

729 What Are the Schemes of the Devil?

Phil Sanders

God's Answers to Life's Questions

Did you know that you are involved in a personal battle for your soul with the devil? You may think this is a silly idea, but the greatest consequences are at stake. What is the devil doing to get your soul? In 2 Corinthians 2:11 Paul said about the devil, "we are not ignorant of his schemes." The devil does indeed have schemes. A scheme is a method, a design, or a plot. The devil is plotting your eternal destruction. He wants to separate you from God's will and God's grace, so that you will spend eternity with him. Peter said in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

The apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:10-17 said, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

We are at war with the devil, and the devil is a formidable opponent. He has had many centuries to find the weaknesses of men and to defeat them. This battle is a personal one, like a fight between two armed soldiers. At the end of a fight in ancient times, one soldier was standing and the other dead. The battle was like a wrestling match, where two people were physically and personally involved eye to eye. You cannot pass this battle off to someone else; you must face the devil yourself. He has taken the time to study you and knows your strengths and weaknesses. He will use every trick in the book to defeat you. He has no qualms about cheating, lying, or using dirty tricks to win. He is serious about defeating you and intends to win.

This spiritual battle is not just for your life; it is for your soul and the souls of your loved ones. It is the most important conflict you will ever face. If you are not aware that you are in a fight, you will surely lose. If you do not have the will to fight, you will surely lose. If you are not prepared to fight, you cannot win. If you fight but do not give it all you have, you will not likely win. Your enemy, the devil, wants your soul; and he will do anything to get it. If that means trickery, he will lie. If that means twisting God's word around to suit his purposes, he will do it. If that means pretending to be religious until he can fool you, be sure that he will.

The apostle Paul was particularly interested that people believe and hold to the truth. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:2-4, "But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." The devil wants to blind people to the truth, so that they will not know what is right and be said. You see, when people leave the Word, they leave the truth. So the devil twists and tampers with the Bible. To tamper with the word of God is to distort it, to falsify it, to make it appear false by deception or distortion. The goal of tampering is to leave the impression the Word says something that it does not actually say. The person who uses God's word cunningly to advance his agenda is in Paul's eyes disgraceful and underhanded.

Through the Scriptures, Satan's devices follow a common pattern. He has found a way that works on people and uses it again and again. If we know that pattern, however, we can be alert to how Satan works. Satan, first, loves to *ask questions that create doubt* in the Word of God. You'll remember that in the garden of Eden, the devil asked Eve, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:2) Now, Satan knew what God had said; he didn't want information but wanted Adam and Eve to change. Doubt is always the first step to apostasy. The Devil will always give you all the reasons why you should not do the will of God. He wants you to forget doing things God's way, to think for yourself, and do what you think is best for you. By urging you to do what is selfish, he gets you to disobey God.

Satan, second, *contradicts what God says*. When Eve told Satan that she would die if she ate of that fruit, the devil said, "You shall surely not die" (Genesis 3:4). The devil is a liar and a murderer. He has no qualms about lying to get his way. Satan always wants people to place their confidence in him not God. He pretends that God has lied to you, and that he knows better. He knows things others don't know. He has the inside tract to what is really true. This desire to know his secrets, to be one of the elite, to buy into his arrogance, has led many unfortunate souls down the path to perdition. You see he tempts what is worst in people: their flesh, their eyes, and their pride. He makes them feel God is holding them down and making life miserable. Jesus told some Jews who followed Satan in John 8:44, "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies." All you have to do to lie is to tamper with the truth just a little bit. Rat poison is 98% corn meal and 2% poison. If it were not so much corn meal, the rats would not eat it; but two percent poison is enough to kill.

Satan will tell you what he thinks you want to hear. Eve was deceived by this lie; Adam was not. Adam knew that eating the fruit was wrong. The devil likes to turn things upside down. He makes what is evil sound so good, and makes what is good sound so bad. Isaiah said in Isaiah 5:20, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" Have you ever noticed in our society how anything righteous is labeled as ugly and boring, while things that are evil are attractive and enticing? That's the devil's scheme.

Satan, third, *produces an alternate version of "truth."* He enticed Eve with these words: "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:5) The devil's alternate always has a mix of truth in with the error. There is enough truth to sound persuasive, but his message is full of misrepresentations and distortions. "Add it all up and the bottom line is a big lie." He wants everyone to believe he has a better way, that God is trying to fool you, and that God is not your friend but is cheating you out of something really good. His strategy is to get people to rely upon him for real "progress." There simply is nothing better "out there" than New Testament Christianity. The entertainment religions don't have anything better than congregational singing in worship. *The church growth experts don't have a*

plan better than preaching the truth in love. You can't improve on God's way or God's will. The subterfuge will always ask questions to create doubt, contradict, and provide an alternative. Don't fall for it.

Satan, fourth, *despises and persecutes anyone who exposes him.* Jesus explained in John 3:19-20, "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed." Jesus knew that if the world hated Him, it would also hate his disciples too when they preach the truth about sin. The devil loves to talk trash about the church, about the truth, and about people who uphold God. Peter said in 1 Peter 4:14, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." The devil is a bully, but God sees everything and rewards those who follow Him.

Satan, fifth, *pretends to be holy.* Paul spoke about some deceivers in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. They pretended to be men of God, but they actually served Satan. "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds." In order to deceive Christians and lead them into his "alternative" churches, the devil pretends to be a Christian leader. With high-sounding phrases, he tries to persuade people that Christianity is like a smorgasbord of ideas, from which you can pick and choose whatever doctrines you like. There are thousands of denominations in America, each teaching different doctrines and wearing different names. It has become popular to follow some man's ministry rather than listen to the Word of God. This is the devil's work. He is the one who provides the heresies (doctrines that divide the church).

If you listen to the devil, you will come to believe that there is no such thing as heresy, that every one's views are as good as everyone else's. You see, when you believe that, you have fallen into the trap of the devil. He wanted Eve to believe that eating the fruit was an advantage to her. He tried to convince her to quit listening to God and to think for herself. When people get away from the Bible and start listening to the reasoning of men, they fall prey to the devil's scheme. Their eyes are blind to the truth. God's ways and man's ways are not the same. You cannot ignore God's Word, build your house upon sand, and expect everything to be all right between you and God. Eve was deceived, lost sight of God, and did what she wanted. If we become deceived, lose sight of God, and do what we want, we too will have to face the consequences of sin.

Satan, sixth, *preys on the weak and ignorant.* Peter said in 1 Peter 5:8-9, "Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world." He is looking for gullible people who will fall prey to his immoral lifestyle and his disobedience to God. He uses false prophets and false churches as alternatives to the truth. He whispers to our consciences that we can sin and not be hurt by it. No matter how attractive or how lovely his message, the devil's goal is your spiritual death. This is why you must resist him, firm in your faith. Pay close, close attention to the Word of God. Keep your eyes focused on the cross. Paul said in Ephesians 6:13, "Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm."

God has not left us alone to fight the devil. Paul said in Ephesians 6:13-17, "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." These things will help you in your struggle: righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God. The armor protects you from the devil's weapons, but the sword of the Spirit, God's Word, is a formidable weapon. It has the truth that pierces hearts and souls. The best thing you can do to fight Satan is to know the Word of God. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). We need the word of God in our lives, in our churches, and in our nation.

When people start doing what they want to do rather than listening to the Bible, the devil wins and they lose. My friend, what about your soul? Is the devil fooling you? If the Lord and His Word do not rule in your life, you will have a master who lies to you and will cost you your soul. My friend, let Jesus be Lord of your life. To become a Christian, believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Out of love, repent of every sin. Confess His name to everyone. Be baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins will be forgiven. Live the Christian life. Get involved at church with other Christians, so that you keep your faith strong and alive. Serve the Lord by never missing worship. The closer you are to God, the easier it becomes to resist the devil. Do it for yourself, and do it for those you love. Your strong faith will lead others to place their faith in the Lord as well. Don't let another day go by, till you have made your life right with the living God.

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Concord Road Church of Christ
8221 Concord Rd., Brentwood, TN 37027
1-877-226-5747

phil@God-answers.org

www.tv.God-answers.org