

“For We Are Not Ignorant of His Schemes”

(2 Corinthians 2:11)

(Taken Primarily from Thomas Brook’s *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices*)

Introduction: It appears from what we have just read that the man whom Paul refers to in verses 5-11 is the man who was guilty of incest, as we read in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, whom Paul ordered to be put out of the church in order that his soul might be saved in the day of Christ. It is important to the peace and purity of the church, that when one of her members is in unrepentant sin, that that member be cast out and turned over to the devil by the officers of the church, until the time that that member shows a true and repentant heart for the sins he or she has committed. It is not the option of the church officers whether they will do so or not, the Lord Himself commands it, as in Matthew 18:17, “**And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.**” In the fifth verse, it appears as though this man’s sins caused a great deal of grief to the Corinthians. Paul writes, “**But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree -- in order not to say too much -- to all of you.**” To the godly, the sins of others cause grief. Jeremiah wept for the sins of Judah. He wrote, “**Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughters of my people!**” (Jer. 9:1). Paul wept for those who made a profession of Christ, but yet were the enemies of the cross, because they had set their minds on earthly things (Phil. 3:18-19). Thomas Brooks, that faithful pastor of St. Margaret’s, a dissenting minister of the seventeenth century, wrote, “Gracious souls . . . mourn for other men’s sins as well as their own, and for their souls and sins who make a mock of sin, and a jest of damning their own souls. Guilt or grief is all that gracious souls get by communion with vain souls” (*Precious* 25).

In the sixth verse, Paul says that the punishment which was inflicted on him by the majority was enough, and since he has repented, they should now receive him back into their communion. It does not honor Christ, nor does it bring credit to the Gospel, nor does it do any good to anyone’s soul, for those who make profession of the true religion to be like those who burnt some that repented at the stake, saying, “That they would send them into another world whiles they were in a good mind” (25).

In verses 7-10, Paul stirs up the church to forgive him, to comfort him, and to reaffirm their love for him, lest he be “**overwhelmed with excessive sorrow.**” Jerome once said, “Let a man grieve for his sin, and then joy for his grief” (25). Godly sorrow that brings grief for sin is a blessing from God. But, as Brooks wrote, “That sorrow for sin that keeps the soul from looking towards the mercy-seat, and that keeps Christ and the soul asunder, or that shall render the soul unfit for the communion of saints, is a sinful sorrow” (26).

In verse 11, Paul lays down another reason why they should have mercy on this repentant sinner: “**in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.**” Lest Satan should take advantage of us, lest he cheat us, lest he get the better of us. Lest like a greedy salesman, who seeks all opportunities to deceive others, Satan seeks to devour our souls. Therefore, we should not be ignorant of his schemes, for he uses them constantly to defeat and to destroy us. And this is what I want us to see from this text, namely,

Satan has several devices to deceive, trap, and undo the souls of men.

I. It Is Important for Us as Christians to Know What the Schemes of the Devil Are So That We Will Know Best How to Defeat Him.

- A. First, it is important because Satan has a greater influence on men, and takes more advantage of them, than we think he does, and if we know how he does so, that is the best way to disappoint him, and to equip ourselves with the strength to resist and conquer him.
- B. Second, just as it would be helpful to have some form of medicine for any sickness you might have, it would be good for us to have a cure for every wound that the enemy would seek to inflict upon us.
- C. Thirdly, there are very few who in our time and culture that ever talk about the devil. I can't help but think that in the back of our minds, we consider that he isn't really there, or that he really isn't a threat to us.
- D. But fourthly, Satan hates us and wants to destroy us. And he has many ways to do so. Brooks writes, "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 being shut out of heaven, and shut up 'under the chains of darkness till the judgment of the great day' (Jude 6), makes use of all his power and skill to bring all the sons of men into the same condition and condemnation with himself. Satan hath cast such sinful seed into our souls, that now he can no sooner tempt, but we are ready to assent; he can no sooner have a plot upon us, but he makes a conquest of us. If he doth but show men a little of the beauty and bravery [finery] of the world, how ready are they to fall down and worship him!

"Whatever sin the heart of man is most prone to, that the devil will help forward. If David be proud of his people, Satan will provoke him to number them, that he may be yet prouder (2 Sam. 24).

"If Peter be slavishly fearful, Satan will put him upon rebuking and denying of Christ, to save his own skin (Matt. 16:22; 26:69-75). If Ahab's prophets be given to flatter, the devil will straightway become a lying spirit in the mouths of four hundred of them, and they shall flatter Ahab to his ruin (1 Kings 22). If Judas will be a traitor, Satan will quickly enter into his heart, and make him sell his master for money, which some heathens would never have done (John 13:2). If Ananias will lie for advantage, Satan will fill his heart that he may lie, with a witness, to the Holy Ghost (Acts 5:3). Satan loves to sail with the wind, and to suit men's temptations to their conditions and inclinations. If they be in prosperity, he will tempt them to deny God (Prov. 30:9); if they be in adversity, he will tempt them to distrust God; if their knowledge be weak, he will tempt them to have low thoughts of God; if their conscience be tender, he will tempt them to scrupulosity; if large; to carnal security; if bold-spirited, he will tempt to presumption; if timorous, to desperation; if flexible, to inconstancy; if stiff, to inpenitency.

"From the power, malice and skill of Satan, doth proceed all the soul-killing plots, devices, stratagems, and machinations, that be in the world. Several devises he hath to draw souls to sin, and several plots he hath to keep souls from all holy and heavenly services, and several stratagems he hath to keep souls in a mourning, staggering, doubting and questioning condition.

"He hath several devises to destroy the great and honourable, the wise and learned, the blind and ignorant, the rich and the poor, the real and the nominal saints.

“One while he will restrain from tempting, that we may think ourselves secure, and neglect our watch; another while he will seem to fly, that he may make us proud of the victory; one while he will fix men’s eyes on others’ sins than their own, that he may puff them up; other while he may fix their eyes more on other’s graces than they own, that he may overwhelm them.

“A man may as well tell the stars, and number the sands of the sea, as reckon up all the Devices of Satan” (15-17).

II. The Scriptures Tell Us that Satan Is Indeed Scheming Against Us.

- A. In Ephesians 6:11, we read, **“Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.”**
1. The word here used for “schemes” is **meqodei,a** (methodeia), from which we get the word “method”.
 - a. In the NT it is used in a bad sense, such as here, where it means “craftiness, cunning, deception,” or in the plural, “stratagems, cunning attacks, tricks.”
 - b. Satan uses his crafty schemes so that he might deceive you.
 - c. They are like snares that one would put out if he was trying trap a wolf or a bear.
 - d. Or they are like mines placed in the ocean or buried on land to destroy the enemy’s vehicles as they pass through.
 - e. Or they are like armed men and thieves who lie in wait on the road waiting to mug and rob anyone they believe they can overtake.
 2. Paul exhorts us to put on God’s full armor, because our own strength is no defense against Satan’s mighty power.
 - a. Jesus does not call him the “strong man” for nothing (Matt. 12:29).
 - b. He is a powerful being. You must be equipped with God’s armor if you are to fight successfully against him.
 - c. You must be aware of his schemes if you are to avoid them. It would be better for you, being heavily armored, to avoid those places where the enemy waits to attack you, than walking straight into his strongholds.
- B. The Second Passage Is 2 Timothy 2:24-26, Where We Read, **“And the Lord's bond-servant 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.”**
1. The purpose for the apostle’s instruction to Timothy to not quarrel, but to be kind, to teach, and to patient in the face of those who oppose him, is that God may grant to them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.
 - a. The devil can “beguile” and bewilder the mind with his lies.
 - b. As I said, he can deceive. He can make someone think that he is thinking the truth, when he in fact is thinking a lie.
 - c. That is why Paul says that **“they may come to their senses.”** That is, that they might “return to a proper state of mind,” “to think right again,” “to no longer think wrong thoughts” (Louw-Nida 00397, Friberg 00387 [Bibleworks]).

- d. To be held captive means to be taken alive, to be “taken and held by the devil as his prisoner of war” (Louw-Nida 02334), “having been controlled by him to do his will” (Friberg 02962).
2. The Bible tells us that Satan does indeed have his snares, and they are very deadly. Since it is possible for us to fall into them, we must know what they are, we must examine our situations to see if we have fallen into them, and we must study the Scripture to know how to escape them.

III. And So Let Us First Look At Those Snares He Uses to Tempt Us to Sin, and Consider How It Is That We Can Escape Them.

I am taking much of this information from a small book by Thomas Brooks, called, *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices*. Many of you here will never have the time to pick up this valuable book and read it, so I will attempt to bring its precious truths to you in sermons from time to time in evening services. Since Brooks used such colorful language, I will be quoting him from time to time, changing sometimes the wording just slightly, to help you enjoy the godly wisdom of this saint.

A. The First Snare that Satan Uses to Capture Men Is “To present the bait and hide the hook.”

1. Brooks states, “To present the golden cup, and hide the poison; to present the sweet, the pleasure, and the profit that may flow in upon the soul by yielding to sin, and by hiding from the soul the wrath and misery that will certainly follow the committing of sin. By this devise he took our first parents: ‘And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil’ (Gen. 3:4-5). Your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods! Here is the bait, the sweet, the pleasure, the profit. Oh, but he hides the hook, -- the shame, the wrath, and the loss that would certainly follow!”

[To tempt Dr. Rowland Taylor to turn back to the Roman Catholic church at the time of Queen Mary (also known to history as Bloody Mary), they offered him not only a full pardon, but also a bishopric. But he refused, for if he would have accepted, it would have cost him his soul. As it was, to refuse would only cost him his life] (29, n).

- a. Brooks continues, “There is an opening of the eyes of the mind to contemplation and joy, and there is an opening of the eyes of the body to shame and confusion. He promiseth them the former, but intends the latter, and so cheats them -- giving them an apple in exchange for a paradise, as he deals by thousands now-a-days” (29).
- b. Satan is continually placing before our eyes his “golden baits.”
- c. He promises you honor, pleasure, profit, but pays you with contempt, shame and dishonor.
- d. He tried to tempt Christ with his “fool’s paradise” (Matt. 4:8-9). He showed Him the beauty and riches and fame of this vast world, which would have brought many wicked men to their knees before him. But this enticement found no place in Christ. It was like bringing a match to wet kindling; it wouldn’t catch fire.
- e. Many men have been brought under the power of these things and their hearts have run out after them, and they have been destroyed eternally by them, but these things did not win the affections of Christ.
- f. We need to learn to pray the way that Bernard, the twelfth century abbot of

Clarvaux, did, who said, “Grant us, Lord, that we may so partake of temporal felicity [happiness], that we may not lose [the] eternal” (30).

2. For a cure for this temptation, consider the following:
 - a. First, keep as far away as you can from sin, and from playing with the bait which Satan puts out to tempt you with.
 - (i) Paul writes, “**Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good**” Rom. 12:9.
 - (ii) When we come close to anything that is extremely evil and repulsive to us, we run from it as far as we can get. You would not come close to a man with a rifle who is shooting people in the street. Neither would you walk up to a coiled rattle snake. And yet sin is much more evil and deadly to your soul than either of these to your body.
 - (iii) Anselm, the twelfth century saint, “used to say, ‘That if should see the shame of sin on the one hand, and the pains of hell on the other, and must of necessity choose on, he would rather be thrust into hell without sin, than to go into heaven with sin,’ so great was his hatred and detestation of sin” (30-31).
 - (iv) It is wisest for us to not go near sin. The best way to keep from falling into the pit is to not come near it. If we dare to come to the edge to look in, we may find that God will give us over to it to teach us to stay far from it. Joseph, when he was tempted by Satan, in the case of Potiphar’s wife, ran away from her, and stood firm against sin. David came near to the edge with Bathsheba, and fell in.
 - (v) Seneca, a heathen, once wrote, “That if there were no God to punish him, no devil to torment him, no hell to burn him, no man to see him, yet would he not sin for the ugliness and filthiness of sin, and the grief of his own conscience” (31). Even the outward ugliness of sin was repulsive to this unconverted man.
 - (vi) Brooks writes, “Sin is a plague, yea, the greatest and most infectious plague in the world; and yet, ah! how few are there that tremble at it, that keep at a distance from it!” (1 Cor. 5:6): ‘Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?’ As soon as one sin had seized upon Adam’s heart, all sin entered into his soul and overspread it. How hath Adam’s one sin spread over all mankind! (Rom. 5:12): ‘Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.’ Ah, how doth the father’s sin infect the child, the husband’s infect the wife, the master’s the servant! The sin that is in one man’s heart is able to infect a whole world, it is of such a spreading and infectious nature.

“The story of the Italian, who first made his enemy deny God, and then stabbed him, and so at once murdered both body and soul, declares the perfect malignity of sin; and oh! that what hath been spoken upon this head may prevail with you, to stand at a distance from sin!” (31).
 - b. Secondly, realize that although sin seems sweet to the taste, it will turn sour in your stomach.
 - (i) Zophar said to Job concerning the wicked, “**Though evil is sweet in his mouth, and he hides it under his tongue, though he desires it and will not let it go, but holds it in his mouth, yet his food in his stomach is changed to the venom of cobras within him**” (Job 20:12-16).

- (ii) Adam thought what he ate would be sweet, but it turned sour.
 - (iii) Esau thought to gain a stomach full of food, but lost the blessing forever.
 - (iv) “After the meal is ended, then comes the reckoning” (32).
 - (v) You cannot drink the cup of the devil and then expect to drink the cup of the Lord in glory with the saints.
 - (vi) Again, Brooks writes, “When the asp stings a man, it doth first tickle him so as it makes him laugh, till the poison, by little and little, gets to the heart, and then it pains him more than it ever delighted him. So doth sin; it may please a little at first, but it will pain the soul with a witness at last; yea; if there were the least real delight in sin, there could be no perfect hell, where men shall most perfectly be tormented with their sin” (32).
- c. Thirdly, consider that sin will bring us the greatest losses that could possibly be to our souls.
- (i) By it we lose the divine favor of God, His joy that is unspeakable and full of glory, the peace that passes all understanding, and the divine influences of the Spirit by which we are strengthened and refreshed.
 - (ii) And so David cries out to the Lord, “**Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation, And sustain me with a willing spirit**” (Ps. 51:12).
- d. And lastly, consider that sin is very deceitful.
- (i) Brooks writes, “In Sardis there grew an herb, called *Appium Sardis*, that would make a man lie laughing when he was deadly sick; such is the operation of sin” (33n).
 - (ii) The author to the Hebrews writes, “**But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin**” (Heb. 3:13).
 - (iii) Sin is like a Delilah, which will betray us into the hands of the devil.
 - (iv) Sin gives Satan power over us to accuse us and condemn us. This is one of the reasons why, when Eudoxia the empress threatened Chrysostom, an early Christian preacher, he told her messengers, “Go tell her, ‘I fear nothing but sin’” (33n).
 - (v) Sin can make a man call good evil, and evil good; bitter sweet and sweet bitter; light darkness and darkness light.
 - (vi) Sin can make a man defy the infinite God, as did Pharaoh, Balaam, and Judas. Brooks writes, “Tell the bewitched soul that sin is a viper that will certainly kill when it is not killed, that sin often kills secretly, insensibly, eternally, yet the bewitched soul cannot, and will not, cease from sin”
 “When the physicians told Theotimus that except he did abstain from drunkenness and uncleanness he would lose his eyes, his heart was so bewitched to his sins, that he answered, ‘Then farewell, sweet light’; he had rather lose his eyes than leave his sin. So a man bewitched with sin had rather lose God, Christ, heaven, and his own soul than part with his sin. Oh, therefore, for ever take heed of playing with or nibbling at Satan’s golden baits” (34).
 - (vii) Satan’s snares are far broader and more varied than simply this one. As opportunity allows I would like to explore this area more fully.

(viii) May the Lord give us wisdom to avoid the snares of the devil. Amen.