"The Devil’s Schemes"

Some question whether the devil exists or not, but the Bible reveals all the troubles that he brings to this world. Hello, I’m Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study “In Search of the Lord’s Way.” Stay with us as we study God’s Word, and you’ll find out what the devil is doing.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord’s Way! We’re here to search the Scriptures for God’s will. God’s word gives us light and hope; it teaches us the way to eternal life. It also protects us from the lies and the schemes of the devil. Your Bible can help you understand what the devil will say and do to try to pull you away from God and from His blessing. The psalmist said in Psalm 119 and verse 11, “Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.” The more we know God’s word, the better we can stop the devil from taking us captive to sin. He may promise you all kinds of pleasure, but his promises fail in time.

Peter warns us in 1 Peter 5 and verse 8, “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” Just like a lion prowls around for its prey, so the devil seeks out people he can deceive and devour. The devil may pretend to like you, but he’s only interested in exploiting you. He may promise you all kinds of pleasure, but his promises fail in time.

The Bible says in James 4 verses 7 to 8, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” If you draw near to God, the devil will not defeat you. God promises us a way of escape so that we may endure and escape the strategies of Satan who wants to steal our souls (according to 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 13). If we’re to defeat the devil, we must learn how the devil works.

Well to help you in your study of the devil’s schemes, we offer a free, printed copy or CD of our study. Now if 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 online at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we’ll read from Ephesians 6 verses10 to 13, and we’ll explore the devil’s schemes.

Our reading today comes from the book of Ephesians, chapter 6, verses 10 through 13. “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.” That’s a reading from God’s holy word. Let’s pray together. Oh Father help us to stand against all the schemes of the devil. That we may love You and serve You always. In Jesus name, Amen!

Someone says, “Well I’m just not sure there is such a person as the devil.” But Jesus believed in the devil, and in fact He met him face to face, as is recorded in Matthew chapter 4. And He found out that Satan works through lies and through deception. The Lord Jesus told some of the unbelieving Jews in John 8 and verse 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.”

You know, people get fooled by lies, because they think that what is a lie is actually true. Well the devil fools them and the devil realizes that if he tells a lie long enough and loud enough, gullible people will come to believe it.

Satan is a cunning adversary who hides his real intentions. Paul warned the church about false apostles in 2 Corinthians 11 verses 13 to 15, he said “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it’s not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.” Now these false apostles taught error and exploited the people for their own pleasure. They didn’t care how their lies affected anyone as long as they satisfied their lusts.

Well how do you spot a counterfeit? Well, counterfeits try to look as much like the real thing as possible, but there’s always differences. Now people who handle cash study genuine bills like this ten dollar bill. They know every detail about it, so that when a fake, counterfeit bill comes, they can see its faults. You know in the same way, the Bible provides us with the standard of what is genuine, so that when the devil introduces a counterfeit religion or a counterfeit church, we can spot it for what it is!

Let’s look at some of the devil’s counterfeits.

First, the devil does his best to remove God from the next generation. He’s urging them to take their focus off of God and what the Bible teaches. He tells them the Bible is old-fashioned, judgmental, and mean. But in reality, the Bible is utterly relevant to today’s world, it’s truthful about what hurts, and so it’s utterly kind. When people forget the Bible, they fall for all kinds of lies and errors. You see the Bible protects us. Ephesians 4, 11 to 14 says, “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. And as a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.” Jesus first gave apostles and prophets and then the written word to teach us the truth and to protect us from the devil’s schemes.

The Bible provides an infallible standard of truth and righteousness. It teaches everything necessary to know for salvation and eternal life. It distinguishes truth from error, right from wrong, and the devil likes to blend that truth with error to keep people from knowing God’s will. Now if they don’t know it they can fall victim to his wicked schemes and end up in great misery. The Lord said through the prophet Hosea in chapter four and verse six: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge (God says), I will also reject you (that is Israel) from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.” Now when people fail to know God’s will, the whole society suffers for it. Though Bibles are available everywhere, many have such little knowledge of God and the Bible that they don’t even know when they have sinned.

Second, the devil would like to convince us that sin doesn’t matter. Now our culture sees almost nothing as sinful. They don’t understand that sin ruins everything it touches. People live for the moment and for their own pleasures with little thought to the consequences of their choices. They forget God calls certain behaviors sinful, because He has seen the harm they do. When parents forget God and set godly examples for their children, children grow up as selfish and irresponsible. Some
wonder why their lives are so miserable and so full of drama. Well they never consider it’s because they’ve shut God out of their lives and they’ve shut His will completely from them. Now if you forget God day after day, you can expect misery to surround you. If you fail to spiritually train your children, you can expect the devil to teach them his ways.

When people quit reading their Bibles, quit going to church, and they push God out of their lives, they’re going to follow the ways of sin. And the devil will rob them of their love, their faith, their consciences, and their hope. He’ll enslave them to sin that hardens their heart and makes them evil.

The Hebrew writer warns in Hebrews 3 verses 12 to 13, “Take care, brethren (now he’s speaking to people who are Christians, to church members), Take care brethren that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

Recent polls reveal that Americans are moving more and more away from the teaching of Scripture. For instance, the devil loves to deceive people into believing that they don’t have to believe in Jesus Christ. But the Lord Jesus said in John 8 and verse 24, “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He (that is the Messiah, the Son of God), you will die in your sins.” Jesus isn’t just another moral teacher or prophet. He’s the one and only Son of God, and unless we believe in Him as the Christ, we’ll die in our sins and be lost forever.

The devil has convinced people that God won’t condemn them for sin, but the Bible says otherwise. Galatians 5 verses 19 to 21 says this, “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Now you can’t live in sin and go to heaven. God will punish sin.

Now the devil loves to hide broken lives and broken homes that were destroyed by sin. He doesn’t want you to see the reality of what sin will do. He loves to make sinful behavior oh "fashionable" and "acceptable." He’ll tell you sin will make you feel good, will make you feel free, and make you look good in front of your friends. He’ll make you think your pleasures will last forever. Of course, He’s lying. His promises sound good but always fail. He’ll tell you people don’t look down on sin anymore. And he’ll make every excuse to keep you doing what he knows will cost you your soul.

God loves us, and it breaks His heart to punish people for their sins. You see, God doesn’t want to condemn us; He wants us to repent. But don’t fall for the devil’s lie that God won’t punish sin. If we disobey Him, He will punish us. God told the Jews through the prophet Ezekiel, “‘Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct,’ declares the Lord God. ‘Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you. Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,’ declares the Lord God. ‘Therefore, repent and live.’” (Ezekiel 18 verses 30 to 32).

Third, the devil loves to plant doubt in our hearts. The devil would love nothing more than to destroy our faith in Christ. The devil knows that without faith, it’s impossible to please God (Hebrews 11 and verse 6). The Bible describes faith in Hebrews 11 verses 1 to 3: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.” Faith assures us that what we hope for is true; and we’re convinced
that God’s word is utterly trustworthy. God sees what we cannot see and knows what we cannot know. And we must learn to trust Him and to be faithful.

Proverbs 3 verses 5 to 8 urges us to “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body, And refreshment to your bones.” Faith in God has proven itself for many, many centuries, but doubt leads only to foolishness and failure. Doubt leaves a person in confusion, chaos, and uncertainty. A person without faith in God has no basis for distinguishing truth from error or right from wrong. He must assume a standard that arises from his own reasoning, a standard as flimsy as the passing of time. Because he can never be sure of anything, and he must live with hopelessness and an uncertain morality. You see, doubt makes people selfish; and a selfish world with selfish standards will inevitably lead to moral chaos and misery.

The devil wants to create doubt in what you believe. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4 verses 1 to 2, “Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. 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.” Now the devil will tamper with God’s word just enough to make it say what he wants it to say and what people want to hear. The devil deceives people by twisting God’s will to fit the times and giving people his warped version of the truth.

Now if Satan can get you to doubt what God says, He can offer you his alternative. He causes doubt by suggesting God has cheated you out of happiness. Satan suggests the way to happiness comes from following his alternative way. The truth is that the devil just wants to enslave you with sin and steal your soul. So the devil loves to produce an “alternate” truth or an “alternative” lifestyle. He’ll do everything he can to keep you from following God’s will.

Fourth, we need to know that the devil hates, and slanders and persecutes anyone who disagrees with him. The Lord Jesus said in John 15 verses 18 and 19, “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. And if you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” Oh my friend, the world hates Christians and the will of God, because the Bible shows the error of their ungodly and worldly ways. Our culture punishes anyone whose brave enough to call sin “sin.” But if we are faithful to God, we must still take notice of the consequences of sin. My friend, please, please, please, don’t be fooled by the devil. Let’s pray together. Father, we’re grateful for the love that You’ve shared with us. And we’re thankful for the truth that is in Your word. Father, help us to hide up in our hearts the things that You have taught us, so that we might not sin against You and be fooled by the schemes of the devil. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen!

There is one last thing the devil will do to cause you to be lost. He’ll tell you that you have plenty of time, time to repent, time to come to Jesus. You see, the devil knows that if you put off repentance now, it’ll be even harder to change later. The devil will do anything to keep you from leaving the way of sin and following the way of Jesus Christ. The Lord’s main message to every village where He went from place to place was “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4 and verse 17). Jesus never condoned or overlooked sin. He despised sin so much that He was willing to bear the cross to atone for our sins, so that we could be reconciled with God and live eternally. Have you considered how much Jesus suffered for you? He loved you enough to take the punishment for your sins.
Now you’re either choosing to follow a liar, that’s Satan, who schemes to rob you of your soul or to follow the One who loves you enough to tell you the truth and to forgive you. The first, that is Satan, will lead you to eternal punishment, while the Other will lead you to eternal life and joy. You can follow the truth or follow deception. You can follow morality or be enslaved to sin. You can follow your greatest friend or follow your greatest adversary. What will you do?

The blood of Jesus is applied to our souls when we’re willing to put our trust in Him, repent of our sins, confess His name before others, and be baptized into Christ. Now baptism is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sin. The devil says you don’t have to be baptized, but the Lord Jesus said in John 3 and verse 5, and I believe Jesus, He said “Truly, truly, I say to you, that unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” My friend, that’s talking about baptism. And you can’t be saved, unless you’re born of water and the Spirit, and that happens when your baptized. Won’t you be baptized today?

Well we hope that today’s study has stirred you to think and to consider your soul. Think about what God says. Now if you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, then 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 online at www.searchtv.org. You’ll also find a schedule of our programs. And we offer a free Bible Correspondence course. Now if you write us don’t worry, we won’t hassle you for money or put you on a list.

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