

# *The Nature of Satanic Attack*

*His Schemes, Devices, and Snares*

## **The Schemes (wiles) of the Devil**

### **Ephesians 6:11**

*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

Sometimes the word translated “wiles” is translated schemes. Both English words only moderately express the truth of the original word. The Greek word for *schemes* or *wiles* is *methodia*. It is used only in two passages in the New Testament. In Ephesians 4:14 it is translated “craftiness” (NASB), and “lie in wait” (KJV). The idea seems to be that Satan is looking for the area of weakness in the individual that he can exploit. The individual will be attacked, not in an area of strength, but in the most likely area of his weakness.

“*Methodia* is from *methodeuo* (*meta, hodos*) to follow after or up; to practice deceit, and occurs nowhere else (Ephesians 4:13; 6:11) save in the late papyri in the sense of *method*. The word *planes* (wandering, like our ‘planet’) adds to the evil idea of the word.” (A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, IV, pg. 538). Another author says concerning this word that it, “...denotes craft, deceit...a cunning device...” (W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, IV, pg. 216). Rushton states, “The term ‘wiles’ of the devil emphasizes the deceitful aspect of his temptations. Satanic temptations never appear on the surface as they really are” (Rushton, *Enemies*, pg. 52).

It is important for the believer to recognize that Satan is subtle and deceitful. He is the most accomplished purveyor of untruth in the universe. He does not want the Christian to believe the truth of God found in the Scripture, and goes to great lengths to suppress that truth. Believers find themselves tempted to abandon normal interpretive procedures and substitute error for truth when studying the Bible. The believer who relies on his own ability to determine the spiritual truth that Satan opposes through using erroneous methods of interpretation is heading toward a fall, and a very serious one.

## **The Designs (devices) of the Devil**

### **2 Corinthians 2:11**

*...lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

The following is a more literal translation of 2 Corinthians 2:11, “...in order that we are not taken advantage of by Satan. For we are not ignorant of his *mental things*.” The Greek word translated designs or devices in most modern versions is more accurately translated “the things of the mind” (*ta noemata*), or “the mental things.”

The word *nous* to which *noemata* is related, refers to the faculty of understanding as a result of experience in the daily life. It is specifically in the area of spiritual understanding that Satan attacks. Satan’s attacks are in areas of practical thinking, that is, thinking that affects the way the individual performs. While, as we shall see, many of these attacks are not attacks to commit sin, they are attacks to think in negative ways that can produce unrighteousness and sin in the life of the believer.

Satan’s attacks are primarily mental and not physical. Indeed, in this dispensation, as presented by the New Testament epistles, Satan exclusively attacks the mind of the believer. For this reason, it is a mistake to go to books such as Job, or the gospels, where Satan was more active in physical matters. Even in Job, it must be remembered, Satan was required to ask God’s permission before he could attack that righteous man physically. Evidently Satan was allowed, from time to time in the gospels to attack in the area of physicality, but the grace epistles do not speak to that problem. Probably this is because Satan’s attacks have been limited by God. He is allowed today only to attack in the area of the Christian’s mentality. Lest this seem less dangerous than before, remember that Satan is a powerful individual whose original fallen condition was the result of an aberrant mental process.

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We read in Acts 5:3, “But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?” This event is recorded for the purpose, at least in part, of indicating that Satan put it into the heart (read “mind”) of Ananias and Sapphria to lie. Lying, is, as we shall see, a result of highmindedness, the basic prideful attitude that has its source in Satan.

Ruston states, “The devil apparently has the ability to put his thoughts in the minds of Christians when allowed by God” (Rushton, *Enemies*, pg. 53). There are limits to this activity of Satan. When one studies the areas of mental attack presented primarily in the epistles, it becomes evident that only certain mentalities are subject to Satanic influence. Not only are all the lusts of the flesh excluded from the devils attacks, uncontrolled mental activity, such as dreams, are not subject to Satanic manipulation. Such activities are related to the indwelling sin principle, and though not controllable by walking by the Spirit, are nonetheless, apart from Satanic exploitation.

### **The Snare of the Devil**

#### **2 Timothy 2:24-26**

*And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.*

#### **1 Timothy 3:7**

*Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

A careful consideration of this passage indicates several truths concerning the way Satan deals with Christians who are studying the Word of God.

Those who oppose the truth of the Word of God are said to be *ensnared* by the devil. That they are opposing the truth of God’s word in a vigorous, personal way is seen by the fact the the apostle uses a Greek participle with the middle voice for the statement “those who are in opposition.” The Greek word is derived from a verb form which means “to place one’s self against, to oppose.”

The ensnared individual, then, is one who for some reason, perhaps even unknown to himself if he has been deceived by Satan, opposes the truth of the Word of God. Ensnarement is not a specific attack of Satan, but rather, a general approach so that when one of the eleven attacks are encountered by the individual, he will not be able to correctly use the statements of the Bible to overcome them.<sup>1</sup>

The ultimate cause of their ensnared condition is found in the last phrase in vs. 26 “having been taken captive by him in relationship to that one’s will.”

The idea of being taken captive is from the Greek *zogreo* It literally signifies “to take men alive (from *zoos*, alive, and *agreuo*, to hunt or catch.” (Vine, *Expository Dictionary*, I, pg. 168).

A change of mind is seen in their need for God to give them “a change of mind (repentance) with reference to a full experiential knowledge of truth.” The word “knowledge” refers to that information which can be used as a practical defense against Satanic attack.

The recovery of the ensnared saint is seen in the words “and they may return to soberness out of the snare of the devil.” The word “sober” is also used in 1 Peter 5:8 of Satanic attack, “Be sober, be

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<sup>1</sup> In the “armor” passage in Ephesians, the “sword of the Spirit which is the word of God” refers not to the Scriptures as a whole, but specific truths in the revealed word that the believer can use to counter Satanic manipulation. Such statements are quoted not for the benefit of Satan, but for the benefit of the Christian. However, if the Christian is ensnared, such a benefit is no longer available.

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vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Kenneth Wuest writes, “In the words ‘be sober’ sobriety of mind is enjoined. ‘Be mentally self-controlled,’ is the idea” (Wuest, *First Peter in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader*, pg. 129.)

Mental control is at the core of deliverance from Satan. If a believer is flighty in his thought process, especially with reference to spiritual truth, he is in danger of succumbing to Satanic attack.

Ensnarement is consistent with the emphasis of the New Testament on the mental nature of Satanic attacks. Rushton states, “The idea of thoughts, mind, mental attitudes again comes to the forefront. Ensnarement, then, is no one specific temptation, but could involve different Satanic temptations, but the specific practical result in this case is the opposition to the truth of the Word of God.” (Rushton, *Enemies*, pg. 55).

According to 1 Timothy 3:7 an overseer (bishop, elder, vs. 1) who has a bad testimony before the unsaved may fall into a snare of the devil. Since the overseer is in a position of authority, it is possible for him to become prideful of place, and therefore think that just because he has that position he deserves to be well thought of, despite how he acts. Such an attitude can only be maintained if Scripture is ignored. The believer’s relationship with the unbeliever is to be of the highest morality and kindness.