

Know Your Spiritual Enemy's Tactics #2

Daniel 10:13; Ephesians 6:11

July 30, 2023

Greg L. Price

Our Reformed forefathers condemned the Roman Catholic rite of exorcism for using unbiblical paraphernalia like crucifixes, holy water, incense, rosary beads, and offering prayers to Mary, the angels, and the martyrs for their intercession and help. The Reformers replaced those unbiblical forms of exorcism with repentance of sin, faith in Jesus Christ, declaring God's powerful Word, and prayer and fasting through the almighty name of the Lord Jesus who has already conquered Satan.

Actually, our reformed forefathers emphasized more (as does Scripture) Satan's role in tempting, deceiving, misleading, and influencing people to follow their own evil desires and the attractions of this world over the will of God. Satan is more successful in hiding in the background by way of his temptations than in publicly exposing himself by way of demonic possession (and all manner of public depravity) for all the world to see.

Though we as Christians grow so weary at times over the continuous temptations we face and the spiritual battle that rages within us, let us understand that such a battle between our enemies (the world, the flesh, and the devil on the one side) and the Holy Spirit and the holy affections within on the other side is evidence we belong to Christ (Romans 7). Where there is no battle at all means that we are dead and there is no battle because there is no life within us to battle those temptations. We do not rejoice in the battle that we fight against these enemies, but we rejoice that there is a battle and that by God's grace and by His Spirit we continue to battle the enemy of our souls and that Jesus is using this battle to sanctify us, to humble us, to draw us to Him who has already conquered all of our enemies through His death and resurrection.

We have already considered, **Know Your Spiritual Enemy**. We began last Lord's Day considering, **Know Your Spiritual Enemy's Tactics** (and continue on that point today). The final point which we will soon reach is, **Know the Resources God Has Given to You to Overcome Your Spiritual Enemy**. I assure you that I am preaching this for my soul as well as yours.

I. **Know Your Spiritual Enemy's Tactics (Daniel 10:13; Ephesians 6:10-12)**. There are two general categories of Satan's temptations that we will consider today: (1) **He tempts us to sin against God's revealed will in Scripture**; (2) **He tempts us to ignore/neglect using God's resources to overcome sin**. The devil tempts us either to say, "No" to God's holy precepts, or he tempts us to say, "Not now, Lord; maybe later". However, when we say, "Not now, Lord; maybe later", we actually are saying, "No". Satan would have us think that procrastination is not saying, "No", when in reality it is (Parable of two sons, Matthew 21).

A. **First, the devil sets temptations before our minds or before our eyes/ears in order to entice us to think, desire, believe, speak, hear, or practice what is contrary to Scripture**. Let's consider eight examples of this first general category of the devil tempting and enticing us to disobey God's Word (these are not exhaustive, but representative).

1. "Do what YOU want to do. It will bring you such pleasure, fulfillment, and satisfaction. Follow your heart/dreams. No one has a right to trample upon what will make you happy—not even God. Others do the same thing and look how happy they are?" The focus in this temptation is all about us and our immediate gratification (Eve—"You will be like God"). We must beware when decisions we make are all about us and our dreams rather than about our service/love for God and others (1 Corinthians 10:31). Remember that the sins of others bring only a brief happiness until they reap the consequences. It's a snare (1 Timothy 6:9).

2. "Test the boundaries and see how close you can get to sin without falling into it. It will be fun. You will be able to pull back at the last moment before you outwardly commit the sin" ("flee youthful

lusts” 2 Timothy 2:22). Whenever we test the boundaries of what we know is contrary to God’s will (and flirt with it), we have already in our desires been set up to fall into the outward sin. Most often, we have warning signals going off from God’s Spirit within us that this temptation is stirring up desires that we know are contrary to God’s will. Seeing how close we can get to the cliff before falling over it is Satan’s way of moving us ever closer to the cliff rather than fleeing from it.

3. “You don’t want to look weird and excluded from your family, friends, and co-workers by following Christ and His Word. Don’t you want to be accepted and included by them? Then follow the world; dress immodestly like the world; watch what the world watches, listen to the music that takes your heart away from the Lord; and talk trash like the world talks” (Psalm 101:3; Ephesians 4:29-30). Peer pressure and not wanting to be different from those around us is a great temptation of the enemy (especially to young people). We are either being conformed to the world or being conformed to Christ—no neutrality (Romans 12:1-2).

4. “Don’t worry about your sin. It’s just a little sin in comparison to that person’s sin. At least you are not as bad as that person.” Let us beware of the Satan’s temptation to justify our sins by comparing us to others whom we deem to be far worse sinners (2 Corinthians 10:12). This only produces self-righteousness in justifying our sins rather than humility in acknowledging our sins before the Lord (Psalm 32:5). Sins that we minimize are often the most ensnaring sins and inevitably lead to more aggravated sins because we did not take the “smaller” sins seriously.

5. “Your sin is not your fault. It’s really their fault. They made you angry and made you lose control because of the way they treated you or spoke to you.” Shifting blame to others for our own sinful response is often the ploy of the enemy to lead us away from the Lord in justifying our sin (Adam—“the woman thou gavest to be with me”). The more we justify our sin by blaming others, the more we become hardened by that sin rather than being humbled by that sin and fleeing to our blessed Savior. Remember—we are responsible for our responses to even injury and ill treatment that we suffer (Jesus says to bless and pray for those who curse us). The devil may have tempted us, but he did not make us do it nor did anyone else make us do it.

6. Sixth, “Go ahead and commit that sin because you can easily repent of it and seek God’s forgiveness afterward. It’s easier to repent of sin than to resist sin.” It is surely true that if we repent God will forgive us 70 times 7 (Matthew 18:22). However, let us beware that when we justify falling into sin because God will forgive us, we will not escape the consequences of our sin for the Lord will lovingly discipline us and will teach us that we must not continue in sin that grace may abound (Romans 6:1-2). We have no idea where sin will lead us. It’s dangerous.

7. Seventh, “When you are struggling with a besetting sin, don’t seek out the help of a faithful pastor, elder, deacon, or a mature Christian. Seek out the help of someone who will agree with you, minimize and justify your sin, not someone who will take you to Christ, to His death and resurrection, and to the commandments and promises of God. All you need is sympathy, not the truth.” As sinners, we do need sympathy; however, not sympathy to continue in our sin, but sympathy that we are all tempted to fall into sin. True sympathy is suffering with that person knowing the temptations we have faced. We have a sympathetic high priest, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 2:18). As many times as we fall into temptation, He ever remains sympathetic as we flee to His mercy. His arms are always open to welcome us. That is how we must relate to one another—open arms.

8. Eighth, “It is not wrong to be resentful when you have been abused and mistreated. You have a right to despise that person who hates you and mistreats you.” That is a lie. That’s the world’s view of justice. We will only hurt and destroy ourselves. We have no such right from God. We have a right to return good for evil (Romans 12:17,21).

B. Second, the devil tempts us to ignore and to procrastinate using God’s resources to overcome sin (whether it be the Word, prayer, communion/fellowship with Christ, the eldership/ministry, and Christian fellowship).

1. “Don’t worry about daily prayer, reading of Scripture, memorization of Scripture, and communion with Christ. That’s just legalism. You’re under grace—not under law. Such structure in your life drains the life out of you. You’re too busy with so many other responsibilities. You just don’t have time for worship.” To the contrary, our life is our union and communion with Christ. The very means of fighting the good fight of faith is to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. It is not legalism to daily commune with Christ—it is grace—it is heaven upon earth for the Christian. That is to live more abundantly (John 10:10). We become prime targets of the enemy because we are not communing with Christ daily. The same is true with regard to daily family worship and Lord’s Day worship.

2. “Worship should make us feel good about ourselves. If it isn’t doing so, just stop for a while.” God warns us to be ever so careful that we don’t attend to God’s Word (whether privately or publicly) in order to have our ears tickled or to have ministers tell us what we want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3-4; Jeremiah 5:31). Worship is ascribing worth to God, not to ourselves. It is honoring God, not ourselves. Worship is God-centered, not man-centered. It is regulated by His revealed will in Scripture, not by what makes us feel good about ourselves. True worship is both inward in a heart of faith and love, and outward in obedience to God’s commands. When we put the Lord first in worshipping Him as He prescribes (in spirit and in truth—John 4:24), then the Holy Spirit builds us up and grows us in Christ.

3. “You cannot come to Christ because of your sin and because you have fallen again into the same temptation of sin. Don’t waste your time. Jesus is holy, and you have sinned away His mercy.”

a. That is just a lie to keep us away from the only One who has overcome temptation and sin for us—the only One who can give us faith in Him and hope in His promises that we are not forsaken and are not doomed to jump whenever Satan flashes that temptation before our eyes. That’s what the enemy wants you to believe.

b. Yes, Jesus is absolutely holy, but He has come to save us from sin, to purify us, and grow us in holiness (which will be fully accomplished when we are glorified at death and the resurrection).

c. The very qualification for our coming to Christ is because Jesus calls sinners (not perfected saints) to come unto Him (Matthew 11:28). Paul’s struggles with his sinful flesh (and evil desires within) did not deny Him access to the power of Christ’s death and resurrection (Romans 7:24-25). To the contrary, his sinful weaknesses drove him to Christ, not away from Christ.

d. Satan wants us only to look at our sin as keeping us away from Christ. Whereas, God wants us to look at our sin as a transgression of His law, so that we might acknowledge our sin and flee to Jesus, our loving, merciful sin-bearer (who grants us repentance, forgiveness, and new obedience).

e. There may not be a greater device that Satan uses in our lives to stunt our growth and to send us away in hopelessness than to lie to us that our sin will keep us from coming to the Lord Jesus for His mercy (Deuteronomy 4:31).

f. Therefore, let us not be slow to turn to Christ after we have sinned (that is the trick of the enemy). Rather let us be quick to do so when we fall (even if we have fallen more times than we can count, Proverbs 24:16). It is when we are slow to come to Jesus that we are all the more tempted and attacked being so vulnerable at that very time. When you come to Jesus, He will rejoice over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17).

Copyright 2023 Greg L. Price.