of here, Satan.” I only do that when I am alone. I don’t want people thinking I am crazy! When I am around people, and a tempting thought comes to me, I imagine grabbing the thought in the air and throwing it to the ground. Do whatever strategy gives you success in resisting temptation! Fill your mind with good things, and you will find that this also breaks the power of temptation as there is no such “good soil” in your thoughts.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things (Philippians 4:8).

The Bible tells us to resist the Devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7). There is an excellent story about Martin Luther, the great reformer of the Christian faith, in the 1400s when he was under spiritual attack in Wartburg Castle, translating the New Testament into German. The Devil did not want the Scriptures read by the ordinary people and wanted to disturb the sacred work, but when he tried to tempt and distract him, Luther grabbed the ink pot from which he was writing, and he threw it at the evil one’s head. Still today, they show tourists the room and the chair where Luther was sitting and the spot on the wall made by the flying ink.

Question 3) Do you have a strategy that you use when tempted in a specific area of your life? Share your thoughts with those in your group.

2) Manipulation. In this stage, demons make a foothold to be a knee hold in the door to your spirit. The door is not yet open to demonic control, but it becomes increasingly harder to resist if the vice is not checked, repented, renounced, forgiven, and forsaken. It may be alcoholism,

drugs, pornography, or pride—you name it! If you traffic in the darkness and give obedience to the voice of the evil one, habits form along the lines of the temptation to which you surrender. What is a habit? It is an automatic reaction to a specific situation, a settled or regular tendency, or a practice that is hard to give up. When the enemy manipulates us like this, and we give in, our will becomes shaped by dark, evil forces, making it difficult to say no.

3) Oppression. If a person does not cast down thoughts and imaginations of the mind that we know are evil, the enemy manages to get a level of control of us. Whoever we choose to obey is who will rule our lives: **“Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?” (Romans 6:16).** Sin desires to shape us into its image to become like the one to whom we listen to and obey (Genesis 4:7). An oppressed person often has negative and somewhat forceful thoughts suggesting going down a particular avenue of sin, more compulsive ideas. We could use the Star Wars movies as an analogy to describe what happens to a person oppressed by demons. In that movie, the Jedi knights dropped suggestive thoughts into the minds of their enemies that gave them a compulsion to do what they suggested. A person does have the power to resist but finds it harder to say no.

4) Obsession. At this level of spiritual attack, a person becomes a slave to sinful habits and demonic control. When this point is reached, it is noticeable to those around the person. They often seem "weird," or "out there," or just plain different. A believer can sometimes perceive that a person at this stage of obsession is not altogether there but maybe cannot put his finger on it. A more mature believer discerns quickly that which is demonic. When a person is demonized to this level, there is often a breakdown in their sanity and ability to reason. The demons have control to a degree where thoughts of harm to others and themselves will come to mind. Suicidal people are often at this stage, driven by guilt and wicked thoughts and unable to find inner peace. Sometimes, there are chemical imbalances at work and overlapping physical, mental, and spiritual issues. However, there is always hope because Jesus came to bring deliverance to our whole being: body, soul, and spirit.

5) Demonization. The demons called Legion that inhabited the Gadarene demoniac brought him to this level of demonization. Day and night, the man cried out in anguish in the graveyard and was driven by the demons (Mark 5:1-20). When sin is expressed and allowed to corrupt a soul to this level, the enemy has such a degree of control that, at times, the person's spirit is set to one side and bypassed utterly. When that kind of phenomenon happens, the demonized person can be in a dream-like state. There are mind-altering drugs that can also bring a person to this point. Sometimes, those around them can hear a different voice as the demons use the individual's vocal cords. It can be pretty scary to listen to a man's voice coming from a woman!

People demonized to this degree often report that they hear destructive voices, although they are not quick to share this with a counselor. Remember the story of the boy whose father told Jesus that he often **“falls into the fire and often into the water” (Matthew 17:16).** A stronghold of demonic control will often seek to drive the person to suicide. The demons often claim that the person belongs to them at this stage. Demons are liars and must not be trusted. I don’t believe a person is ever too far under Satan’s dominion that they cannot be brought to Christ and restored to complete mental and physical health.

There are different degrees of bondage to Satan and demons, but every person on Earth can call on the name of the Lord and be delivered. Those who are in the early stages of being demonized are, I do believe, able to cast down evil thoughts, temptations, and habits. The prophet Isaiah says: “**Shake off your dust; rise up, sit enthroned, O Jerusalem. Free yourself from the chains on your neck, O captive Daughter of Zion**” (Isaiah 52:2). I believe it is possible to free oneself at all stages but often more challenging due to the level of control given to the enemy. If a person is in the last stages of demonization, it is always best to have a trained team of mature Christians that will pray for deliverance. The Scripture is never without hope: “**And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved**” (Acts 2:21).

This word, “saved,” is the Greek word *Sōzō*. It means to be safe, delivered, made whole, preserved from danger, loss, or destruction. If you feel you are demonized, you are never without help! Call sincerely and urgently upon the name of the Lord and lay down everything that has got you into such a condition. Get rid of anything occult in your home, books, music, pictures, videos. Renounce every dark deed that has allowed the enemy to gain territory in your life. Repent and make no excuses to God (“repent” means to have a change of mind concerning your sin, to turn around and live your life toward Christ). Ask Christ to forgive you for whatever is heavy on your soul. I don’t believe that God ever leaves us without help.

Satan’s Tools

We have many examples from the Scriptures of the enemy using individuals as tools. We have already looked at Satan’s attempt through the Apostle Peter to turn Christ aside from going to the cross. At the time, Peter was unaware of who was motivating his words. Jesus spoke abruptly to the spirit using Peter, saying, “**Get behind me, Satan**” (Matthew 16:23).

Judas was an excellent example of someone used as a tool of demonic activity. The sin that overcame him was greed:

Judas 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, slowly corrupting his heart and mind until there came the 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, but he chose to harden his heart and was unwilling to believe. Even after three years of walking in ministry with Jesus, he was still an unbeliever: “**‘Yet 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). The Scripture says that Satan entered into him:

²and 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. ³Then **Satan entered Judas**, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. ⁴And 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 of betrayal was over, and Judas saw how he had been duped into being Satan's tool, all the enemy had to do was suggest that Judas was beyond forgiveness. He more than likely had oppressive thoughts after selling Jesus to His enemies, i.e., thoughts that drove him to suicide. We don't know how far Judas was demonized or if Satan entered him as a one-time event to use him. Still, it seems highly likely that the enemy gained entry using Judas' love of money and the deception that went along with stealing from the moneybag (John 12:6). He had been stealing out of the moneybag for a while and set his heart and will to sin. He saw instances of Jesus knowing people's thoughts, yet he willfully kept stealing from the money bag.

He chose to walk in willful sin, and Christ will not violate a person's will. The fact that Judas could 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 regret, remorse, or merely 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 merely as a tool that had served its purpose, driving him to suicide (Matthew 27:5). If you are a slave to sin, you will open yourself to oppression. In the life of an unbeliever, a strong, stubborn will against God will ultimately end in disaster (Proverbs 29:1).

[Question 4\) What's the difference between an accusation from Satan and the illumination or conviction that comes from the Holy Spirit? How can one tell the difference?](#)

One big difference that I find is that when the Holy Spirit convicts me of sin, it is a gentle voice to which I have to pay attention. He shines His light on my path and makes me aware of something hindering me from moving forward with Him. This conviction has nothing to do with His love for me because His love is always constant. It has everything to do with my effectiveness and my ability to abide with Christ and enjoy the abundant life He gives. The Holy Spirit's conviction brings illumination, i.e., light into my life and upon my path to point to something specific, enabling me to agree with Him on the matter and move on. The enemy's accusation results in nagging guilt that weighs heavy on the soul. It does nothing but impede my journey, offering me no signposts or help to find the way to forgiveness and restoration.

I don't think Satan gained entry into Judas' life for the first time on the evening of the Last Supper. It likely happened over a period, perhaps over many years before he met Christ, in which he gave way to his desire to thief his way ahead in life.

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 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.³

Some Helpful Tips

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 into the house. During the night, I had a terrible dream that seemed so lifelike that I knew it was demonic. I immediately prayed with Sandy, who also had trouble sleeping, and we sensed an evil presence in the house. We took authority in prayer that night until we felt that we could rest.

The following day, we took some olive oil as a symbol and went through the house, room by room, i.e., praying and taking authority over any demonic forces there, making a sign of a cross with the oil in each room, and dedicating our home to the worship of God. We never had a problem since we did that, and each house into which we have moved, we have cleansed and dedicated it to the worship and presence of God as a family.

2) Do the opposite of what the Devil would like you to do. Jesus put it this way, “**Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you**” (Matthew 5:44). The enemy of our soul hopes that we respond with hate toward those 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 middle of oppression and darkness. When King Jehoshaphat was attacked by an enemy much more significant 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. “Enough said!”

5) If fear ever assaults you during the night (or at any other time), call on the name of Jesus! The name of Jesus has all authority in the unseen heavenly realms. Sandy, my wife, had times when she was spiritually attacked during the night by nightmares or night terrors. She has been frozen in fear more than once, 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 when we have not known what to do. When we have undergone all kinds of difficulties, we have found it helpful to write down all our

³ Ibid. Page 60.

blessings for which we are thankful. Don't just write them down, though; express your gratitude to God for the things with which you are blessed.

7) Meditate (think, contemplate or ponder) on Scripture daily. Highlight passages that "speak" to you in your Bible. If it was good for Jesus to quote the Scriptures amid dark times (Matthew 4), it will do the same for you.

8) Dedicate your children to God. You don't have to do that in Church, although 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 a principle of giving up ownership of all we are and all we have, including our children. In some way, I think it undercuts Satan's attempts to get at us by attacking our family.

9) If the enemy comes against you with an accusation, take it to God in prayer. If there is sin in your life, come to the throne of grace and bring the issue to the Father in prayer (Matthew 5:25). 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 rejoice in His forgiveness.

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 day's 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 and maybe even make restitution for what you have done to get it right with God and others.

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 crosshairs of Satan's schemes of attack. Perhaps close with a reading of scripture something like this one:

²⁴Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, ²⁵to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen (Jude 24-25).

Prayer: Father, thank You for all the blessings that have come to us through the cross of Jesus. We pray again for deliverance over anything our enemy would throw at us. Thank You, also, that You have promised that nothing will harm us by any means (Luke 10:19).

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