

## Know Your Spiritual Enemy's Tactics #1

Daniel 10:13; 2 Corinthians 2:11

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If we truly understand (as Christians) that there is a spiritual battle within us between our sinful flesh and the Holy Spirit, and likewise that there is a spiritual battle outside us between the seductive temptations of the world and our renewed nature as Christians, then why do we need to discuss the devil at all in relationship to this spiritual battle? Is spending time discussing Satan and a spiritual battle with his wicked spiritual forces necessary? Do we give too much credit to the devil and his evil cohorts, and the role they play in our temptations?

God tells us through His inspired prophets in Scripture that there are not just two enemies that tempt us and draw us away from Christ (the world and the flesh), but three enemies: **the world** (as tempting us outwardly through people and through the attractions of this age that are opposed to God—1 John 2:15); **the flesh** (as tempting us inwardly through its sinful desires that oppose the will of God—Romans 13:14); and **the devil** (as tempting and influencing us to follow the world and the flesh rather than to follow Christ—2 Corinthians 2:11).

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (17:3) addresses the “Perseverance of the Saints” and identifies these same three enemies as the source of our temptations in leading us into sin:

Nevertheless they [true Christians] may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their perseverance, fall into grievous sins; and for a time continue therein: whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve his Holy Spirit; come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts; have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.

Therefore, let us not minimize this spiritual enemy (Satan) and his wicked forces in the spiritual battle that we face daily in this world. Knowing the enemy and how he uses the world and the flesh to draw us away from the Lord Jesus is not a matter of mere knowledge, but will prove to be our wisdom in overcoming him in our daily lives.

In this brief diversion from our text in Daniel 10, we began a careful consideration of the spiritual battle we face as Christians: (1) Know Your Spiritual Enemy; (2) Know Your Spiritual Enemy's Tactics; (3) Know the Resources God Has Given to You to Overcome Your Spiritual Enemy.

### I. Know Your Spiritual Enemy's Tactics

A. There is seen and unseen demonic influence all around us.

1. We see and acknowledge the demonic influence and deception in all false religions (including the huge growth of Satanism, the occult, and new age paganism), in the persecution of Christians who stand for God's truth, in murdering unborn children (mass murders), in wickedly confusing children about their sexual identity, in transgender mutilation of children, in destroying the institution of marriage, in not only tolerating sexual perversion but normalizing it by law, media, and porn, in trafficking children/adults as sex slaves, in racial hatred, in violent riots that burn down cities, etc. Those are all very public displays for anyone to see and acknowledge as works of the devil.

2. But what are not so often known to be the works of the devil are the many ways that he leads us into sin away from the Lord Jesus by way of his temptations/suggestions. This is a grand deception of the devil, and yet we are responsible for our response to his temptations (“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” James 4:7).

a. Just as there are ways in which he desires to be directly and public acclaimed and worshipped (Satanism), so there are many ways in which he prefers not to have the light shined upon him so as to expose him in tempting and deceiving us. For we would be much more quick to say, “No”, to a temptation if we understood that it was Satan and his demonic forces that were tempting us to follow them.

b. Our spiritual enemy loves to hide in darkness (to work secretly) in seducing us to follow him in pleasing our sinful desires or in pursuing the vanity of this world (1 Timothy 4:1). Let us visualize Satan as dangling that temptation before us to entice us, and we will more likely flee (like Joseph) into the merciful arms of our beloved Savior.

## B. Two Preliminary Questions

1. **Why does our loving Father and blessed Savior allow Satan to tempt us?** Almighty God could prevent/restrain Satan from tempting, confusing, seducing, and lying to us (as He could have done with Peter). Satan must seek permission from God to tempt us, so why does God allow him to do so? Let me suggest there are a number of reasons God does so, and none of them are for our destruction as Christians, but out of love for us to grow in Jesus Christ.

a. **Why does God allow Satan to tempt us?** Even Jesus did not escape the temptation of Satan (Matthew 4:1). The Holy Spirit did not intend the destruction of Jesus. God cannot tempt anyone to sin (James 1:13), but He could prevent it if He chose to do so. I submit it was for our encouragement and comfort that Jesus was tempted (Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 2:18). Jesus became one of us (He’s fully man and not only suffered for us, but suffered with us). He prays for us in heaven knowing the strength of Satan’s temptations. He also was tempted by Satan to show us how we are to combat the enemy—three times Jesus said, “It is written” (the sword of the Spirit committed to memory). If the Father permitted His only begotten Son to be tempted, who are we to complain that it is not loving or fair for God to allow Satan to tempt us for our good and the good of others who likewise can benefit from what we endure?

b. **Why does God allow Satan to tempt us?** God grows us in faith and perseverance through temptations. They may be temptations from the enemy that he intends to lead us into sin, but they are tests from God to strengthen us in withstanding the attacks of the enemy (James 1:2-3). The way in which we learn to stand against the enemy is to learn how to stand (not only from Scripture), but how to stand through experience; how to overcome the enemy through practicing the truth. If a team wants to defeat a strong opponent, it must be tested by playing a tough schedule not a soft and easy schedule.

c. **Why does God allow Satan to tempt us?** God humbles us and shows us how weak we are and how much we need the resurrection power of Christ to overcome the enemy and his temptations he brings against us (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). We like Peter may act as though we are beyond being tempted by Satan to fall into THAT sin, but we are warned against such pride (1 Corinthians 10:12).

d. **Why does God allow Satan to tempt us?** God uses our temptations to encourage and comfort others who go through similar temptations (Luke 22:31-32). When we are struggling with a strong temptation that we have fallen into so many times, comforting others may seem like the last thing on our minds (but rather failure), and yet that truth can be such a hope to never give up, but to rise again (even seven times, Proverbs 24:16). That’s not to excuse or encourage falling into the same sin, but rather a hope that keeps us from despair.

e. **Why does God allow Satan to tempt us?** God uses the temptations of Satan to discipline us in love when we stubbornly insist on heading down a path that the Lord has warned us not to travel (in His Word, through preaching, through parents/friends). Yet, we refuse to listen to our loving Father. He teaches us what sin will do to us because we will not learn through the loving and gentle instruction of His Word by allowing Satan to teach us the hard way through temptations in that very sin (like Peter and the other apostles; Hebrews 12:5,6,10).

2. A second preliminary question is this: **How do we know when it is Satan and his evil forces that are tempting us, as opposed to the world or the flesh that is tempting us?**

a. Since Satan tempts us by way of sinful suggestions that arouse the evil desires in

our heart and by way of presenting temptations in the world to our outward senses, it is very difficult to distinguish the temptations of Satan from the outward temptations of the world and the inward temptations of the sinful flesh. I submit it is not necessary that we be able to make such clear distinctions, but simply to understand that Satan uses the world and the flesh to tempt us, to deceive us, to lead us away from Christ and His truth. In some places in Scripture the emphasis falls upon this outward battle with the world (James 4:4). In other places the emphasis falls upon the inward battle with the flesh (Romans 7:18). And then there are those places that emphasize our spiritual battle with the devil (Ephesians 6:11). Satan uses all of our weaknesses and sins against us (whether it be a proud look, angry words, porn, fretting over people and circumstances, doubting the promises of God, trusting in the arm of flesh, avoiding communion with Christ, etc.). He knows our weaknesses by way of scouting reports.

b. But let me suggest some practical indicators of Satan's work in using the world and the flesh to tempt us.

- (1) The frequency of the temptation.
- (2) The strength of the temptation/out of nowhere.
- (3) The confusion from the temptation.
- (4) The anxiety/panic from the temptation.
- (5) The discouragement/despair/depression from the temptation.
- (6) Illnesses may have a medical explanation and yet be used by Satan (Job;

Luke 13:16; 1 Timothy 5:23).

(7) The destruction of God's institutions of marriage and the church from the temptations to consume spouses and brethren.

## II. Application

A. The more ignorant/apathetic we are to Satan's secret devices the more happy he is to work *incognito*. It's time he be exposed/resisted by the power of Christ's death/resurrection, the Word, and the Spirit.

B. It is also a device of the devil to drive us to fear him the more we learn about him and how he works. He is already a defeated enemy through the death, resurrection, and enthronement of Christ. He may be a roaring lion, but he is a toothless lion that has been declawed by Jesus. Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah before whom all the forces of evil flee. The more we learn how to fight this spiritual battle, the more bold we become in Christ (not more fearful). May temptations send you to Jesus, not from Him. We resist the devil by fleeing to Christ.

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