



THE INVISIBLE WAR AGAINST SATAN



Part 6: How Satan Seeks to Destroy You

Introduction

Perhaps more than any other Scriptural reference related to spiritual warfare, the Apostle John's assertion in his first epistle is cited to bring comfort and assurance in the midst of the battle: "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 Jn. 4:4). It would not be unusual for an engaging conversation about a roaring lion and incoming flaming arrows to take place among friends, only to have one of them conclude with words such as these: "Well, I am sorry you are in this fierce battle, but always remember that 'greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.'" On the one hand, this strong affirmation recognizes that Satan only has limited and derived power, while God is omnipotent; on the other, it fails to provide real help in the midst of the struggle.

Introduction

It should not be surprising that many believers are not familiar with the teachings of the Bible on the reality of spiritual warfare, i.e., that they have a true enemy, that the battle is raging daily (not occasionally), that as an extremely intelligent being, Satan has cleverly designed plots for our moral defeat, that God has provided us with spiritual (not fleshly) weapons with which to engage him and his host of demons, that he was defeated by Christ when He died on the cross to set us free from sin and death, and that we can live a victorious and abundant life *while* we are struggling “against the rulers, against the powers, against the world-forces of darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

Introduction

The reasons for this condition are many, including widespread liberal theological positions on the Bible, pastoral and lay embarrassment about the existence of Satan and demons, worldviews which avoid any mention of the supernatural and preternatural world, popular but unbiblical notions about the nature of the Christian life, Satan's own ploy to cause people to disbelieve in him in an enlightened age, and a general lack of interest in the deep things of God and His eternal kingdom. The remedy for these reasons lies in what you and I are currently doing: carefully examining God's self-disclosure (the Bible), thinking analogically (thinking God's thoughts after Him), and accepting the correspondence theory of truth (truth that corresponds to reality).



Introduction

As we live our lives each day, “trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord” (Eph. 5:10), we must always realize that facts and reality are totally unforgiving. “Facts are what we run into when we are wrong” (Dallas Willard). Therefore, as we press ahead in our sixth lecture, let us consider (and accept) what Scripture teaches regarding Satan’s strategies against us. Does he really plot and scheme against us? If so, how does he seek to accomplish his objective and turn us away from Christ? Having laid a biblical foundation regarding the origin and fall of Satan, his activities and power, his defeat, and our unrelenting war with his malevolent operatives, we now turn our attention to the devices he uses to ruin us and tempt us to leave the God we love.

Satan's Schemes & Flaming Missiles



“Taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one” (Eph. 6:16).

- “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the **schemes** of the devil” (Eph. 6:11, ESV).
- “So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to **everything the Devil throws your way**” (Eph. 6:11, *The Message*).



The Schemes of the Devil

- **Methodēía**, *n.*, (*method, methodical*) scheming, craftiness (only in an unfavorable sense); in the plural, it means “wiles, stratagems.”
- **Meta** = “after” + **hodos** = “way.” Thus, *methodos* means “a going after, pursuit, system.” Later, it includes premeditation and the art expressed in method, especially in a bad sense (cunning, deception, craftiness). **Satan is pursuing you** – seeking to devour you (1 Pt. 5:8).
- The word is from the verbal form, *methodeúo*. At first, it meant “to treat methodically” and “to handle according to plan” (e.g., the handling of taxes). Later, it takes on the nuance of “handling craftily,” “overreaching,” “deceiving,” thus, “to defraud, deceive, pervert.”



The Schemes of the Devil

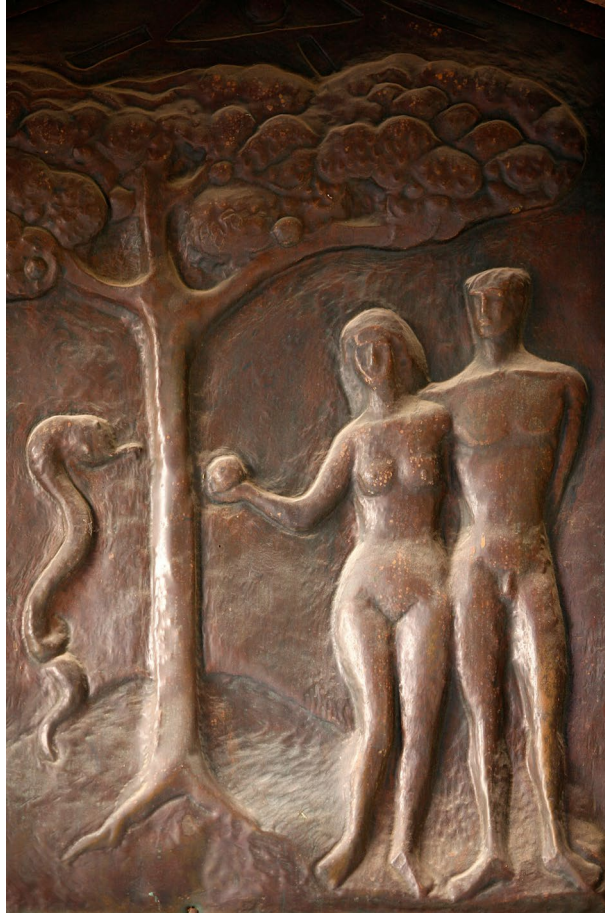
- The OED defines **wile** (KJV) as “a crafty, cunning, or deceitful trick; a sly, insidious, or underhand artifice; a stratagem, ruse.”
- Kittel maintains that “the reference is to machinations (**malicious plotting**) or (in military terms) attacks against which one must be armed.”
- The plural form suggests that the attacks are **constantly repeated** or are of **incalculable variety**. Is it difficult for you to live in freedom?
- R.C.H. Lenski suggests that “the idea of **expert skill** should not be overlooked.” “His mental powers are massive” (Michael Green).
- The nature of the attacks constitutes their **great danger**, against which the armor of God is the only defense.



The Schemes of the Devil

- Ephesians 4:11-14 – “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by **craftiness in deceitful schemes.**”
- These schemes are “the devil’s crafty methods” (Hendriksen), and “the expert methods of the devil” (Lenski). Satan “knows his game.”

Deception in the Garden of Eden



Annunciation Basilica Door
Nazareth, Galilee, Israel

“Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this that you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent **deceived** me, and I ate.’”

- Genesis 3:13

“But I am afraid, lest as **the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness**, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”

- II Corinthians 11:3



The Plots of the Devil

- The Apostle Paul uses another Greek word to describe Satan's malicious plans in his second letter to the Corinthians: "...in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his **schemes**" (II Cor. 2:11).
- The word here is *noema*, which means *thought, mind* and, in a bad sense, *design, plot*. It is found five times in the New Testament (only in Paul) and is always (except in Phil. 4:7) used in a bad sense.
- Paul "uses the word 'devices'...with a bad sense, meaning the artful schemes and tricks of which believers ought to be aware, and will be if they allow the Spirit of God to rule in them" (Calvin).

Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

“Satan being fallen from light to darkness, from felicity to misery, from heaven to hell, from an angel to a devil, is so full of malice and envy that he will leave no means unattempted, whereby he may make all others eternally miserable with himself....He makes use of all of his power and skill to bring all the sons of men into the same condition and condemnation with himself.”

- *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*



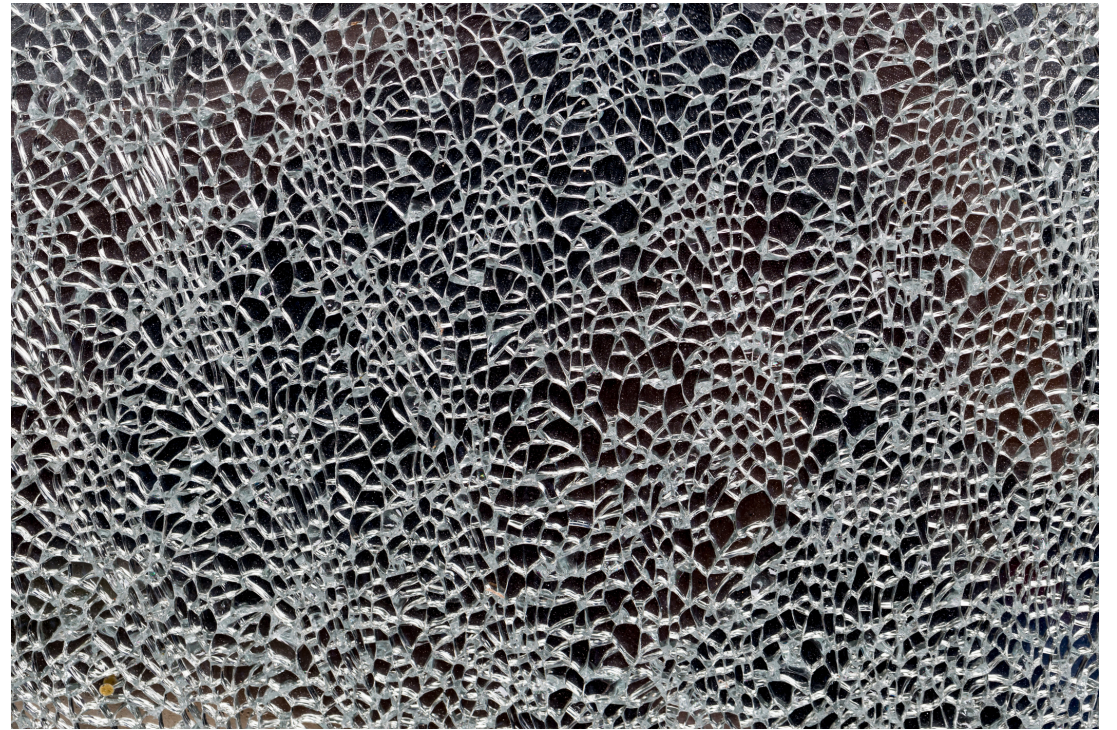


Satan's Arsenal

Satan's devices are referred to in Scripture as schemes, wiles, stratagems, tricks, ruses, machinations (plots), attacks, designs, methods, and flaming darts. His schemes are crafty, deceptive, premeditated, repeatable, cunning, evil, versatile, overreaching, perverted, sly, insidious, underhanded, artful, ensnaring, and destroying. As such, they are known as "the golden bait" by which Satan seeks to catch you. And, as Brooks' suggests, you "may as well count the stars, and number the sands of the sea, as reckon up all the Devices of Satan." His goal? "Satan seems bent on attacking and destroying creation in general and humankind in particular, and above all on thwarting God's project of remaking the world and human beings in and through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit" (N.T. Wright).

Satan's Shattering and Ruinous Purposes

- To spoil and destroy God's work
- To keep people from God
- To draw Christians into sin
- To accuse and trouble Christians after they have sinned



Tailor-Made Arrows

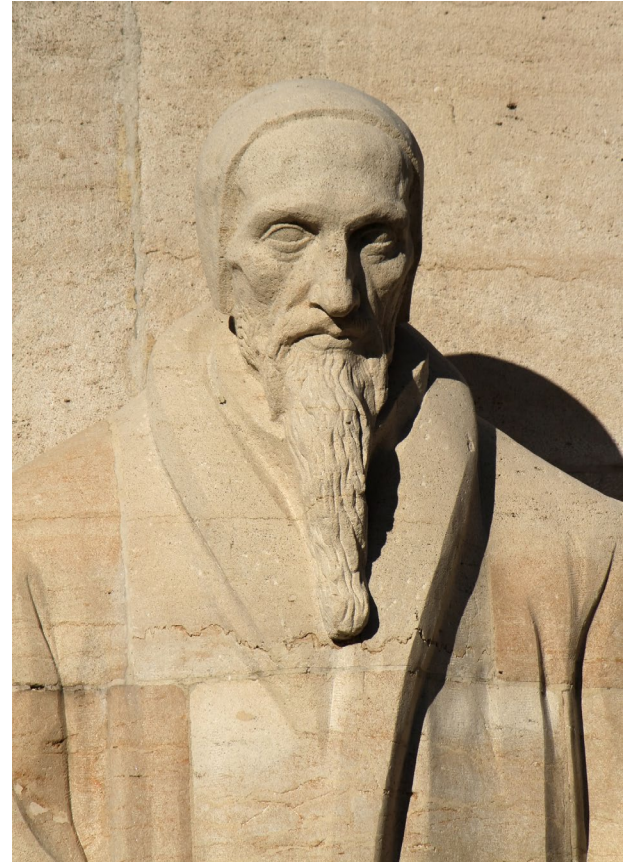


“Satan loves to sail with the wind,
and to suit men’s temptations to
their conditions and inclinations.”

- Thomas Brooks

The Secrecy of Satan's Attacks

“We know from the Lord’s forewarning that his most frequent trick, when he cannot hurt us openly, is to surprise us by a secret attack when we are off our guard. Since we are aware that he is going to attack us by indirect methods and make secret attempts upon us, we must look well ahead and see that no hurt befall us.”



John Calvin
Reformation Wall
Geneva, Switzerland,

A Brief Review

- Satan is pure evil; his nature and will are wholly given to evil.
- He is a deceiver and the master tempter. “...Satan, who deceives the whole world” (Rev. 12:9).
- He is a liar: “...for he is a liar, and the father of lies” (John 8:44).
- He is seeking to devour you: “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (gulp down)” (1 Pt. 5:8).
- He is seeking to separate you from God and to “thwart God’s project of remaking the world and human beings in and through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit” (N.T. Wright).

A Brief Review

- He longs to “plunge you into disastrous spiritual rebellion” (Carl F.H. Henry).
- Satan’s “supreme goal is to exert moral lordship. He sabotages both truth and love if he can conform you to his image” (David Powlison).
- Satan premeditates his attacks on you and exercises malicious plotting to turn you away from God.
- He tries to deceive, defraud, and pervert you.
- The variety of methods he has at his disposal are incalculable.
- Satan poses a great danger to you; he is not to be underestimated.



Satan's Ultimate Goal

- “And the Lord’s bondservant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition; if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from **the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will**” (II Tim. 2:24-26).
- The word snare primarily means “anything which fastens” or “holds fast” (e.g., a noose, net, mouse-trap, etc.). The Trojan horse was called the “wooden snare.” According to Paul, “those who resist the Christian message are in the snare of the devil. The ultimate reason for this opposition is that Satan has deluded them and trapped them into doing his will” (Kittel).

A Partial List of Satan's Weapons

- **Insinuating Doubts:** “Did God really say?” (Gen. 3:1).
- **A Spirit of Fear:** “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity (fear), but of power and love and discipline” (II Tim. 1:7; cf. Peter’s denial).
- **Instigating False Teachings:** “But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons” (I Tim. 4:1; Eph. 4:14; II Thess. 2:1-12; I John 4:1-6; II Cor. 11:14-15).
- **Evil and Blasphemous Thoughts:** “Jesus answered them, ‘Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?’ Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him” (Jn. 6:70-71); “...the devil already having put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him” (Jn. 13:2).

A Partial List of Satan's Weapons

- **Depression and Discouragement:** "...casting all your care upon Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pt. 5:7-8).
- **Pride:** "...and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:6-7).
- **Temptations:** See the Lord's temptations in Mt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13.
- **Suffering:** "But resist him (Satan), firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world (1 Pt. 5:9).

A Partial List of Satan's Weapons

- **Immorality:** “Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (1 Cor. 7:5).
- **Misquoting Scripture:** The temptations of Jesus Christ (Matthew 4 & Luke 4).
- **Promising that Good can be Attained through Wrongdoing:** Satan offers Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for worship (Lk. 4:5-7).
- **Persecuting the Church:** “Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison” (Rev. 2:10).
- **Hindering Service for God:** “For we wanted to come to you – I, Paul, more than once – and yet Satan thwarted us” (1 Thess. 2:18; cf. Acts 13:8-10).

A Partial List of Satan's Weapons

- **Physical Blindness and Muteness:** Mt. 9:32-33;12:22.
- **Accusation:** Satan “accuses them before our God day and night” (Rev. 12:10).
- **Lies:** “You are of your father the devil...” (John 8:44; cf. Acts 5:3).
- **Oppression:** “Jesus went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil...” (Acts 10:38).
- **Causing a Woman to be Bent Over Double:** “She had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all” (Lk. 13:11).
- **Sifting Us Like Wheat:** “Satan has demanded permission to sift you (Peter) like wheat” (Lk. 22:31).

A Mighty Fortress

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe
His craft and pow'r are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.



Martin Luther
1483-1546