

THE DEVIL – THE UNHOLY GOD - Part 6

II Corinthians 4:3-4

“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”

In our previous studies we covered the following: The Devil’s Origin, Original State, Downfall, Nature, Names, Domain, The Devil’s Demons, The Devil’s Dangers and The Devil’s Strategies. Continuing let us consider:

THE DEVILS’ DEVICES

“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”
(Ephesians 6:11)

The Greek word translated “wiles” is “*methodeia*” (*meth-od-i'-ah*) and means: “craftiness, devices, arts, trickeries, wiles, stratagems.” The Greek “*methodeia*” is the word from which we get the English word “method.”

The apostle Paul made a statement in reference to the Devil, when writing to the Christians in the city of Corinth, warning them about the Devil. He said, “*We are not ignorant of his devices.*” (2 Cor. 2:11) While that may not have been true concerning the Christians in the city of Corinth, there are many Christians today who evidently are ignorant of the Devil's devices for he is certainly having his way with many of them.

What are some of the “devices” that the Devil uses to accomplish his strategies? He has many, but let us concentrate upon the following more obvious ones:

HIS DEVICES UNIVERSALLY WITH THE CHRISTLESS

Think for a moment of the vast number of souls who are without God and without hope in the world. Granted, many of these have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, however many have heard the Gospel and have rejected it. Why? The Devil is delighted that is the case. The Devil's devices with the unsaved can be categorized as follows:

A. He Wants To Bind Them In Captivity.

Sinners are dead in sin and the Devil wants to keep them in that condition. Paul describes the condition of the unsaved as follows:

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.” (Ephesians 2:1-3)

God's Word makes it perfectly clear that there are those who are the Devil’s captives. Paul, in

instructing pastor Timothy, counseled him about those captivated by the Devil by saying:

*“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and **escape the snare of the devil**, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”* (2 Timothy 2:24-26)

B. He Wants To Blind Them To Truth.

The Devil rules over the Kingdom of Darkness, therefore, he wants to keep the unsaved in spiritual darkness as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 *“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”*

C. He Wants To Bar Them From Salvation.

The Devil is a thief! His design is to steal and/or conceal the truth from lost souls thereby preventing their salvation. The Devil seeks the destruction of souls; God seeks the salvation of souls.

Jesus said, *“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”* (John 10:10)

In the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, Jesus said, *“Therefore hear the parable of the sower: when anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart.”* (Matt. 13:18,19)

One of his methods of keeping sinners from salvation is the use of deception for he is the great deceiver. We read in Revelation 12 about the Devil being cast out of heaven: *“So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”* (Rev. 12:7-9)

The Devil deceives by counterfeiting God’s program. Imitation has a single purpose and that is to create something as similar to the original as possible. He announced his plan when he first sinned. He said, *“I will be like the most high.”* (Isaiah 14:14)

Therefore, the Devil has his religions, doctrines and prophets:

- His religion is, *“A form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”* (2 Timothy 3:15)
- His doctrine is *“false doctrine.”* In I Timothy 4:1;
- His prophets are *“false prophets.”* Mark 13:22
- His followers are called, *“false brethren.”* 2 Corinthians 11:26

The Devil has nothing to offer for the betterment of lost souls. He plans the eternal damnation of souls and his aim is to prevent their salvation and exclusion from heaven.

HIS DEVICES COLLECTIVELY WITH THE CHURCH

The church, the Body and Bride of Jesus Christ, is the only repository of righteousness in the world today. And, since the Devil is the personification of unrighteousness, he hates righteousness. Consequently, he hates the church that Jesus is building. (Matthew 16:18) His strategy, so far as the church is concerned, can be summed up as follows:

A. He Foments Strife and Divisions Within it.

“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them..... I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concern-ing evil. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” (Romans 16:17,19-20)

Illustration: It is reported spuriously that the Devil called a meeting of his demons to discuss how to stop the growth of the church. Among the suggestions given by the demons were the following: one said to make Christians doubt the Virgin Birth of Jesus; another suggested that they attempt to cause Christians to doubt the resurrection of Jesus Christ; yet another suggested that they tempt Christians to doubt the Bible as being God's Word. However, the Devil rejected them all and said, "Those are good suggestions and that we will do. But better yet, let us go and cause division among Christians. Then their behavior toward one another will nullify their beliefs." That is what the Devil has used most successfully, causing Christians to fight one another.

I Corinthians 3:3-4 *“For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal?”*

What a wonderful testimony a united, harmonious and loving church is and fortunate indeed is that community that has such! Psalm 133:1 *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”*

B. He Facilitates The Incursion of False Teachers.

“Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness.” (Jude vs.3-4 NKJV)

The New Living Testament translates the verse as follows: *“Defend the faith that God has entrusted once for all time to his holy people. I say this because some ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches, saying that God’s marvelous grace allows us to live immoral lives.”*

The familiar saying that “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty” is nowhere more true than it is relative to the church of Jesus Christ. Jude says that *“certain men have crept in unnoticed.”* He was saying that in his day, when the church was yet young, there was this problem, and the threat continues to this day.

An enemy in the camp is a thousand times more dangerous than one-hundred enemies outside the camp. Therefore, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, we must ever be on guard against error.

The song, "Stand Up, Stand Up For Jesus" emphasizes this truth:

*"Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross;
Lift high His royal banner, it must not suffer loss.
From victory unto victory His army shall He lead,
Till every foe is vanquished, and Christ is Lord indeed."*

Verse two of the hymn is not in most of our song books. Here is the second verse:

*"Stand up, stand up for Jesus, the solemn watchword hear;
If while ye sleep He suffers, away with shame and fear;
Where'er ye meet with evil, within you or without,
Charge for the God of battles, and put the foe to rout."
-George Duffield, Jr. 1858*

C. He Fosters Disharmonious Relationships Within it.

One of the Devil's most subtle methods of upsetting the work of God is that of sowing seeds of discord among God's people. Unfortunately, disharmony developed in the early churches. In Acts chapter 6 we read: *"Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution."* (Acts 6:1-2)

Also, in the church in Philippi there were ragged relationships. Paul wrote, *"I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord."* (Philippians 4:2)

One of the six things that the Lord hates, according to Proverbs 6:19 is *"...one who sows discord among brethren."* How easy it is for any Christian to almost unconsciously become a tool of the Devil. When the flesh gets riled up and pride gets in the driver's seat, the Devil is all too happy to step on the gas!

How often has the witness of a church been destroyed because of complaining, bickering and quarreling among the members! The Devil is delighted when Christians individually or a church corporately experience fellowship fractures.

D. He Fights To Discredit The Church From Without.

The Devil not only works from within the church to bring about its defeat, but he works from without to discredit the church. He uses godless persons to oppose the church by their atheistic rants.

One such is Christopher Hitchens, a present day atheist who describes himself as an "antitheist" instead of an "atheist." In many of his debates against religion he describes an antitheist as "someone who does not believe in God but also is relieved that such a tyrannical god does not exist." Hitchens is the author of more than 10 books, including *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*.

Satan also uses persons poisoned by unbelief to:

- ridicule the church's doctrines;
- magnify its members flaws;
- misrepresent the church's message;
- infiltrate the church's membership, as Jude warned: *"Certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Jude 1)

However, God will have the last word as Enoch's prophecy declares: *"Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."* (Jude 14,15)

Do not forget that Jesus, the Founder of His Church said, *"I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it."* (Matt. 16:18 NLT)

HIS DEVICES INDIVIDUALLY WITH THE CHRISTIAN

While it is undeniably true that we Christians have a great and glorious Savior, Jesus Christ, it is also true that we have a very powerful and sinister adversary, the Devil. Some of his most successful ways of attacking the individual Christian are:

A. He Elicits us to Disobey God.

The Devil is actively at work encouraging us to disobey the Lord and thereby keeps us weak and halfheartedly living for the Lord. When we disobey by listening to his sinful suggestions he has scored a great victory! Every time the Lord calls us to obey Him, the Devil will try to influence us to disobey Him. Therefore, at every step in our walk with God we have to make a choice: obey God or disobey Him.

This was his most effective ploy when he approached Eve in the Garden of Eden. God had said, *"Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* (Genesis 2:16, 17)

The Devil drew out Eve subtly and successfully. The record reads: *"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'"* (Genesis 3:1) Eve and Adam yielded to the solicitations of the Devil and disobeyed God.

We do not live in the Garden of Eden but we have the same subtle enemy that Adam and Eve had and he delights to cause God's children to disobey their heavenly Father. In our unsaved state we were called *"the sons of disobedience."* (Eph. 2:2) Let us not give him the pleasure of grieving God by enticing us to disobedience now that we are saved. There are sure and certain consequences for the disobedient.

B. He Effects Peace-Disrupting Situations.

The Devil does not want the Christian to enjoy anything that God gives and God's desire is that His children should experience perfect peace: *"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."* (Isaiah 26:3)

Along comes the Devil, or one of his henchmen, and instigates some adverse situation, trying to cause the Christian to lose focus on the Lord and to misplace his/her trust in Him. If we capitulate and allow the disturbance to rob us of *"the peace of God"*, frustration ensues. But remember that *"God is not the author of confusion but of peace."* (I Cor. 14:33)

Therefore, *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:6-7)

When such peace is the experience of Christians individually, their lives are characterized by poise and power and by freedom from doubt and fear. But the Devil wants to disturb our peace, upset our poise and rob us of power. He wants to deprive us of the *"peace of God, which surpasses all understanding."*

C. He Engenders a Spirit of Discouragement.

Discouragement is a plague that quickly spreads and stymies any advance in the work of the Lord unless it is quickly reversed. We see the effects of discouragement in several Old Testament passages of scripture:

Numbers 21:4-6 - *"Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses: 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.'" So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died."*

Deuteronomy 1:28 - *"Our brethren have discouraged our hearts, saying, 'The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to heaven; moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there.'"*

Deuteronomy 1:21 - *"Look, the LORD your God has set the land before you; go up and possess it, as the LORD God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged."*

While the Devil cannot possess a child of God, he can and does oppress and he tries to take advantage of us when we are overwhelmed with duties when we are spiritually or physically weak, etc. In such situations the Devil often stirs up a spirit of discouragement in ourselves or in others around us.

Therefore, *"Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not*

forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

D. He Entices us to Yield to Temptation.

One of the Devil’s most revealing names is “The Tempter.” The apostle Paul was concerned about the believers in Thessalonica and he said, *“For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.”* (1 Thess. 3:5)

Every temptation that is placed before us has the Devil’s fingerprints all over it! He has no better lever to pry us away from a holy walk with our Savior than the lever of temptation. He can use a smell, a look, a taste, a thought, a person – at the right time and at the right place to tempt us – and he does! Temptation is not the sin, yielding to temptation is the sin.

He tried to entice Jesus to yield to temptation and if he tried his godless tactics upon the holy Son of God, he will not hesitate to test us. The Lord Jesus showed us how to overcome the Devil’s enticements. Matthew records the incident in the life of our Lord as follows:

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to

Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”” (Matt. 4:1-4)

Jesus thrust the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, at the Devil saying, *“It is written”*, showing us how to repel the Devil when he tempts us. We are not helpless when the Devil entices us to yield to temptation. We too, have the Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit, with which to repulse the Devil.

Conclusion

- Wherever there is evil there is the Devil;
- He wants to keep sinners blinded to Gospel truth;
- He wants to extinguish God’s Lighthouse, the Church;
- He encourages the saved to live like the unsaved;
- He claps his hands with glee every time a Christian sins or a lost sinner steps into eternity without knowledge of Jesus Christ as Savior.

Paul said to the Corinthian Christians, *“We are not ignorant of his devices.”* (II Cor. 2:11) After reviewing some of his devices, we can say that we also are not totally ignorant of his devices. We must constantly be on guard against the devices of the Devil. Therefore, *“Do not give the devil an opportunity.”* (Eph. 4:27 NASB)

We Christians are no longer in the Devil’s kingdom of darkness but in the Lord Jesus’ kingdom of light. But our arch enemy, the Devil, still seeks our downfall. He cannot rob us of

the destination of heaven when we die, but he does try to rob us of heavenly blessings that God wants us to enjoy here and now on the earth. He cannot prevent us from reaching heaven but he can steal the joy from us while we are on our way to heaven unless we are on guard against the devices of the Devil.

I recently heard a remark like this: "It seems that everybody is on the Devil's side." Don't you believe it for a moment! The Devil would like for you to think that he is winning - but he is a loser from the beginning! May we have holy boldness to let it be known that we are on the Lord's side - the victory side!

And remember to

***"Put on the whole armor of God,
that you may be able to stand
against the wiles of the devil."
(Eph. 6:11)***

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