

# OpenTheo

## Recognizing the Devil's Devices



### **Spiritual Warfare** - Steve Gregg

In this message, Steve Gregg discusses the devil's tactics and how Christians can recognize and avoid them. He emphasizes the importance of being vigilant and aware of the traps the devil sets, and not falling for his deceptive tactics. Gregg notes that the devil often speaks through trusted individuals and uses ambiguous questions to make people question boundaries and tempt them with things that are forbidden. He also reminds believers that they are not of this world and need to resist the fleshly desires that the devil often uses to seduce them.

### **Transcript**

In this session, I'd like for us to consider what Paul refers to as the devil's devices or his wiles. The devil actually has strategies, just as anyone involved in war must. And we do not have to remain in ignorance of his strategies.

It certainly puts you at an advantage in any conflict if you know what the enemy is likely to do, if you can anticipate his actions, if you know in advance what his strategy is and what his modus operandi is. And in 2 Corinthians 2, verse 11, 2 Corinthians 2, 11, Paul said, Lest Satan should take advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices. Satan could take advantage of us, he could gain the advantage over us, if not for the fact that we are aware of his devices, but we are not ignorant of his devices.

Or are we? We don't have to be. They are disclosed to us in Scripture, and for that reason, there's no reason why we should be ignorant of his devices. Paul obviously was not ignorant of them and believed that his readers were acquainted with them also.

I do think it is possible to be unacquainted or unaware of the devil's devices, and when people are unaware, they succumb more frequently because they get hit from a side they weren't watching for. They don't recognize the trap. You know, in Proverbs chapter 1, Solomon is warning his son not to associate with certain people and participate in certain plans, to rob and to kill and so forth.

He's basically telling his son to avoid getting into gangs, criminal gangs. But in that place, in Proverbs 1, 17, Solomon says, Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of

any bird. Which means that if you want to catch birds and you're setting a net to catch them, you better do it when the birds aren't watching you.

If the birds see you setting the net, even they with their little bird brains are smart enough to know not to go into that net. You set the trap while the prey is watching and they'll be smart enough, even if they're not highly intelligent creatures, they'll be smart enough not to walk into that trap. The net has to be done more discreetly.

It has to be done more secretly. If the trap is exposed to the intended victim, the intended victim will avoid it. Likewise, the devil, if he wishes to trap you and win your obedience to get you to sin or to get you to be an ally of some sort or to simply to be ineffective or disabled in the warfare, he is greatly advantaged if his trap is not detected by you.

If he sets his net while you're watching and you know what his net looks like, you will avoid it. You won't spring the snare. But on the other hand, if you don't know what his net looks like, if you don't recognize his devices, then in all likelihood you may succumb.

Likewise, we read in Ephesians 6, we've been in that chapter at least a little bit, almost every session so far, in Ephesians 6.11 it says, Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. The word wiles means scheming. His schemes, his strategies, his plots.

The devil plots and the devil has methods and schemes and strategies. It's important for us to know what those are so that we, like the bird who watches the net being spread, do not fall into that net. The net is spread in vain.

In 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 8, Peter says, Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Lions often crouch in the tall grass and sneak on their bellies and creep up unexpectedly on their prey. Actually, lions, though they can run a lot faster than we do, they can't run as fast as a lot of their prey can, except for short sprints.

And therefore a lion will almost never catch its prey if the prey sees it coming in the distance. The lion has to sneak up very close before it begins the attack because he can only sprint for a short time. His prey, his intended prey, the zebra, the wildebeest, or the antelope, the gazelle, can run faster for a longer period of time.

And therefore he has to get very close, or she, more properly, because the lioness is the one who generally does the hunting, and that in groups. They have to get as close to the prey as they can without being detected before they actually launch their full attack. If the lion is detected too early, the prey will flee, and the lion cannot usually outrun it.

The lion, though, Satan is like a lion. He's seeking someone to devour. He's seeking a prey.

He sneaks up, and therefore you're told to be vigilant, Peter says. Be sober and be vigilant. Vigilant means you keep a vigil.

You keep a watch. You're like a watchman watching for the approach of the enemy. If the enemy can come undetected, then the enemy can usually win.

But if the enemy is detected, there is much less likelihood that he will obtain his advantage. The devil in particular depends a great deal upon concealment of his activities, on us not recognizing that it is in fact him. Because most Christians don't want to cooperate with the devil.

If the devil would just appear to you in your room and say, well, hi, I'm Satan. I've got a tremendous offer to make you. And if you'll just come my way and sign on with me, I'll make you fabulously happy and wealthy.

Most Christians simply wouldn't do it. Because they say, no, I know who you are. You're the devil.

You're the enemy. I'm at war with you. And our guard would be up as soon as we know that the devil is the one making the offer.

You know, when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, we read of the devil saying things to him. And we sometimes picture it that maybe he and the devil were having a face-to-face confrontation. Like he could see the devil like we could see another person.

And conversed with him like we conversed with a person. There is that possibility. The story does not need to be understood that way.

To say that the devil came to him and said, why don't you turn these rocks into bread? Or the devil took him to a certain place and showed him all these things. All of this could have been stuff the devil was doing, playing upon his mind. Just like the devil does with us.

Frankly, Jesus overcoming the temptations is much less impressive. If he was actually having a face-to-face confrontation with the devil. I think even I would overcome the devil in that case if I knew it was him.

I mean, if I'm hungry and Satan himself appears and I know it's him. And he says, why don't you turn these rocks into bread? Which I couldn't do anyway. But if he says, why don't you go break your fast and get some food and violate your fast.

I think I would have very strong resolve against obeying. Because I could see him and know who it was. The problem is when I'm fasting and the thought comes to my mind.

Well, you know, this fast was kind of ill-conceived in the first place. It's not a very good day to fast. After all, they're having your favorite food for dinner.

And tomorrow or sometime next week would do just as well, wouldn't it? And maybe you really ought to break this fast, you know. And when these thoughts are in my mind and I don't perceive them to be the devil trying to get me to be destroyed, my guard is not up. I suspect that the temptations Jesus experienced, since the Bible says he was tempted in all points the same as we are, I suspect the temptation was more upon his mind.

Things that the devil brought to his mind, images, pictures, thoughts. That's how the devil works upon us. And Jesus recognized it was the devil.

He said, be gone, Satan. And he didn't allow it to overcome him. We, I think, stand a much better chance of avoiding defeat every time we're attacked if we recognize and we learn how to early on detect that it is the devil.

Because, as I said, our defenses are more likely to be up and in place if we recognize, oh, this is an attack from the devil. But if there is a subtle suggestion to the mind or some other thing that causes us not to recognize initially that we are in battle here, that there's a fiery dart just been launched our direction, we need to resist it. If we don't recognize that, we're much more vulnerable.

Now, I'd like you to become acquainted with Satan's allies because he often works through his allies. In fact, almost always he does. To know Satan's methodology, we need to know who's in the battle with him.

In James 3, James says in verses 15 through 17, perhaps I'd better start earlier at verse 14, but if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and do not lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now, there are two kinds of wisdom, two kinds of thoughts that may come to your mind. Some are from above, some are from below.

The thoughts that come from above are pure thoughts. They're peaceable, gentle, willing to yield. This kind of wisdom, this kind of mindset is from God.

But envying and self-seeking and bitterness, these are part of a mindset, a part of a complex of thought, a wisdom, as James puts it, that is not from God. It is actually, he says, earthly and sensual and demonic. Now, there are three things that James tells us this wrong thinking, this wrong-headedness is derived from.

There are three sources of it, or three associations from which it arises. It is earthly, that is, it's of the world. It is sensual, that is, it's of the flesh.

It is demonic, it is therefore of the devil. We see that the devil is not working alone,

therefore. He has the world, and he has the flesh as his allies.

That state of mind, which is from below, originates from the world, it originates from the flesh, and it originates from the devil. Now, we know from certain passages of Scripture, like Galatians 5.17, that part of our spiritual warfare is against flesh. In fact, it's interesting, although the Bible does attribute many of our problems in our spiritual lives to the devil himself, there are passages where we might expect to find reference to the devil, but we don't, we find reference, rather, to the flesh.

In Galatians 5.17, Paul says, Now the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. And these two are contrary to one another, so that you cannot do, or do not do the things that you desire, or that you will to do. Now, Paul indicates there's a battle going on.

This would be a very good time for him to mention the devil. We're wrestling with principalities and powers. Well, he does say that elsewhere, but here he doesn't mention that aspect.

He just mentions another foe, the flesh. The spirit of God within us is wrestling against the flesh. Now, does this mean we're not wrestling against the devil too? It's not an either-or thing.

We are wrestling against the flesh, we are wrestling against the devil. The flesh and the devil happen to be allies in their battle against our sanctity, and our holiness, and our spiritual well-being in general. The flesh is the ally of the devil.

In James 1.13, James says, Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted, at this point we'd expect him to say, by the devil.

Right? I mean, we're not tempted by God, we're tempted by the devil. He's the tempter. But James doesn't say that here.

James says, Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires, his own lusts, and is enticed. Now, this is not a denial of the devil's activity and temptation. There is someone doing the enticing, the seducing.

That is being done by the devil. But we sin, not when the devil entices us, but when we succumb to enticement, by being drawn away by our own lusts, our own desires. That's the flesh.

It is the flesh's cooperation with the one doing the enticing that causes us to become enticed. That is to say, the flesh is the side of us to which the devil makes his appeal. There are lusts of our flesh.

Our flesh has desires. Now, I might just comment in such a way as to hopefully clarify what I understand the flesh to be. The word flesh, the Greek word is sarx, S-A-R-X.

And it is used a number of ways in Scripture. The word sarx can mean humanity in general. For instance, the Bible says, all flesh is as grass.

All flesh means all humanity, all humans. The human race is all flesh. When Jesus said no flesh would survive, or all flesh, these expressions talk about people corporately, the race, the human race.

So that flesh, sarx, can simply refer to humanity in general. It can also refer to the physical body. It says that Jesus suffered in the flesh, or that because the children were flesh and blood, Jesus also became flesh and blood.

That means a physical body. The flesh is many times a reference to your body. There is another sense, possibly, in which the flesh occurs.

This, perhaps more often than not, in Paul's writings, although it is found elsewhere as well. And that is where the word flesh is used, and it does not appear to mean humanity, and it does not necessarily appear to mean the body either, necessarily. And what it actually does mean is open to question.

Most theologians believe that the special use of flesh, especially when Paul uses it, is a reference to a sinful nature that resides in us. In fact, many modern translations have, in certain places in Paul's writings, translated the word sarx with the English words sinful nature. For example, when Paul says in Galatians 5, Now the works of the flesh are these.

Many translations say the works of the sinful nature. Substituting the word flesh, or sarx in the Greek, with the English words sinful nature. Now it is very possible that this is a good translation, or I should say interpretation, because it is not really a translation.

The word sarx is not hard to translate. It is translated with the English word flesh. But it is an interpretation to say, I think that when Paul said flesh here, I think what he meant was something called a sinful nature.

You see, that is the interpreter's license being taken there. We know what word Paul used. He used the word flesh.

The question is what he meant by the use of that word. Was he using it? I mean, flesh is used metaphorically a lot of times. Flesh can just mean meat.

Eating flesh, animal flesh, is just meat. I mean, the word flesh has a variety of possible meanings. The question is whether Paul means sometimes sinful nature.

And I frankly don't consider it to be a service rendered when translators interpret for us. I

would rather that the modern translations would do what the older translations did, just render it flesh all the time, and let us decide from the context whether we think that Paul meant this, that, or the other meaning of flesh. But the modern translators, especially NIV and some of those, proceed from the assumption that Christians are stupid, and they can't think for themselves.

And so, like little children, everything has to be chewed up and pre-digested for them, and laid out in pabulum form, so that the intelligent scholars who know all and see all, and are omniscient, they can do all the interpreting for you. Therefore, what they hand down to you as an alleged translation is really more like a commentary or interpretation, which reflects the opinions of the scholars, more than the actual wording of the text. As you can tell by my tone, I'm not all that pleased with some of these translations, but I think that to the Christian who doesn't have any interest in thinking, probably the Living Bible or the NIV are very good translations to divest you of all responsibility to think for yourself.

But I'd rather have a translation that required me to think, that tells me exactly what the writers said, and let me bear the responsibility for deciding what they meant, from the same factors that the scholars would use to make their decision, namely context and lexical meanings of the word, and things like that. I don't consider myself a scholar. I don't ever want to consider myself a scholar, but I don't consider myself a wit behind the scholars in terms of ability to do research and figure out the meaning of a thing from its context.

We are human beings. We are given rational minds, and we can think. Therefore, I object to translators taking the word *sarx* and translating it as sinful nature, because that's what they think Paul means in this particular place here or there.

Maybe he does, maybe he doesn't. But see, many teachers following the idea that *sarx* in these places means sinful nature, emphatically say it does not mean the body. When Paul says that the flesh is an enemy and there are lusts of the flesh, many teachers say this does not mean the lusts of the body, but it means the lusts of the sinful nature.

Well, they may be right. However, I think that the lusts of the body are quite a problem in themselves. When James says a person is drawn away by temptation by his own desires, he doesn't use the word flesh there, but he's talking about fleshly desires.

And I don't know if we even need to interpose the idea of a sinful nature here so much as just having a body. Having a body with glands, having a body with cravings. These cravings are in themselves perhaps neutral.

The craving for food, the craving for sex, the craving for drink, the craving for rest, things the body craves, the craving for comfort, the craving for pleasure. These are things our bodies are made to desire. There are glands, there are organs, there are

hormones and so forth that cause these cravings.

By the way, all of these biological factors were made by God. These cravings were in the human body before the humans fell. It's not part of sin that a man has an interest in eating when he's hungry or in sex or in comfort.

Your nerves are made to appreciate good feelings and stuff. That's the way the body is made. You don't need to inject the idea of a sinful nature in order to have problems in the flesh and just mean the body.

I'm not saying that the word flesh never is used to suggest sinful nature. I'm saying that we have sufficient problems with our body, whether or not we have a doctrine of the sinful nature being our problem. Because our bodies crave certain things.

The cravings are in one sense legitimate. They are merely biological in some cases, many cases. But the things craved may not be legitimate things to have.

A person who is hungry is legitimately hungry and craves food. In fact, depending on where they are, they might crave somebody else's food. They might crave food that isn't theirs.

Well, in such a case, we can't fault them for having a craving. That's a neutral thing. That's biological.

But the flesh has to be governed by spiritual principles. So that if I have a craving for food, my spiritual side has to tell me whether I can eat this food or that food, whether this is mine to eat or not mine to eat, whether I'm supposed to be fasting or whether it's okay for me to eat. Those are decisions made from my spiritual side.

My flesh doesn't make those kinds of decisions. My flesh just knows it wants food. Same is true of sex.

When the hormones or glands crave sex, the body doesn't distinguish between sex with one party or sex with another, with a legitimate spouse or with somebody who's not legitimate spouse. That's your spirit. Your mind has to make those decisions.

The body is to be pleased with any outlet. The spirit tells you which outlets are legitimate and which are not for these various cravings. Therefore, we have sometimes a conflict between what the craving is and what our spirit tells us is right.

When you're fasting, your body's going to crave food. But your spirit tells you, no, I'm supposed to be fasting. I'm not supposed to eat.

When your body's craving sex and you're not married, or you are married but you're craving it and you're around somebody who isn't your spouse, your spirit has to tell you, no, this is not something that the flesh can be allowed to have. This is something I have



to deny my flesh. I have to say no.

And at times like that, the flesh doesn't just go away. The cravings are there. There's just a struggle.

The flesh and the spirit fight it out. The flesh, therefore, can be an ally of the devil. If the devil wants you to sin, he will make his appeal to the desires of the flesh.

The desires of the flesh can influence you to kill because somebody is very unpleasant and intolerable to you and you just soon be rid of them, get rid of your problems with them. The desires of the flesh can lead you to adultery or fornication for obvious reasons. The desires of the flesh can lead you to lie and to steal because of various objectives that are personal, selfish, self-seeking.

Your flesh is not good. The flesh was good when God made it. He saw all things he had made, which included human flesh, human bodies, and he said it was all very good.

But because of the fall, there is a tendency to continue to crave those things which God has forbidden. And that is a warfare that is conducted between the spirit of the Christian, which is instructed and knows what is right, and the flesh, which doesn't have any particular knowledge of what's right and wrong, it just knows what it wants. And the devil, through deception and through aggravation and seduction, will try to get the flesh to respond to various kinds of temptations.

In those cases, the flesh certainly proves to be an ally of the enemy. But the world is also the devil's ally. Jesus said, if you were of the world, the world would love its loan, but because you're not of the world, but I've called you out of the world, therefore the world will hate you.

If the world hated me, it will hate you. What do you mean by the world there? That discussion is found in John chapter 15, verses 19 and verse 18. If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.

If you're of the world, the world would love its own, etc. etc. Mostly John 15, 18 and 19.

The world hates Jesus, and the world hates Christians. It says in 1 John, therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. What is the world then? The Bible says God so loved the world, and yet we're told, love not the world.

Same word in the Greek, kosmos. It's sort of like the word flesh, it has more than one possible meaning. In one sense, the flesh is quite neutral.

In another sense, the flesh can be a real adversary. In one sense, the world is somewhat neutral. When it says God so loved the world, I am of the impression that it means he loved all the people in the world.

He loves people. The world's population, God loved. But when John says, do not love the world, he's talking about something a little different.

He's talking about that world that hates Jesus. That world that hates Christians. And when he says, don't love the world, he doesn't mean don't love the people.

Even God loves the people. And we must love the people, but we're not to love the world. What is the world then? Well, Satan is referred to as the ruler or the prince of this world.

Jesus used that term three times in speaking of Satan, the ruler of this world. Well, does that mean Satan rules the planet Earth? No, the Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. Jesus said, all authority in heaven and Earth belongs to me.

Satan is not the ruler of planet Earth. He'd like you to think so, and many Christians believe he is. That he is somehow the rightful ruler of this world.

No, the rightful ruler of this planet and of heaven, too, is Christ. All authority in heaven and Earth is given to him. The devil doesn't have any rule or authority over that.

But he has rule over the minds of men who give him that rule. Those who submit to him. Those who buy in to his plans, his ways, his methods.

And taken collectively, those who are under the rule of Satan are the world system. The world system is simply a whole institution, as it were, a spiritual institution of humanity submitted to the prince of this world, of this world system. It is this world system that we are not supposed to love.

As a matter of fact, to know what the world means in this particular usage, I'd advise you to notice what John says in 1 John 2. It would be a very good example of what is meant by the world when used in the negative sense. Nothing wrong with the planet Earth. And there's nothing necessarily to be hated or avoided by the people of the world in general.

God loves them. But there is a world we're not to love. That's a specialized use of the word in Scripture.

And in 1 John 2.15 it says, Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, now here we get John's meaning.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away and the lust of it. But he who does the will of God abides forever.

The world system under Satan is passing away because the kingdom of God is growing to supplant it in the Earth. The system under Satan once actually involved everyone in

the world, almost. The whole planet until the gospel went out to all nations and now there's fewer and fewer people.

I should say there's more and more people who are not part of that world, who are becoming Christians. But what world are we talking about here? We're talking about the world system characterized by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These are worldly in the negative sense of being worldly.

When we talk about someone being worldly, it's usually not a compliment if we're talking about a Christian. Worldly is sort of like saying carnal, fleshly. A worldly person is one whose life is dominated by the things of the world.

What are the things of the world? John says the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Now everybody has lust of the flesh, everybody has desires of the body. And those are the things that I think are granular and biological to a large extent.

The flesh craves food, sex, rest, comfort, pleasure. The flesh has its cravings. Those who live according to those cravings are worldly.

Those who resist those cravings or bring them into subjection to the principles of God's holiness, those people are not worldly, they're resisting the worldliness. Worldliness, or the world system, is characterized by following the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes. Now the lust of the eyes, I just want to clarify that a lot of people may not understand because we know that Jesus said if a man looks at a woman to lust after her, he's committed adultery in his heart.

Looking and eyes have something to do with each other, obviously. So some people think that the lust of the eyes has to do with looking lustfully at a woman. But that is actually more under the category of lust of the flesh.

Sexual desire, whether it's mental or materialized, is a matter of the hormones, of the flesh. The lust of the eyes is not talking about that, it's a different category entirely. The lust of the eyes is a Hebraism, it's a Hebrew expression that speaks of greed or the desire to acquire possessions.

These possessions may or may not confer any particular pleasure on the flesh itself. For example, to have a large house may not be any more comfortable physically than a house that's not quite so large. But it's got more status, it's more attractive, the eyes covet things that even the flesh would not covet.

Your body would not necessarily covet a gold coin or a bag of gold. But your eyes might. The lust of the eyes, the Jewish concept of the eye being evil or the eye being good, were the ways that the Jews spoke of being greedy or not being greedy.

When Jesus said the light of the body is the eye, if your eye is good, then your whole

body is full of light. If your eye is evil, then your whole body is going to be full of darkness. This is kind of a strange statement, but he's using the Hebrew expressions.

Meaning if you are greedy, your whole life will be darkened by it. If you are an ungreedy, generous soul, then you will have light within. And you can find in the Old Testament, in Proverbs and in Psalms and in Ecclesiastes, this usage of the eye.

The eye being that which desires possessions. The lust of the eyes, therefore, is not just seeing something that your sensual desires are interested in. That would be the lust of the flesh.

The lust of the eye is seeing a fancy car, seeing a fancy house, fancy clothes. Clothing that your body wouldn't make a dis... I mean, you put on an expensive pair of shoes or a less expensive pair of shoes, there may be no difference in the comfort level of your flesh, but your eyes desire them. And you want other people to see them with their eyes, too.

There's a status thing attached. And this connects in some way to the third thing, which is the pride of life, too. I take the pride of life to mean ambition.

The desire to elevate oneself. If you think about it, there is hardly any temptation available that is not in one of these categories. So it's lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Sensuality, greed, and pride. These are the things that essentially make up the mindset of the world under Satan's rulership. The ruler of this world influences the world that submits to him in these ways.

We are not to love those things. We're not supposed to seek those things. We are not to govern our lives by those things.

Those things may exist. There may be a desire for advancement. There may be a craving for something physical, or even a craving for something material, in the sense that people want more money.

Christians can be tempted in all those areas. They have all these desires. We live in the world.

But we are not to be of the world. We're not to have the spirit of the world. We're not supposed to love the world, that world, because that is the devil's world.

Now, there is a certain mentality that is worldly and fleshly and devilish. That is the wisdom that is from below, James said. But there is wisdom from above.

And our minds, which are the battlefield, by the way, of this warfare, must be committed and must be given over to the wisdom that is from above, and not those things that the

devil uses to bring us into sin and condemnation. You know, the simplest way to put it, I think, is that the world provides the bait. The flesh is the part of us that is attracted to the bait.

And the devil is the one who lays the snare and seeks to attract us to the bait. It is a trap. The world is full of traps.

And the things of this world are the bait. Many Christians have succumbed, and they live their lives, at least partly, if not entirely, for recognition, for promotion, for position, for the obtaining of a certain standard of living, for the enjoyment of a certain level of comfort. These are the things of the world.

These are the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life. The craving to always be entertained. The craving to always enjoy pleasant experiences, to avoid suffering, to be secure financially.

These things are not of the flesh. These are of the world. These are the things that the devil uses.

These are the things that the devil holds out before us to attract us into a path that is different from the path God is calling us to walk. And therefore, the world and the flesh become the allies of Satan. Now, Satan's methodology is discernible in Scripture.

And anyone who has been a Christian very long and has made attempts to resist the devil has probably become aware of some of these devices just in personal experience as well. But if you go back to the proto-temptation, back in Genesis chapter 3, the original temptation, it's really interesting that virtually everything that Satan does, he did there. Almost everything that Satan ever does in tempting Christians, all the devices of Satan are found in this one original temptation, which means that Satan hasn't come up with much new.

He is not a highly creative being. He has a few ploys that he reapplies in different circumstances and often gets the same good results, good from his point of view. He wins because people are not acquainted with his devices.

But we can see what his devices are. Of course, we can perhaps be a little bit merciful toward Eve. She didn't have any way of knowing the devil's devices, and she was the first to succumb to them.

But it says in Genesis 3, 1, Then the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die, for God knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate, and she succumbed.

Now it's interesting, in verse 6 it says, The woman saw that the tree was good for food, and it made an appeal to her flesh, it's the lust of the flesh. It was pleasant to the eyes. In addition to being tasty and enjoyable to eat, it was an attractive piece of fruit.

Women are probably more susceptible to that particular aspect of this temptation than men. I don't know if men would go and gather fruit and make a fruit arrangement in the home as an ornament, but a woman might be more taken by that. That's not a statement against women, that's just women more attracted to those kinds of things, I think.

She was more susceptible on that basis. Adam might have fallen on another basis, but I don't think it would have been because the fruit is so attractive. I think I'd like to own that fruit.

I want to take that home and put it on my coffee table. But in addition to its value or desirableness as food, it was also attractive to look at, the lust of the eyes. And then it was to be desired to make one wise.

That is, she was ambitious for promotion. She wanted to be wiser than she was. She wanted to have some of the traits that God had, that she didn't already have.

That's the pride of life. She was tempted in these three ways. This is all that is in the world.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The devil exploited these things. But the devil actually followed a certain plan to get Eve to succumb to these things.

And there are certain points in that plan that we can identify, which he repeats all the time. One thing we can see, of course, is that the overall effect of what he did was deception. She thought she was going to come out differently than she came out.

She thought this was going to be an improvement for her, but it ended up not being an improvement for her or for anyone else. The devil deceived her. Now, I pointed out a few sessions ago, he didn't deceive her by lying.

He deceived her by telling part of the truth and not the other part. That is certainly part of the devil's purpose, if he tells you part of the truth. Well, first of all, if the devil only told lies and never told truth, it would be quite easy to detect him.

Lies are eventually found out. Some of them, you know, if someone lies all the time, they cannot conceal for long the fact that they're lying. A person to be a truly effective con artist, or to be a deceiver, has to have enough truth mixed in to give credibility to the lie.

Now, the devil knows how to tell the truth in a way to deceive. He knows which part of

the truth to leave out. When he tempted Jesus in the wilderness to jump off the pinnacle of the temple, he says, oh, isn't it written in scripture? He has given his angels charge over thee, and they will bear you up in their hands, lest you dash thy foot against a stone.

But he left out part of that. He didn't quote it in its entirety. The actual scripture is, he has given his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways.

The devil left out the part about keeping you in all your ways, meaning all the ways that you should be in, all the ways that are legitimate for you to be in. When you're doing what God wants you to do, that's something that the angels can be counted on to help you, but when you take something other than the right way, like just jump off the pinnacle because the devil tells you to do it, that's not what God's telling you to do, then the angels are not necessarily obliged to come to your aid. God's angels are there to protect you as you are doing God's thing in the way that God has appointed for you to go.

They will keep you in all your ways, but if you're out of those ways, if you're not in the way that's appointed for you, then the angels do not have any obligation to help you. And what Satan said was true, but he left out part of it, and the part he left out was the essential part, and Jesus didn't fall for it. But the devil can quote scripture, he can tell the truth, but he will never tell the truth in such a way as to advance your awareness of truth ultimately, but rather he'll manipulate truth.

He'll give part of the truth, and that part will be calculated to arouse you to something that he doesn't give you the other part of, the other half. You know, it says of the Queen of Sheba that she heard of Solomon, about his great wisdom and his great wealth, so she made a long journey to come and see Solomon and hear his wisdom and so forth, and when she had been given the tour of his palace and seen all his wealth and the glory of his kingdom and heard his wisdom, her comment was that everything that she had heard about Solomon was true, and she says, and the half of it was not told. In the figure of speech that means, you know, it's actually twice as wonderful as what I'd heard.

But really the statement, the half had not been told her, is interestingly true in another sense, because the other half of Solomon's glory is found in Ecclesiastes. He was an empty man, empty-hearted man. He was striving after the wind.

He was seeking fulfillment under the sun, and he didn't find it. His life was full of vexation of spirit and vanity. He was frustrated.

He was searching continually for something that would satisfy in the world. The world could see his splendor and his wisdom and the glory and the fame that he had, but the other half, the half that he knew in his heart, had not been told. And he tells it in Ecclesiastes.

It wasn't all wonderful. Not all that glitters is gold. And, you know, the devil sometimes, the half isn't told by him sometimes too.

He'll show you the positive side. He'll show you the attractive side of a thing and won't tell you the downside, just like advertisers do. I wonder if modern advertising is inspired by him, because they do exactly what he did.

Some advertising product always tells you the good side, and they never tell you the downside. They always downplay the cost or conceal it. There's hidden costs.

They do a bait and switch or something. But this is how the devil does things. He'll tell you part of the truth.

The part that he told was true. The part he left out was the more important part, and Eve was left thinking she'd heard the whole story when she hadn't, and therefore she was deceived. Now, one of the first things Satan did on this occasion, and often does, is speaking through another trusted individual.

In this case, the devil didn't just appear as a slimy scoundrel that he is. He appeared in the form of the serpent, who was a lovely, attractive creature. Now, Eve hadn't been around long, but for all she knew, all animals were good guys.

They were all under Adam's dominion, and here was an animal. She had no reason to be suspicious of this animal. The devil was in it, speaking through it.

He did not come in his ugly self. He came disguised as a lovely creature, one that Eve had no reason to be suspicious of. And therefore, her guard was down.

She was willing to converse without realizing she was in danger. She didn't realize she was under attack. And the devil often will speak through other people.

As I said, he doesn't just come out and say, Hi, I'm the devil, let me make a suggestion to you. He'll speak through people, especially the more trusted, the better. Like Peter.

When Peter said to the Lord, Oh, don't talk like that. We don't want you to go to the cross. That won't happen to you.

The devil was speaking through Peter. Peter was a trusted friend. He didn't even know the devil was speaking through him.

But Jesus knew it. Jesus recognized it and said, Get behind me, Satan. You're an offense to me.

When Job had suffered the loss of everything except his wife, his wife came to him and said, How long do you retain your integrity? Why don't you just curse God and die? What a strange suggestion to make. I mean, even a bad wife wouldn't usually think of saying



those particular words. Why don't you just curse God and die? But what's interesting is that's the very thing that Satan had a bet on Job that he would do.

I'll make him curse you, God. She was speaking for Satan. She probably didn't know she was.

Satan inspired those words. Job was being urged by a trusted family member to do the very thing that the devil wanted him to do. The devil speaks through people and not just through bad people.

He speaks through good people, through people that you trust. You need to be always detecting when you hear something from someone, a trusted friend, an author, a pastor, your parents, somebody that you would not ordinarily distrust. You never know when they might even, unknown to them, be speaking as a mouthpiece of Satan.

Peter didn't expect that he was doing so. He was a minister of the gospel. There have been many times when people who are actually God's people inadvertently become the occasions of temptation, deception, or otherwise mouthpieces of Satan.

That doesn't mean they're demon-possessed. It just means that they themselves, their guard is apparently down. They're not thinking right at the moment.

And what they say, the devil's able to interpose something there through them to deceive you. And the very fact that it is somebody that you trust, somebody that you don't expect to hear the devil talking through, makes it all the more sinister, makes it all the more difficult for you to catch it. But Paul said, Prove all things and hold fast that which is good.

No matter who's speaking. John said, Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they're of God, because many false prophets have gone out in the world. Now, do you think a false prophet wears a T-shirt that says, I'm a false prophet? No, a false prophet is a prophet who professes to be a true prophet.

But what they say proves that they're false. That's why we have to be aware of them. They are wolves in sheep's clothing.

If they were wolves in their own wolfy clothing, they would be very much less dangerous. We'd keep our distance. But they have sheep's clothing.

They look like real prophets. They look like real Christians. And yet they speak lying and deceptive words, and the devil uses them.

And I'm not just talking about people who profess to be prophets now. I'm talking about just anyone who speaks, even people who profess to speak as Christians. People who give you counsel and say, I really think the Lord would have you do this.

Or who would say, No, what you're suggesting is stupid. God would never have you do that. I mean, you better not just assume that since this is a Christian representing what they say as God's wisdom, don't just assume that that's so.

It may be the wisdom from below. You need to check it out. You need to test what's being said by its own content.

Because you can recognize what the devil is saying by its content. You can't always recognize it by the mouthpiece that he's using. As I said, the serpent was an animal.

The animals were under man's dominion. There had been no fall. There were no bad animals.

Man and animals were in harmony at this time when Eve met this serpent. She had no reason to expect an animal, a serpent, or any other animal to do her harm or to wish her ill. And yet the devil spoke through that means rather than appearing in his true colors.

As I said, one of Satan's principal advantages is to remain undetected. If he is detected, he loses his advantage. And one of the ways he remains undetected is by speaking through persons that you would not expect him to speak through.

Now, what is the content of what he says? What does Satan do? Well, he said, first of all, the woman, Has God indeed said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? That's an ambiguous question. Has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? Does that mean that you can't, that God has said you're not supposed to eat any of them? You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? Or does it mean you're not, there are some of them that you're not allowed to eat of. You're not allowed to eat of every tree, but some trees.

I mean, the question itself is ambiguous. It's not even entirely clear how Satan meant the question, but it's clear what he intended to do by asking it. He intended to question what God's boundaries are.

Question and call attention to the issues of what God has forbidden. What are the boundaries, really? It's very common for Christians to ask, I've been asked it many times by Christians, How far can I go on a date with somebody, without sinning? How much touching? How much kissing? How much whatever? What is permitted? How far can we go? And they're always trying to find out what's the boundary line there. Has God said we can't do this? Has God said we can't do that? What has God said we can and cannot do? Now, on one hand, you might say, well, that's a very virtuous thing to inquire.

What has God said we can do? But if the reason for raising the question is to try to find the outermost limit and walk the very edge of the boundary and to get away with as much as you can, then it's not a virtuous motive for asking. You see, if someone says, now, I don't know whether I should do this or do that, and I really want to know the will of

God, is there any word from the Lord? That's one thing. But to say, I really want to get away with a great deal of sensuality, I want to get away with a great deal of affluence.

How much money do you think God would allow a person to spend on himself? How much do I have to give to God? And how much can I spend on me? Those kinds of questions, there's not real obvious or clear boundaries in one sense because there's not specific commands on some of those points. What constitutes work on the Sabbath? That's something the rabbis labored with. You see, obedience to God is a matter of wholeheartedness.

To be wholeheartedly committed to God is the only right attitude. And to be saying, well, if I am not wholehearted, how much heart do I have to give God? How much can I indulge myself a little bit here? Is already a wrong attitude. To call attention to the fact that there are some things that I'm not allowed to do, that God has forbidden me to do, that might be, in some respect, pleasurable to do or good to do, gets me wondering where the exact boundary is.

And Satan begins by questioning the boundaries. What has God said is okay? What has he not said is okay? Can you walk right along that boundary? Can you get very close? In fact, even he goes further and says the boundaries are wrong. But the net effect of Satan asking the question was to get Eve thinking about something she probably was not yet thinking about before the question was asked.

And that is, have you noticed that God is withholding something from you? There are boundaries. Now, Satan didn't say it. He asked the question that was calculated to bring it to her mind.

God is not allowing me to eat of this tree. Now, he's told me I can eat all these other trees, but this tree, for some reason, he said I can't eat it. Now, was that already on her mind before the devil brought it up? I don't know.

We don't read that it was, but we can see that the devil's question caused it to arise. What the devil does is to get you to focus on the boundary and what's beyond the boundary. You see, there's nothing wrong with being aware of the boundaries.

You better know where the boundaries are. But for you to be always thinking about the boundary, how far can I get over far from center, far from total commitment to God, and still be within the safe zone? Where is the edge of the safety zone? Let me get as close to the edge of the safety zone as I can so I can still be safe, but still be as carnal as I can get away with. That is a mentality that Christians shouldn't be trying to think all the time what the boundaries are.

I don't sit around thinking, how much can I indulge myself and still be safe? My preference is to think, how much can I be totally devoted to God? How can I be more in

the middle of His will, not at the edges of the road, on the edge of disaster? If people tread around the edges of disaster and are always trying to be just as close to the boundary as they can be, and are always thinking about, am I over the boundary yet? Have I crossed the boundary? They are spending too much time thinking about the wrong thing. The right thing to think about is, what is the center of God's will? How can I be right in the middle, not at the edge? And to call attention to what's on the other side of the boundary, and whether there might be something desirable about that over there. You see, we would naturally want to be in the center of God's will if we didn't suspect that somewhere over in that direction, just beyond the boundaries, there's some very pleasant thing forbidden.

And we want to know how close we can get to that pleasant thing before we get to the point that it's forbidden. That's what the devil did. Now Eve wasn't hungry.

She was not lacking in food. She had every tree of the garden to eat. She had a great variety of food.

It wasn't like the Jews eating man in the wilderness where they got tired of the taste and they didn't have any variety. This woman had everything that we have to eat. Total variety.

Just one thing that wasn't available. It was not that she was hungry. It's not that she lacked variety or she was bored with the diet.

It's just that it just didn't seem right that she shouldn't have everything. Why should anything be forbidden? The fact that God had given so much, the more he gives you, the more likely you are to think that you deserve more. That's kind of how spoiled the process of getting spoiled is.

If you don't have very much, many times you can be content with little, but the more you have, the more you accustom yourself to having. The more you begin to feel that having things is your rightful due. It's what's natural.

It's what you're accustomed to. And then when you find something you're not granted, it seems like you're being deprived wrongly. It's a denial that someone is denying you something that would be good for you to have and it seems like an affront and an injustice.

That's how spoiled children think. And Eve was sort of spoiled, I'd have to say. She had been given so much that the devil tried to put in her mind that really she shouldn't be denied anything.

She's the queen of the world. It's all hers except for that one thing, and why shouldn't that be hers too? Christians are not exempt from thinking this way. And the more affluent, the more privileged we are, the more susceptible we are to fall into this kind of

thinking.

Well, God's given me so much, he certainly must want me to have everything I want. And I think sometimes of the current controversy over women pastors, women in leadership in the church, about this. There's not very much that God has said women shouldn't do.

There are a few things that God says I don't let women do this. But there are so many other things that women can do. Actually, the only thing that's really forbidden is that they would have authority over men.

Well, that doesn't forbid them from having, let's say, authority over women or over children. Women and children make up at least three quarters or more of the world's population. That should keep any woman plenty busy.

If I were a woman, I wouldn't feel deprived if I were not allowed to have authority over men. I think there's a lot of people on the planet who aren't men. If I'm going to be a teacher of children, if I'm going to be a teacher of women, that opens up about, oh, probably about four billion people to me.

I can keep plenty busy with those three quarters of the world as my parish. I don't need the other quarter added to it in order for me to be satisfied. And yet there are women out there, and men who support them in this, who say it's not right.

God shouldn't hold that back from women. He has to give her that too. And to me, it's so much like Eve.

God gave her everything except that one thing. God's given women a whole range of ministry activities, but just not that one. And yet some are not content.

They have to have that one too. They have to press the limits. Has God really said that we can't do that? Couldn't we manipulate this text in 1 Corinthians 14 a little bit? Can't we reinterpret a little bit here? Can't we find a way to move that boundary a little bit? Because I'm not satisfied with what God's allowed me, I have to also crave what He has denied me.

Now, that is one of the things the devil does regularly in our lives. I can't commit adultery. But can I enjoy the view of another woman other than my wife? Well, I'm not allowed to look with lust after, but where is the borderline of lust after all? Can I just appreciate the attractiveness of another human being, a female? If so, can't this be a very innocent thing? Can't I just look at pictures on advertisements in the magazines or in catalogs? Can't I just look a little while at these models and these actresses whose faces grace all these magazine covers and so forth? After all, that's not lust.

I'm not having sexual fantasies about these women. Am I crossing over any line there?

Why should I even put myself in the danger of asking those kinds of questions? Why not just not look? Job said in Job 31.1, I have made a covenant with my eyes. Why then should I look upon a maid? He didn't even say, why should I then look with lust upon a maid? He just said, why should I even look? Now, there are times when, of course, you can't help but look at things.

Things come within your field of vision and it's quite innocent and there's nothing wrong with it. You don't have to feel guilty about that. But Jesus said, whoever looks at a woman to lust, it's a motivation thing.

Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her. It's not your fault if you enjoy the view of things that happen to pass across your field of vision and you're not looking with any kind of ulterior motives. But at the same time, if you find yourself justifying it, can't I look at this? Can't I spend a little bit of money in this way? Can't I enjoy just this much entertainment? I mean, I realize if I spent all my time and money on entertainment, that'd be kind of wasteful and not very edifying, but how much can I devote to these things? Well, I don't think those are the right kind of questions.

Asking about the boundaries suggests that you're looking to live near the boundaries. I'm not too concerned about where the boundaries are because I don't plan to get very close to them in the first place. I know what God has said He wants me to do positively.

I don't have to spend my time splitting hairs about what He's forbidden. I know what He wants me positively to do. And that's what I want to be committed to doing.

Now, of course, it may be that I'll end up doing something imperfect, something that's not perfectly right, and I will wonder, did I cross over some boundaries? Have I broken any command of God? That's a legitimate thing to do. You need to search your soul if you feel like, well, I think I blew it here. Did I sin? But to spend time just focusing on how far to the edge can I get without falling into disaster is absolutely a wrong way of thinking.

It's a way that causes most people to fall into disaster. They think they can walk that line without falling, but very few end up doing so because they shouldn't be that close to the line in the first place. It's a slippery thing.

And the devil tried to get Eve to focus on the boundaries. What has God said you can do? What has God said you can't do? Now, that was just the beginning. Once she had correctly identified what God said she couldn't eat, by the way, she did make one mistake and she added to God's Word, but we won't work on that right now.

She did say we can't touch it. God hadn't said that. But she did correctly identify that there was one tree that they were not allowed to eat.

Then the devil moved further. Having called her attention to that which was forbidden,

he begins to suggest that God's motivations for forbidding that were perhaps not all that good. Maybe God isn't really looking after your best interests.

Why would God forbid such a thing as to eat of that tree? What possible harm could be done from eating of that tree? Do you realize God has a reason that He doesn't want you to eat of it and it's not a good one? He knows that you'll be improved if you eat of that tree. Your life will be fuller. You'll be enlightened.

Your eyes will be opened. You'll have a broader life, a more fulfilled life. You'll be more like Him.

He doesn't want you to enjoy life as much as He does, so He wants to hold off some of those privileges for Himself. That's what the devil suggested to her. Now, in essence, what he's doing is not only pointing out and calling attention to the boundaries, but suggesting that those boundaries are boundaries that do not have a very positive basis for being set in the first place.

God's reason for saying them was not because of concern for your well-being. It might be for selfish reasons. He may just be trying to hold out on you.

I mean, if you're tempted to do something that you know God has forbidden, you can probably count on the devil at least making the suggestion to you that this forbidden thing isn't really anything that would hurt any. As a matter of fact, it would probably enhance your life. You'd probably be happier if you do this thing.

You're not likely to be tempted if you don't think it's going to make you happier. And therefore, the suggestion is that God, in forbidding it, was somehow trying to withhold some happiness from you. Now, the Bible indicates that all the commands that God gave, He gave for our good.

It says that repeatedly in the book of Deuteronomy. All these commands that God has given for our good. God is concerned about our good.

He's also concerned about His glory. And those are things that are good for us to be concerned about, too. We don't always know what it is about God's commands that will turn out to be good, but we need to trust His wisdom and we need to trust His good intentions, His motives.

But the devil will try to call those things into question. If the devil can get you to think that God isn't on your side, that God really has made arbitrary rules that he knows will be a little hard for you to keep, but he's done it just to hold out on you. He's done it so that you won't be too free.

He wants to keep you somewhat under his heel, under his foot too much. Then, of course, you're beginning to not think that God's word is good for you. Now, I would say

this, that even if I were convinced that God's words were not for my benefit, I personally believe it would be right to keep them.

I'm not sure that I'd always be so virtuous as to do that which I don't see as to my benefit, but I do believe it's a legitimate way for a Christian to think that, well, even if it's not to my benefit, I have no business violating God's will. He made me. He owns me.

He can tell me what to do if He wants to, even if it hurts me, even if it's no good for me. He still has the right to govern me, and therefore I'll do what He wants, even if it's not good for me. That's an attitude that we're probably asking a lot for Christians to have that kind of virtue, but it would be a right attitude to have.

Ideally, a Christian should think that way. But the fact of the matter is, although we should be willing to do what's right even if it wasn't good for us, the Bible makes it clear that whatever is right is good for us. Whatever God has commanded is good for us to do.

It's good for us. It's to our advantage. It's just not always clear how it is so, and the devil will try to persuade us that God's laws are not to our advantage.

Actually, violating them would be more to our advantage. Our happiness in life, our fulfillment, getting a divorce when there's no grounds for divorce, and finding a better mate. Many, many Christians succumb to this temptation.

About 50% of married Christians apparently succumb to this from what I've heard statistically. I don't know if that's a true statistic, but you hear it everywhere. If it isn't the right statistic, it's some other statistic that's very horrendous.

I mean, maybe not 50%. If it's 20%, it's too much. Christians who have no grounds for divorce, but who leave their spouse for someone else.

Why would they do that? Are they unaware that the Bible forbids this? Well, they might be unaware of it because the churches hardly teach the Bible anymore, and therefore they may have never heard it. But many Christians are quite aware of what the Bible says on it. They're just not convinced that what the Bible says is really in their best interest.

Their happiness would be much enhanced if they could get out of this marriage and get into another one. There's someone over there much more pleasing to be with than this person they're with who's boring or oppressive or miserable to be around or whatever, and their lives would be much happier if they just sinned, if they just do what God said not to do. Now, I doubt if very many Christians actually put it in those terms when they're thinking about their decision to divorce their mate, but that's essentially what they end up saying.

I mean, they divorce because they assume they will be happier doing what God said not



to do than they would be if they kept doing what God said to do. That is, remain faithful, remain submissive, remain loving, remain in the marriage as they said they would do when they got married. You know, just keep their word instead of lying and perjuring themselves under oath.

Divorce is not okay. But, I'm not saying there's no grounds that could make it okay, but when those grounds exist, it's because the other party has broken the oath. You see, someone has to sin for there to be a divorce, and when people do it, they're doing it in the interest of their own happiness.

You know that's true. People don't get divorced thinking, I'll be more miserable once I get divorced, but it's just the right thing for me to do. They get divorced thinking, I'm miserable in this marriage, I'll be happier if I get out.

In other words, the devil has convinced them that by disobeying God, they will enhance their enjoyment of life. Of course, that's true even of people who backslide generally. People don't backslide unless they think they'll be happier that way.

People backslide because they think sin will be more enjoyable than holiness. They're wrong. Now, I'm not saying they're wrong in all respects.

There probably are greater pleasures in sin for a season than there is in suffering reproach for the name of Christ for the same season. The question is, in the long term, which brings more happiness? Which is better in the long term for all parties concerned? Obviously, holiness and righteousness and faithfulness to God is advantageous to the participant. Defection from God, rebellion against God is not to our advantage, but the devil would like to make you think that it is.

So what the devil does, he not only gets you to wonder about the boundaries, focus on the boundaries, take a look, focus your attention on what's on the other side of the boundaries, how close to those boundaries can you get, the boundaries should not be our concern. We should stay well within the boundaries, so far well within the boundaries that we can't even see them and we're not even looking for them. We should be right in the middle of the will of God.

But the next thing the devil does is once he's identified the boundaries, he says those boundaries are arbitrarily set or they're set for bad reasons. God didn't have very good reasons for setting those boundaries. In fact, he didn't have your interests at heart at all.

He's trying to deprive you of something good. And almost all temptation suggests that. If you're tempted to do something that is in fact said to be wrong in Scripture, and you know that it's said to be wrong in Scripture, if the temptation persists, there will no doubt be the suggestion that, you know, God said not to do this, but I can't really think of any reason not to do this.

I don't see how it'll hurt me, I don't see how it'll hurt anyone else. In fact, it seems like it'd make me happier at the moment to do this thing. Therefore, God forbid me to do it, God's not really, I mean, God's trying to cramp my stomach, God's trying to withhold some happiness from me.

He can't expect me to deny myself of this happiness when there's certainly no harm in doing it or whatever. I mean, this is the kind of thing the devil said to Eve. This is the kind of thing that the devil always says to people to get them to cross the boundaries.

There's another thing he does too. He said to Eve, you will not surely die. Now, God had said you will surely die.

The day you eat of it, you shall surely die. The devil said, no, you won't surely die. That's not going to happen.

Now, that was part of his pointing out that he thought God was denying her something good. But he says, no, God is lying when he said you'll die. You're not going to die.

You know what, they didn't die. Not that day, not physically. They died spiritually and God's word was true, but they didn't physically die that day and the devil was quite right about that.

But even if they thought that eating that food would prevent them from dying physically, they were wrong. They did die physically, eventually. Death is a judgment for sin.

The wages of sin is death. And the devil will always try to persuade someone that they will not die or they will not experience the judgment or the consequences that God has said will accrue to sin. The Bible makes it clear.

God is not mocked. Whatever you sow, you'll reap. If you sow to the flesh, you'll reap of the flesh corruption.

And there are consequences for sin. It says in Ecclesiastes, I think it's 8-11, because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set on them to do evil. Because God doesn't execute judgment instantly, people think they got away with it.

They think that there is no judgment. There are whole religious systems, false religious systems that the devil has put forth to say there's no judgment. There's no ultimate judgment.

There's just reincarnation. You just come back and go through it again. If you don't get it right that time, you come back and try it again.

There's no ultimate judgment. You just keep getting more and more tries until you get it right. And then everyone ends up sane.

There's no death. And whether it's a religious system or an ad hoc argument the devil uses to try to get you to succumb to a particular temptation, you will not succumb unless you are deceived into thinking that you will escape the judgment for this act. Now Christians often think they'll escape the judgment because they just say, well, I know this is sin.

I know there's judgment for it, but I can repent. And then I'll escape judgment. One way or another, the devil has to convince you that there will be no terrible consequences for your act, or else he will not persuade you to do it.

If I said this to you, listen folks, we're going to have dessert after dinner tonight. We've brought in your favorite dessert. But after you eat it, anyone who eats it is going to get their head cut off in their sleep tonight.

I probably wouldn't have any takers for that dessert. It might be the most alluring dessert in the world, but if you really believed that the cost of eating it was going to be you're going to be decapitated in your sleep, I don't think you'd have any serious attraction to it. Because the consequences are too great.

The pleasure does not outweigh those consequences. The devil, in order to get you to sin, must convince you that the pleasure of the sin will outweigh the unpleasantness of the consequences. To do this, he either has to convince you that you will suffer no consequences.

Somehow you'll be the one who got away with it. No one else ever does, but you got away with it, or you will. Or, if you're not going to get away with it, at least you'll suffer some, but not as much as the pleasure of doing the thing.

I mean, when you weigh in the balances, the consequences of what you have to suffer with the pleasure of the act, certainly you'll be glad you did it. You'll be glad you committed the act. The devil has to indicate that judgment either will not come or that judgment will be minimal if it exists at all, or else he will not win.

And for this reason, all temptation is a form of deception, as I said earlier. A person who is tempted to sin is seeing reality out of focus. They're ignoring remote consequences, and they don't ignore it on their own.

The devil tries to convince them there will be no consequences. And you can count on it. Any time that you give in to temptation, it is because you have momentarily believed that this will be more satisfying than any consequences you may suffer for will be unsatisfying.

You've weighed these things in the balance, and you've decided the pleasure of sin is greater than the punishment for it. And that is, of course, a lie of the devil. Now, you might say, well, maybe it is true.

Maybe I will get pleasure out of sin, and maybe I will actually repent, and I won't suffer any punishment for my sin. Then, I mean, can't the devil suggest that as a realistic scenario to a Christian? If you go out and sin, and you get all the benefits and pleasures, or whatever you may call the advantages or the attractions of sin, but then you repent, and God forgives you, doesn't that mean you didn't suffer anything for it? No, you suffered more than you thought. Because sin... Your personality is not static.

Your personality is in flux. It grows. It changes.

And every time you resist sin, you become more strong, more holy, more established in patterns of righteousness. Every time you succumb to temptation, you become more unstable, more susceptible to another temptation of the same type, more alienated, less confident in your Christian walk. Even if you repent and God forgives you, it's not as if there's been no consequence.

You have lost something. When Esau sold his birthright for a pot of lentils, he didn't really feel like he'd lost anything of value at the time. He seemed to have gotten away with it, but he realized that he'd lost his blessing later.

He didn't perish because he sold his birthright, but he suffered loss, and he wept over it later on. And when you commit sin, even if you repent, and by the way, there's no way that you can calculate that you will be able to repent. If you, by calculated premeditation, say, I'm going to sin, and then I'm going to repent, you're already hardening your heart against God by even having that attitude.

I'm going to rebel against God. I'm going to disobey God. Now you're going to come back and I'm going to get God to forgive me.

That's not a heart toward God. That's a heart that's turning from God. And if your heart turns from God, there's no guarantee you will be able to legitimately repent.

Some people spend their whole life rebelling against God, but they assume that on their deathbed they'll repent and get right with God and go to heaven, so they'll have all this in heaven too. But what they end up is getting all this. And that's all.

You may have heard, I've read of some studies of people who repented on their deathbed and then recovered. They thought they were dying. Unexpectedly, they recovered.

But while they thought they were dying, they called for the priest, they called for the minister, they tried to make their peace with God, they repented of their sins. But when they recovered, they didn't live for God. Actual studies have been done of people who had this experience, that they had an unexpected remission of their cancer.

They recovered unexpectedly and they had made peace with God, they thought, on their

deathbed. But when they recovered, they didn't live for God. What's that tell you? Their repentance wasn't genuine.

But you know for darn sure when they thought they were dying, they were repenting as genuinely as they knew how. They thought they were about to face God and they wanted to make sure they got right with God and they did everything they could, but they didn't really genuinely repent. You can't just genuinely repent when you play games with God all your life and take Him lightly.

Suddenly, when you throw a switch, you take Him seriously enough to repent and be saved. No, the Bible says, Call upon God while He is near. He comes near at times and you feel convicted and you know that you must repent now.

If you don't, you'll harden your heart against it. You may not be able to repent sincerely again. The opportunity may pass.

To simply say, Well, I will sin, but I'll get away with it because I'll repent. You're presuming upon God. The very attitude may itself prevent you from being able to sincerely repent.

But even if you do, even if it happens that you do repent and you do be forgiven, that doesn't mean you've lost nothing. If you think you have lost nothing, you're still buying the lie of the devil. You've lost a great deal.

Because every time you succumb to temptation, you establish yourself more in a pattern that makes you more vulnerable to falling to temptation in the future. Every time you resist a temptation, you're setting a new pattern, strengthening yourself, establishing in a pattern of righteousness. You lose ground with every sin, even if you get forgiven of it later.

There are consequences. And a person is a fool who listens to and believes the devil when he suggests that you will get away with this. There is no death.

You won't die. You won't suffer for this. Yeah, I know the Bible says you'll be sorry for it, but I'm telling you, you won't be.

I realize God said there's consequences, but there aren't. You won't suffer any. Don't fool yourself.

There are, and you will. And unless the devil can convince you otherwise, he probably won't get you to sin. So this denial of sin's consequences and judgment is a major part of the devil's lies to get you to sin.

These are some of the principal things that the devil does. He gets you to focus also on the things that are forbidden. He gets you to focus on the boundaries.

He gets you to question God's goodness and God's commitment to you in making these boundaries in the first place. He tries to give you the impression that God made idle threats that won't materialize and that if you sin, you won't suffer consequences. All of these are lies of the devil.

There are others, too. There are the lies of accusation. As I said earlier, the devil's principal advantage over you is when he can get you to feel condemned and alienated from God.

So you cannot approach God with confidence. This he will do, first of all, by trying to get you to sin. If you won't sin, he'll still try to make you feel guilty.

The devil will try to make you feel guilty just for being tempted. Hannah Whitehall Smith, in her book, *The Christian Secret of a Happy Life*, made this point. She said that the devil accuses us even just for being tempted.

She says, as if you would come home and find a burglar in your house going through your things, and as soon as you caught him, he'd turn around and start accusing you of being the burglar. When you're tempted, it's not you who's doing something wrong. That's the devil tempting you.

Jesus was tempted in all points like we were, but he didn't sin. Sin and temptation are not the same thing. Everyone is tempted when he's drawn away of his own lusts and enticed, but lust, when it conceives, brings forth sin.

There is a time when temptation exists, but it is not sin. The devil, however, will try to make you feel guilty about even just being tempted. Make you feel, how could I ever approach God? How could God ever accept me when I've had such horrible thoughts? Well, what were the thoughts? If the thoughts were temptation, then they weren't yours.

They're the devil's thoughts put into your mind. That's what temptation is. It's when you agree to those thoughts.

It's when you begin to resonate with those thoughts. When those thoughts do not go against your grain, but you begin to align your grain in favor of them. Say, yeah, maybe so, and start to buy into them.

That's when you sin. When lust conceives, it brings forth sin. And as long as you are resisting the thought, you are not sinning.

Now, the thought may continue for a very long time, but as long as it is not yours, as long as you say, no, I will not, I do not agree to that, then you don't have to own it. You don't own that temptation. That thought is not yours.

But whether you sin or not, and even if you get forgiven of your sin, the devil will try to

accuse you, because it's important to him to alienate you from God and make you feel guilty and unforgiven. And, of course, that leads to despair. That leads to hiding.

Adam and Eve, when they sinned, they hid in the bushes to try to hide from God. They were alienated from God. Another thing that sin does is get you to accuse other people.

The devil will not only accuse you to yourself, he'll accuse other people to you. We find that once Adam and Eve fell under the devil's control, they began to accuse each other. Adam says, it's the woman you gave me.

She did it. It's her fault. Well, there was some truth in that, but it was a non-issue.

His guilt was what he had to be concerned about, not hers. But the devil will get us in a mode of accusing others. He'll put accusations of others into our mind, make you suspicious, make you angry at people, get you to take offense, get you bitter, cause you to gossip.

These are things that the devil loves to do too. He loves to destroy relationships by accusation, which leads to suspicion and so forth. When the devil accuses you to your own conscience, he's seeking to get you to feel condemned and alienate you from God.

When the devil accuses other people to you, he wants to alienate you from them and put a wedge in that relationship. The devil wants to destroy all the relationships that are valuable to God, that God cares about. Now, there are specific responses to these devices of the devil, and the Bible tells us what they are.

We don't have time in this session to give them, so we'll hold them for next time. Next time, I want to talk about how we are to respond to the specific devices of Satan when they come, and what are our advantages in it, how to gain the advantage specifically, very practically. What the Bible says to do when these lies, when these methods are being brought against us.

And by the way, they're not easy to overcome, but there are ways that they can be overcome, and God has revealed in Scripture what those ways are. So, we'll take that as the other part of this session in our next session. After that, we'll probably start talking about the issue of demonic bondage and deliverance, demon possession, and those related topics.

But, first we need to talk about our responses to the devil's devices. We'll do that next time.