

If I Were the Devil

Several years ago, General Douglas MacArthur published a speech called the Principles of War and the message that was repeated over and over was *the better you know your enemy, the more likely you are to be victorious over him*. This is one of the most basic principles of warfare. This is why Moses sent the 12 spies into the Promised Land before the Israelite invasion. The same is true with spiritual warfare. The better we understand Satan's tactics and strategies, the more likely we are to attain victory over him and his forces. That's what Paul is talking about here. **(2 Cor 2:11 KJV) Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.** Let us not be ignorant of the devices of Satan. Let us learn of his battle plan and strategies that bring about our spiritual downfall, so that he will not gain the advantage over us. When we are ignorant of Satan and his devices, then he automatically has the upper hand, but when we are aware of his tactics, then we can be on guard and war against those tactics. So, for the next few minutes, we want to look at some of Satan's strategies and as we do, we will take the approach of "**what I would do if I were the devil.**" Now let me begin by saying that Satan has so many devices in his arsenal that we will only touch the tip of the iceberg. You may think of many others in his attack plans.

NO. 1. THE FIRST THING THAT I WOULD DO IF I WERE THE DEVIL IS TO CONVINC
PEOPLE THAT I DID NOT EXIST. If I could get people to get the idea that I was just a figment of their imagination and was like a fairy tale character and did not really exist in power and influence. I would want people to think that years ago someone just concocted the idea of the devil in order to explain all the evil that was in the world. So, I'd try to convince people to look at me as some kind of comical character dressed in a red suit, two horns, and a long-pointed tail carrying a pitched fork. I would hope that people would think of me as something funny, not serious at all. They would consider me only in their cute jokes.

Now the devil has been pretty successful at doing just that. Many in our society today really don't regard Satan as much of a threat as they consider him only as a joking character. They really don't take him seriously. They don't want to believe that there is a being that hates them so much and wants to destroy them so bad in a place called hell. People want to believe in heaven but not in hell; but one is just as real as the other. When we don't take the devil seriously, we are really playing into his hands because we let down our guard and become open to his attacks.

There is a saying "*What you don't know want hurt you.*" While this might be true in some areas, it is not true about the devil. What you don't know about Satan can not only hurt you, it can condemn you. We need to realize that the devil is real and active in our world today. Satan is not off in some isolated area doing his own thing – no Satan is all around us. Jesus referred to him in John 14:30 as the "**prince of this world.**" Paul writes in **(2 Cor 4:4 KJV) ... the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not...** John adds in **1 John 5:19 ... the whole world lieth in wickedness.** Satan is real and is doing every thing that he can to condemn every man, woman, boy, or girls and that includes you and me. He is a real threat.

A question frequently asked is where did he come from and how did he get here? Well we don't know for certain, but there are strong indications that he was an angel who sinned and was cast down from heaven. 2 Peter **(2 Peter 2:4)** and Jude tell us about some angles who sinned and because of that sin were cast out of heaven. **(Jude 1:6 KJV) And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.** They were not satisfied with the level of authority and sinned against God. It seems the condemnation of the devil is pride.

Paul tells us in 1Tim 3:6 that one of the qualifications of an elder is *not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.*

We know that Satan is real because of his children. (*Eph 2:2 KJV*) *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.* This helps to explain the moral darkness that engulfs our world. Jesus said of the rebellious Jews in *John 8:44* *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.*

The devil is real because Jesus confronted him during his ministry. Remember the temptations Jesus encountered during the 40 days following his baptism by John (Matt. 4). Three times the devil approached Jesus and said, *“If you are the Son of God, then ...”* With each attack, Jesus resisted and countered that temptation with the word of God. You ask Jesus if the Devil is real and he will tell you absolutely so.

We know that the devil is real because the Bible teaches that the devil is real. Giving comfort to the Christians in Rome, Paul wrote (*Rom 16:20 KJV*) *And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.* Or to the Thessalonians he wrote that he would have come sooner but Satan kept throwing up road blocks. (*1 Th 2:18 KJV*) *Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.* Paul warns Timothy in 1 Tim 6 the danger of falling into the snare of the devil. Peter tells us that the devil is real in (*1 Pet 5:8 KJV*) *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*

Frequently we find the devil being described in personal terms. He is referred to as a deceiver, a liar, a murderer, an adversary, etc. Satan is real and we should take him seriously because he is **public enemy number 1**. Now while you may not have done anything to cause the devil to hate you, it's really is not about you. It's about God. God is the one Satan hates and he tries to get to God by getting you. Satan can't hurt God so the next best thing he can do is to hurt someone He loves – and that's you and me. He wants to destroy you. He will take the purest young girl and try to turn her into a prostitute, take the brightest young man and turn him into an alcoholic, the cleanest mind and fill it with filth. Now if I were the devil, then to help accomplish this task, I'd try to convince people that I really don't exist and that they should not take me seriously.

NO. 2. IF I WERE THE DEVIL, THEN I'D TRY TO MAKE SIN ATTRACTIVE. What good is temptation if it has no appeal? As the devil, I would understand that if I presented sin as it really is with all of its ugliness, hurt and filth that surrounds it, then I'd never have any followers. So, my goal would be to convince people that sin was not as bad as they have been led to believe. I'd make sin just as attractive as I possible could. Let us understand that this is a tactic used by Satan from the very beginning.

Remember the Garden of Eden? What a beautiful place that must have been with its splendor. God told Adam and Eve that they had the run of the place and could eat of all the tasteful fruit of all the trees in the garden, except one. There is only one that was off limit. Don't you know that there were some beautiful fruits there? Think of all the different kinds of fruit we have in today's world all in one spot, and God said that you can eat of it all except one.

Now this one fruit was the very one that Satan choose. He tried to make it sound better and more appealing than any other fruit in the garden. The ole serpent talks to the woman and about how good that forbidden fruit is. It's so appealing to the eye and how sweet it must taste. Not only does this fruit look good and will be good to eat, it will also make you wise. In fact, your eyes will be opened and you will be as wise as

God and you will be able to discern between good and evil. Oh, this sounded so good to Eve. How could that kind of fruit not be to her benefit? She fell for it and ate.

Satan does the same thing today. He will make sin so very appealing that it is hard to resist. Look at some of the advertisements and how they make sin look so appealing. The liquor industry is really good at this. They will show a man with a drink in his hand and he will appear to be a man of who has arrived and is of importance. The implication is that this is the way to success. Or he will be out in some wilderness with his buddies around the campfire with their beer in their hand and the implication is this is really living. What they don't show is the drunk in the gutter. They don't show the broken homes and abused wives and children. They don't show that mother worrying about how she is going to buy groceries because he spends every cent for the bottle. But that's the way sin advertising itself. If I were the devil, I'd make sin look as appealing as possible. I would not show the consequences of that sin. John Mac Author said, "*Satan continues his efforts to make sin less offensive, heaven less appealing, hell less horrible, and the Gospel less urgent.*"

Close kin, if I were the devil, I'd present the Christian life as something dull and boring. I would try to get people to believe that Christians will never have any fun because they view anything that looks good, taste good or gives any pleasure as sin. But if you really want to have fun in life, then here's the way – not the Christian way but my way. The devil will always show the entrance of sin but never the exit of sin. He will show the night before but not the morning after; the pleasure sin brings but no the pain. But if you really want an accurate picture of sin, you have to see it all the way to the end. While there are pleasures of sin, they are short lived. That's why Heb 11 talks about the *pleasures of sin are but for a season*. Sin is always ugly and always harmful. It never makes things better but always makes them worse. But if I were the devil, I'd make sin just as attractive as I could.

NO. 3. IF I WERE THE DEVIL, I'D TRY TO DESTROY THE EFFECTIVE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANS. As the devil, I would understand that when a person obeys the gospel, then I've lost his soul and his allegiance is now to God. *He has been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's son (Col 1:13)*. He is no longer one of mine yet while I have lost his soul, I would do everything I could to keep him from winning other souls to Christ. I would try to make him just as ineffective in the Christian life as I possibly could. I would try to destroy the Christians service to God. I would try to get him to ignore that passage in Rom 6:12-14 that tells the Christian that he is *no longer to present himself as the instruments of sin but as instruments of righteousness to God*. As Christians, we are to have a new purpose in life which is to serve God and others. But as the devil, I would try hard to get that Christian to forget and/or ignore that passage.

What I would do is suggest to the Christian to just not read their Bible. It's really not all that important. In fact, it's not nearly as important as that TV program, or that recreational activity, or that second job. Then there is this matter of prayer – you know prayer is really not that significant and you can go for a week or two without really talking to God. Another thing Christian, who ever gave you the idea that you had to be involved in God's work. I mean why go to all that trouble to go and make that hospital visit; why go out of your way to make a visitor to worship feel welcome; why write that card of encouragement. Why bother to get involved in God work at all. There are other things that you can do. Why be so concerned about teaching someone else the gospel; why be so diligent in attending the services of the church. I mean attendance just every month or so is plenty. If I were the devil, I'd try to convince that Christian that serving God was not all that important and significant. I would try to destroy both their effectiveness and influence.

Sometimes the greatest hindrance in winning people to Christ is the inconsistency of those who claim to be Christians. What do people see when they look at you and your life. Do they say, “*If that is what Christianity is all about, then I don’t want any part of it*”; or so they see something that they lack and want. We are living advertisements for Jesus the Christ. There are some advertisements on TV that really are disgusting to me and because of that ad, I’d not even consider that item. Then there are others that present an item as attractive and appealing and I really want to but one of those. What kind of advertising are you?

NO. 4. IF I WERE THE DEVIL, I’D WANT YOU TO NOT UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. I wouldn’t care if you believe because I’d still have you in the bondage of sin. I really wouldn’t care if you repented of some of your sins because until you wash away your sins, I’ve still got you in my snare. I’d try to convince you that baptism was not essential to salvation. I would most definitely try to keep you from reading Acts 22:16 and 1 Pet. 3:20-21 *20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:*

But I’m not the devil and I don’t want any of us to be lost – instead, I want us to be saved and the way you do that is by obeying the gospel. To obey the gospel is not used by many denominational churches, but it is a powerful expression found in the NT. 2 Thessalonians 1:8 tells us that people who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ will be eternally lost.

Invitation. The Lord invites you to come while the devil says wait till tomorrow.