

GOSPEL HIGHWAY

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Satan's Strategy, God's Remedy

2. Satan's Strategy

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" Gen. 3:1

A *kung-fu* manual must be valued and studied closely. The formula for the precious medicine must be scrutinized and understood. What we need to know first is the strategy of Satan. Satan used a certain strategy to drag down our first parents. He continues to use the same strategy to assault people today. Many are those who have fallen heavily without even knowing what has hit them! Many are those who realize that they are entangled in difficulties and conflicts of a spiritual nature, and do not know how to get out of them! We must understand the strategy of the devil, for smart though he is, his weapons are limited. He may appear to be so full of surprising moves and techniques, but his basic strategy may be understood from Genesis 3. His strategy consists of four main steps.

Catching you unaware.

The first step in Satan's strategy is to catch you unaware. You see him doing just that to Eve in Genesis 3. He appeared as a serpent and began talking to Eve. The serpent was one of the many creatures of God. Genesis 1:21 tells us that God created each creature "according to its kind". There were the elephants, the camels, the birds, and so on. There were probably different kinds of snakes that had been created by God. Satan appeared as one of these snakes.

A snake can only hiss. On this occasion, that particular snake began to speak human words! This should have aroused Eve's suspicion. She should have put on her guard. She should have taken a step back, then another step, and run to her husband. And they should have run to God together for protection! In the Bible, there was only one other occasion when an animal spoke, and that was Balaam's ass. On that occasion, Balaam appeared to have been so annoyed to the point of failing to see the oddity of a donkey speaking. What could have accounted for Eve's want of suspicion?

We must understand that Eve was still in the state of innocency. She had not done anything wrong before, and there was a total absence of fear, shame or guilt in her. She was probably astounded when the snake began to speak, but she did not think that anything sinister could be hidden in that fact. The words of the serpent began to inform her mind. She began to think more of what was said by the serpent than of the oddity of the fact that it should speak. This was the beginning of her fall. She was caught totally unaware by the devil who was speaking through that snake. She was totally unaware that the devil had bad intentions upon her.

That continues to be Satan's approach today. He will attempt to catch you unaware. At the place where you least expect him to be present, there he will be! Just think - how would he catch you unaware today? Would he come to you as a snake and speak to you? Of course not! He knows that you would straightway be on your guard. Would he then speak to you through the house lizard? Or through your dog, or cat? Of course not! Satan is not as foolish as that.

How then will he attack you? Let me tell you how. He will speak to you through men. He will speak to you through the mass media. He will attempt to change your thinking through false religions and philosophies. See how many people have been drawn away by the cults, by the religions invented by men, and by the so-called theory of evolution! "But these are respectable people whom we listen to," you might protest. But that is precisely the problem. The scientists are respectable people. The

politicians are respectable people. So are the religious teachers, the news-readers and actors on television. And so are the advertisers and the people who attempt to get you to buy their goods, their cars and houses. These may be respectable people, but what we are saying is that through these people, Satan is attempting to draw you away from God and from anything that is spiritually helpful.

Remember that Satan was a mighty angel who was created by God. He rebelled against God and was cast to earth with those angels that followed him. The Bible calls him "the ruler of this world", and he will do all he can to capture as many people as possible and place them under his dominion. Satan is powerful! Satan is more subtle than you think. He will catch you at the point where you least expect him. Beware!

Attacks indirectly

The next step taken by Satan is to attack you indirectly. In the garden of Eden, he came to Eve instead of to Adam. His real target was Adam, because Adam was the representative head of the human race. God did not make Eve, but Adam, the representative head. That was why the eyes of the two of them were not opened when Eve ate the fruit from the forbidden tree, but they were opened when **Adam** ate the fruit (vs. 6, 7). How would Adam have known that he was going to be attacked through Eve? He and Eve were the only two humans around at that time. Eve was Adam's wife, someone close to him - the "bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh". He would never have expected that Eve was going to be the instrument of his downfall!

Satan is a clever enemy. He will not come to you directly. He will get you "hooked" through someone or something close to you. When he approached Eve, he asked Eve a question. Eve could have ignored him. She *should* have ignored him. You must never entertain Satan in any way. But Eve did just that. She replied to Satan's question. Satan wanted her to respond in some way. It would not have mattered if she had shouted back at him, or disagreed with him. All he wanted was for Eve to talk back to him in some way. It was very much like a fisherman who has thrown a line into the water. The fish comes, and then begins to examine the bait. All the fisherman wants is that the fish bites the bait. It does not matter from which direction the fish comes - whether from the left or the right, whether from the side or the bottom. It does not matter whether the fish pounces at the bait or gulps it down coolly. All the fisherman wants is that it bites the bait. The moment the fish bites, the hook will pierce through its mouth! That is all that the fisherman wants to happen! After that, he can take in the fish quickly or slowly. He can then boil it or fry it. Satan wants to get you hooked. He will do it indirectly

Today, many people have been hooked by Satan. This has come about through their career, their health, recreation, or their children's education. Many are so caught up in their career that they have no time for anything else. Others are so caught up with some pursuit or other, such as nationalism, politics, or social issues, that they have no thought for their spiritual well-being. Others are too concerned about their health so that they invest too much time, money and energy in nutritional products, exercise and sports. There are those who are so concerned for their children's education that no thought is given to their own spiritual needs or that of their children. Think of the various extra lessons that you send your children to - extra tuition, piano lessons, ballet lessons, martial arts lessons, swimming lessons, mental arithmetic, computer classes, art classes,... The list appears endless! There is nothing wrong in sending them to some of these classes. It is good to have some other interests apart from studies. What is wrong is our obsession with them. We have come to think that these are in some ways indispensable. Our children's education seems to be what we live for. Look at the extent that some people go to in this area. They are prepared to sell their estates, their cars, their houses, and even migrate overseas, all for the sake of their children's education. They have failed to realize that, in the process, they are selling away their souls, and those of their children!

Is this not true? Think of the amount of money and time spent in giving the children a better education. Compare these with the effort made to meet their spiritual needs. Do you have family worship every evening? Do you teach your children the Bible? Do they learn to pray, and to memorize Scriptures? Do you pray often for their salvation? Many parents fall short in this area. They have been ensnared by the devil. Satan has attacked them indirectly, through their concern for the children's education, or through some other otherwise legitimate concerns!

Beware! Satan's intention is to get a hearing from you. He wants to capture your attention. He wants you hooked. Once hooked, he will be able to lead you astray - slowly or quickly, imperceptibly or dramatically!

Questions the word

The third step employed by the devil is to make you question the word of God. He will make you ask, Is the Bible really God's word? Is its teaching really true? Is it really sufficient to guide me in life? Is Jesus Christ alone the only way back to God? Surely there can't be any harm if I do this? Surely it would be all right if I don't do that? That was how he approached Eve. He came to Eve and asked, "Has God indeed said...?" He was actually sowing doubts into the mind of Eve about God's word.

Satan knows that the moment your faith in the Bible is undermined, your faith in God will also be shaken. He knows that once the Bible is not the authority in your life, errors of various kinds may be introduced easily. That is because the word of God is the basis of our faith. To have faith basically means to take God at His word. We believe because God has said it. The moment you lose confidence in God's word, that moment you lose confidence in God. Satan wants to accomplish precisely that. He wants you to trust God less, and less, and less... Of course, when your anchor is loosened up more and more, you will be easily moved away.

We have known of men who appeared to be so strong in their faith but are today in errors of various sorts. They shouted so loudly about their faith before, they spoke strongly about their views, but they were themselves not firmly anchored on the word of God. Their apparently strong views and opinions arose from reasons other than the fact that the Bible teaches those things. When confronted by clever and eloquent men, men with "charisma", who sweet-talked to them, they succumbed! All their strongly-held views evaporated! They are today with those very people whom they used to oppose. It is all so saddening. Instead of changing for the better, they have turned worse. They are now with those who undermine the authority of the Bible, who utter so-called prophecies and claim to see visions. May God be merciful to them!

Do not be led away from believing what the Bible teaches. The Bible is God's word to man. Of course, you must ensure that those who appeal to the Bible are actually saying what the Bible teaches. We are, however, not too afraid of those who propagate falsehood by appealing to the Bible. When they direct people's attention to the Bible, the likelihood is that those who are sincere and sensible will discover soon enough their errors. No, we are more worried about those who draw you away from studying the Bible for yourself. Beware of this step in Satan's strategy!

Appeals to the carnal senses

The final step employed by the devil is to appeal to your carnal senses. You note how he did it to Eve. We are told in Genesis 3:6, "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." Who would not want the fruit of that tree? It was "good for food", "pleasant to the eyes", "desirable to make one wise". But wait a moment before you stretch out your hand to pluck it! Does this not sound so familiar? Does it not remind us of the words of the apostle John? You would remember that he says in his first letter, "For all that is in the world - 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 (1 Jn. 2:16)." That's it! The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life! Satan will appeal to your carnal senses. He will attempt to trip you in that area.

Of course, Eve did not have the advantage of the words of the apostle John to help her. But she had God's words ringing in her ears. God had said to Adam and Eve, "In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die (Gen. 2:17)." Even in her state of innocency, she was tempted by her carnal senses. She found the fruit so appealing. She saw it as good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and good to make her wise. What would you have done in her place? Would you not have succumbed as well? And what with your fallen nature, would you not be more likely to fall?

Yes, many have fallen into the snare of the devil! Many have been burned by their sins. They have lacked self-control. They have ignored the warnings of God. They have bought that new car, that expensive dress, and so many things else, and ended up in debt. They have mixed with wrong

company, and engaged in the lust of the flesh. Many have lost control of themselves, and done the thing that they now wish had never been done. "On, what a fool I have been!" But regret is too late. You have already fallen. All attempts to cover up your sin cannot erase the guilt in your conscience. You know that you have sinned against God! You have sinned!

That was how death came into the world. If Adam and Eve had not sinned against God, they would never have experienced physical death. And they would never have experienced spiritual death, which is separation from God. They would in all probability be translated to a higher level of glory in heaven, without the need to experience death and decay. However, they sinned, and brought death to the whole human race!

Today, Satan continues to ensnare the children of Adam and Eve. And he happily continues to employ the same strategy, perhaps with variations along the way, but it is basically the same strategy. The steps are the same. He would catch you unaware; he would attack you indirectly; he would cause you to question and doubt God's word; and he would appeal to your carnal senses. That accounts for the many falls that you have had. That explains the bitter experiences of many, and the absence of peace in your soul!

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