

"The Devil's Schemes"

You have an enemy who wants to ruin your life and cause you eternal harm. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're exploring some of the devil's schemes. Stay with us.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Scriptures not only teach us what is good and right; they also warn us about the spiritual dangers of sin and the efforts of the tempter to lead us to sin. The wages of sin is still death, and we must learn how our enemy the devil works to lead us into error and to immoral behavior. If we listen to the devil, we can be led astray and fall into sin. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

1 Peter 5:8 to 9 says, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." Satan is cunning, deceptive and he's your adversary. He "masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11 verse 14). And so we must consider how the devil works. Satan loves to create doubt in God and in His word; he will go so far as to contradict God. To those who fall to his schemes, he provides an alternative that he says is better! But what Satan offers is cruel, sinful, and destructive. He is not your friend.

Satan wants you to love the world. 1 John 2:15 to 17 says, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." His schemes to lead you astray and take your soul are many.

We offer this study free on the devil's schemes. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Genesis 3:1 to 7, and then we'll explore the schemes of the devil and how it's different from the way of God.

Our reading today comes from Genesis chapter 3 verses 1 to 7. And here we learn the story of how sin came into the world.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Oh Father we are so sorry that sin has come into the world and that we are selves have given into it from time to time. Father we pray that You will help us to understand Your will. And to love You with all of our hearts. In Jesus name, Amen.

In dealing with Adam and Eve, Satan was deceptive, seductive, and selfish.

Oh, yes, the devil plants doubt in the place of faith. And when it comes to truth, Satan asks "Indeed has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" He does everything he can to plant doubt in God's word. Now, when God speaks, he says "maybe", that is the devil says, maybe and "perhaps." He says everything is relative. Satan wants everything to be so, everything anybody wants. But when God tells us the truth, Satan says, "Oh, we can't know that!" The devil says there are no absolute truths, and people can fall for it. Sometimes we need to ask, "Can you be absolutely sure there are no absolutes?" If you're absolutely sure, then there are absolutes! Satan loves to create doubt, because he doesn't want us to take God seriously. He arrogantly sits in judgment of God and of God's Word.

Second, the devil will tell bold lies. The Lord Jesus told some Jews who refused to believe in Him in John 8:44 that, "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." When the devil told Eve, "You will surely not die," he was lying, contradicting what God said, in order to take life from Adam and Eve.

The devil loves to make false promises. He told Eve, that when she ate of the fruit, she would become like God, knowing good and evil. Instead, her sin against God caused her to lose access to the Garden of Eden and to the tree of life. She knew good and evil, but that didn't make her like God, for God is holy. The devil will tell you that all kinds of sinful practices are good for you and pleasing; but they in time will hurt you and your loved ones.

Third, the devil is an accuser and a slanderer. He hates the light and punishes those who disagree with him. Satan has spent his whole life as an "adversary" of God and of good. He attempts to defeat God by slandering and accusing any good thing with evil intent. The story of Job has Satan accusing God of unfairly blessing Job. Satan said, "you take the hedge away, let him suffer, and he will deny you!" Well, Satan's accusations against God and Job were wrong. In Isa. 5 verses 20 to 23 we learn that Satan's business is to turn our value systems upside down. He wishes to make evil look good and good look evil. In Revelation 12 verses 9 and 10 Satan is the accuser of the brethren. Satan's way is to accuse and slander every good thing.

The devil makes an enemy of anyone who dares to criticize any sin. He calls people who speak out against sin "hate mongers" with phobias. He supports those who think there is no such thing as sin. And he makes fun of and puts down everything Christian and moral. Being Christian isn't "cool." He labels Christians as 'Pharisaical' and 'hypocritical.' He concentrate on all the things "wrong" with the church and never sees any good.

Fourth, the devil loves to confuse the issue; He tries to make the Bible, centuries of tradition, and common sense and all of those things as irrelevant. He tells people they cannot trust in God or His word. He says we don't know whether the unborn is a person; we don't know whether we're males or females; and we don't know what marriage is. He tells people what they, as an individual, think or feel is more important than anything else. And he's propagated confusion about many things. And he'll tell you: "There is no God"; "or we cannot know God"; or "God does not care about you." He wants us to think the Bible is not trustworthy; that it's just a bunch of historical myths. He says the church is only interested in what it can get out of you; all Christians are hypocrites in his mind. He says, "There is no hell"; "everyone will be saved eventually"; or "there is a purgatory."

He will suggest to you, "You can sin, and God really won't judge you." Well, when people are tempted to sin, he whispers, "Just a little won't hurt," or "No one will know." Satan says, "Man isn't responsible for his sins--he was born a sinner and sinful." He argues, "Man was not created but evolved from lower forms of life." He loves to tell lies that confuse us. If we believe the devil, we will never know the truth. The devil and his followers will look down on you, and if you don't approve of everything they think or do. Our society will think all beliefs are equally valid and they try to force Christians to be silent about their moral and religious convictions. The world will hate you for believing in Jesus. The devil labels them, the Christians, as "mean-spirited" and "judgmental," though they speak the truth with kind motives.

Fifth, the devil wants you to ignore the Word of God; he doesn't want you to believe. Romans 10:17 says that, "faith comes by hearing" and hearing the Word of God. Faith is essential to our salvation, and because Satan doesn't want us to know the truth, he tries to keep us from reading and studying the Bible. He knows that abiding in His word, that is the word of God, teaches us the truth, and "the truth will make you free" (John 8 and verse 32). You see, he wants us to be ignorant of the very thing that will judge us on the last day, the words of Jesus (John 12 and verse 48).

Sixth, Satan likes to offer alternatives. He offers counterfeit religion and counterfeit churches that differ from the New Testament. He says, "one church is as good as another"; and "it doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you love Jesus." He offers entertainment in place of worship. He tells man that he can make up his own religions, write his own creeds, and have his own morals, and do his own thing. But when men trust themselves, they stop being God's people. Satan loves to relabel important doctrinal matters as "non-issues." He loves to confuse doctrine with opinion, making human opinions traditions more important than the true teaching of God's word.

Seventh, Satan poisons relationships. Satan wants you to blame everyone else for your troubles. He plants pride in your heart and encourages selfishness. He promotes jealousy and envy. He tells you to forget kindness and compassion. He encourages gossip and slander of those that you dislike. He whispers, "get even" and "take revenge!" He starts fusses as often as he can. God tells us what kind of people we should be in Ephesians 3, excuse me chapter 4 verses 31 and 2. He says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

Satan loves to cause discord among brethren! Gal. 5:13 to 21 speaks of the works of the flesh by which Satan works. Satan will do all he can to cause problems between brethren in the church. Some works of the flesh include "enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, and envyings" All are problems of the heart, fostered by the lies and the prompting of Satan, the tempter.

Satan plants evil thoughts in our hearts to tempt us. Evil destroys friendships, families, and even churches. Satan put it in Judas' heart to betray Jesus in John 13:2. What is he putting into your heart and mind? James 3:14 to 16 says, "But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing."

Eighth, Satan wants you to be insensitive to sin. He tries to change the way that we look at sin by ignoring or excusing it. If he can relabel sin as harmless, then he might persuade you to do evil. Sin does untold harm. Paul described a sinful culture in Ephesians 4:17 to 19. "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their

mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness." Oh, this is a tragic, it's destructive!

People who know little about the Bible can still quote Matthew 7 verse 1: "Judge ye not, that you be not judged." Well, denying the truth doesn't help. The Lord Jesus also said in John 7:24, "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment." There is in fact a time to make judgments, and everyone does judge. Even people who are against it. Some think it's right to judge someone for judging but never realize they're doing the very thing that they condemn. They give themselves the privilege of judging but deny that privilege to others.

Some say Jesus never called anyone a sinner, but Jesus did call people sinners. In Matthew 23 Jesus scorches the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, calling them sons of hell. In the book of Revelation Jesus rebukes some churches for tolerating doctrinal and moral sin. He demanded their repentance. Jesus loved sinners, but He tells them to "go and sin no more" (John 5 and verse 14). Jesus didn't ignore their sins but forgave them and pointed them to a better way.

Jesus never excused sin; He never covered it up. He never lied about where sinful behavior came from or allowed people to escape responsibility for it. He loved the sinner, yes, but He condemned the sin and called people to repent. He didn't leave people where He found them. He hated sin so much that He was willing to die to remove the consequences of it from the people He loved.

Now, which is better: an immoral person with high self-esteem who deceives himself that sin doesn't matter and then he ends up lost; or a person who, realizing his sin is wrong, repents, obeys the Lord, and enjoys eternal life? Jesus lovingly confronts sin and helps the sinner overcome it. Satan, on the other hand, tempts to sin, enjoys the sin, and he persecutes the brethren for exposing sin to the light.

Satan uses humor to get you to laugh at sin; he makes it appear "fun" and "harmless." He develops movies and television shows that make fun of the righteous and make heroes out of sinners. He uses humor to stimulate the worst in people. Titus 1:15 to 16 says, "To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed." The devil has no conscience! He hides how sin has caused broken lives and destroyed homes only show you the pleasures of sin. He makes sinful behavior "fashionable" and "acceptable." He whispers to you how good you'd feel, how free you'd be, how good you'll look in front of your friends whenever you, sin. He makes you think all this fun will last forever. Of course, he's lying to you. He would take away your desire to do and to be different from the world, to do what's right. He'll "stretch the truth" about sin and tell you "everybody's doing it." He'll say, "times have changed, and people don't judge you for what you're doing any longer." He'll give you every excuse possible to keep you deceived. He doesn't want you to know that your sins will cost your soul.

Let's pray. Oh, Father help us to see sin for what it is. This is our pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.

We must resist the devil and stand with Christ. Ephesians 6:10 to 13 says, "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.” Christ will strengthen us so that we can stand firm.

1 Peter 5 and verse 8 says, “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” The way to win against the devil is to draw close to God. James 4:7 to 8 says, “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

We first draw close to God by believing in Jesus Christ and in His word! Without faith we, we can't please God (Hebrews 11 and verse 6). We must turn from sin and turn to the ways of the Lord. The Lord said in Luke 13:3, “unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” Jesus died to forgive our sins; how can we continue in sin? We can't. With love we must confess Jesus Christ as God's Son and be baptized into Christ. And baptism into Christ is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). Won't you be baptized today?

We hope that today's study on the devil's schemes has stirred you to recognize your responsibility to the Lord Jesus. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Just subscribe to our channel, “SearchTVMinistry” on YouTube. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

There's no better day than today to worship at church and revive your spiritual life. There's probably a church of Christ in your area. So worship with them today? If you're looking for a, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So, keep searching God's Word and tell a friend about us. As always, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.