

## TACTICS OF THE DEVIL

On October 12, 1998, six men were killed in the night while sleeping inside the rails of a train track near Brownsville, Texas. The train crew was unable to stop the 45 MPH train and none of the six men responded in time and were adequately awakened by the horn. Tragically, this is a fairly common occurrence among those entering into America illegally from Mexico. The reason this is so common is that there is a mistaken belief that snakes will not cross railroad tracks, therefore, it is believed that one can sleep between the rails and be protected from the snakes. This is not true. Officials from Union Pacific Railroad have noted that their tracks are littered with snakes that have been cut in half while crossing the rails. The warm rocks under an elevated rail bed actually attract snakes at night.

These six men became victims of a lie, and countless others fall prey to a similar myth about a far more deadly snake - the same serpent that tempted Adam and Eve in the garden. The lie is that there are certain places where we are safe – areas the devil doesn't go. However, the devil's lies will never put you beyond his reach. The peaceful sleep that he offers is always between the rails of death and destruction.

Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, `You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, `You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

### 1. Doubting the Promises (vs. 1) – calling God's word into question (mind)

The first tactic of the devil is to get us to call God's word into question. He tries to get us to doubt what the Bible says. Notice the devil starts his temptation in verse 1 saying;

Gen 3:1 ...He said to the woman, "Did God really say...

The devil starts by planting the seeds of doubt into Adam and Eve's mind. It is the truth that sets us free. When we question the truth we can be easily be lead into all kinds of error. The devil said to Eve, "did God really say"? He says the same thing to each one of us on a regular basis. To resist the devil we need to know what the bible says and fully believe it.

As a pastor I hear so many people who try to justify their bad choices: Did God really say "do not be yoked together with unbelievers." If you only knew this person and the situation then I'm sure God would say it OK. Did God really say do not lie, do not commit adultery etc.

One who uses the Bible as his guide never loses his sense of direction.

There was a short-lived French settlement in Florida prior to the Spanish settlement at Saint Augustine. The Spanish wiped out the French settlement, but the native American Indians had learned two psalms in French (Psalm 128 and 130). They used this knowledge to determine if a white man were French and therefore friendly, or Spanish and hostile.

Truth is truth, it is not relative. You cannot say, "well maybe that works for you but it does not work for me." We are going to be doing a preaching on truth in the coming months, but we have to start with the foundational belief that there are absolutes, that truth is truth.

Willie Nelson apparently at one time owned a golf course. He said the great thing about owning a golf course was that he could decide what par for each hole was. He pointed at one hole and said, "See that hole there? It's a par 47. Yesterday I birdied it."

Have you ever been in a conversation with someone about your faith and you tried to use the Bible and said "well, it says somewhere that ..." and the person asked "where does it say that, show me!" and you couldn't. In Matt 4 when the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness He answered him each time with God's word saying "it is written ...". This is a good model for us to follow as well. In order to stand your ground against the enemy you have to know the Bible.

I encourage you to make sure that you are reading your Bible. Get in a small group that is studying the bible together. Make use of our church library and resources we have like Rightnow Media and make sure you are growing in your understanding of God's Word. If you do not know it, the devil will use that against you.

Do you know what a sitting duck means? It means an easy target. Years ago I went with some friends and had a game of paintball. We were all looking for the other team. Some told me to check around a corner. I went walking around the corner and all 5 of the other team were standing there with their paintball guns pointed at me. It was a massacre! Don't be a sitting duck for the devil. Be a student of God's Word.

## 2. Disregarding the Permissions (vs. 2-3) – focusing on the prohibitions (heart)

The second tactic of the devil is to try and turn our focus away from God onto other things. He tries to get us to focus on the things that we know we should not do (the prohibitions) rather than all the things we can do (the permissions). Look at what happens here;

Gen 3:1 ...He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from ANY tree in the garden?'"

The devil was trying to plant the seeds of resentment in Adam and Eve's mind. God does not want what is best for you. God does not want you to have any fun. Is that really what God said? Not at all!

Genesis 2:8 Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. 9 And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground--trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil... 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

God did not say you MUST NOT eat from any tree in the garden, He said you MAY eat from any tree in the garden, except one. God gave us all but one. Likewise today God has given us so many wonderful gifts to enjoy. Things that are good and pleasing and wonderful. However, how often we choose to focus on what we can't do rather than what we can.

While we are not told much about the Garden of Eden, we are told where it was located. It was where the Tigris and Euphrates and two other rivers met. There is only one place this could be, the northern part of Kuwait. Geological satellite imagery also shows the locations of the old dry river beds that led West into Saudi Arabia (where there was gold and aromatic resin) and East into Iran. The fact that this is where some of the largest oil reserves on earth are located there show that this garden was vast.

By the way, next time someone doubts that the Garden of Eden was a real place remind them that they are fueling their car with it!

God gave this vast lush garden and everything in it to Adam and Eve. They had everything they could ever want. They could eat from a different tree every day for years, and there was one thing they were told not to touch. It was the one thing they ran to.

Eve, with all the fruits of Eden blest,  
Save only one, rather than leave that one unknown,  
Lost all the rest. -- Thomas Moore

The devil delights in making good things seem bad and bad things seem good. Like a good father God wants to give us everything that is good for us. Unfortunately we seem so often drawn to things that will hurt and destroy us.

E.g. Children in a room full of toys going to the one thing she cannot have. E.g. Teenagers going to great lengths to do things just because they aren't suppose to.

Years ago we were out with the girls before Christmas and they wanted a toy from a store. Christmas was in a few days and all their presents had already been bought – at a great expense I might add. Still they really wanted a little toy. One of them, after we told them that they could not have a toy said, “you never get us anything” before retreating to silence. Though we had a closet full of presents waiting to be opened we were being accused of never getting them anything. As I reflected on their childish behavior, I cringed. I recognized that there were many times I have acted in the same way before God. Have you ever prayed for something that God chose to withhold? Sometimes the no we receive from God today is imply the prelude to unimaginable blessings tomorrow.

There are so many permissions God has given us. He wants us to enjoy life and enjoy it to the full. There are some things that can harm us which He has told us not to touch. By concentrating on what we can't have we miss out on all we can have. Really, this is an attitude of the heart. Do you choose to concentrate on the negative or live in the positive. It is a choice.

"It is notable that nearly all the poisonous fungi are scarlet or speckled and the wholesome ones brown or gray, as if to show us that things rising out of darkness and decay are always most deadly when they are well dressed." – Ruskin

### 3. Denying the Punishment (vs. 4-5) – consequences of disobedience (will)

Gen 3:4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman.

The third tactic of the devil is to let us think that we can get away with sin. If there is no punishment or consequences to sin then it does not matter if we sin or not. By removing the consequences of sin it becomes easier to commit.

When we lived in Kuwait all the highways were marked with speed limits. However, these limits were not enforced. In Kuwait there is something called wasta, which means influence. If you are from a family that has less wasta than another family then you have to be careful. The police were all from low wasta families and most of the people that were speeding were from high wasta families. If the police pulled over someone with more influence than they had, they could get themselves in trouble, so the speeding laws were never enforced. All that changed when they got speeding cameras. Now there was not a person but a system that you had to argue against. I learned this the hard way when I went to renew my drivers license and found I had over \$600 in speeding tickets!

A law that is not enforced is not an effective law. The bible reminds us that sin always has consequences.

Steve Green, who sang six years with Bill and Gloria Gaither, tells about getting to know some of the work crews in the large auditoriums where their concerts were held. The Gaithers prefer concerts-in-the-round, which means extra work for the "riggers," who walk the four-inch rafter beams--often a hundred feet above the concrete floor--to hang sound speakers and spotlights. For such work, understandably, they are very well paid. "The fellows I talked to weren't bothered by the sight of looking down a hundred feet," says Green. "What they didn't like, they said, were jobs in buildings that had false ceilings--acoustical tile slung just a couple of feet below the rafters. They were still high in the air, and if they slipped, their weight would smash right through the flimsy tile. But their minds seemed to play tricks on them, lulling them into carelessness." Satan's business is not so much in scaring us to death as persuading us that the danger of a spiritual fall is minimal

We need to look at all of our decisions in life in light of where they will lead us. There are consequences for sin. We will reap what we sow. Even though you may get away with something once does not mean that you are getting away with it.

The real danger in our situation lies in the fact that so many people see clearly what they are revolting from and so few see at all what they are revolting to. -- Harry Emerson Fosdick

Back in January my right hand had a nasty run in with a snow blower. The fingers were badly cut and broken. Because the bones were not healing by themselves I had to have surgery to put in pins to hold the broken bones in place. I remember that I preached the week before the surgery. I was on mild pain killers at the time and made some comment on how weird it was to preach on pain killers. After the service someone spoke with me in the foyer saying "you had better be careful talking about pain killers, they have a dark side you know." I was soon going to find that out for myself.

After the surgery I was in a lot of pain. The pain killers I had been on were doing nothing, so the doctor gave me a much more powerful prescription. Those morphine pills helped the pain, but they messed with everything else. I stopped eating and fell into a deep depression. I really felt like I was dying. Fortunately I was able to get off that medication and immediately started feeling better. What remained was the overwhelming sense of gratitude that God was with me.

I think it is a good thing whenever we come to terms with our own mortality. Whenever we are reminded that this life is temporary. I remember when I was at my lowest thinking about my life, and all the things I have done and left undone. Some day we will all have to stand before God and give an account of our lives. You may be young right now and think that you will live forever, but one slip on the ice and your life could be over.

When was the last time you were tempted to do something that you knew was wrong but felt you could get away with it? Be careful.

Galatians 6:7-8 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

When he was arrested in February 2002 for dumping off as many as 200 bodies in nearby woods, 28 year old Ray Brent Marsh, the operator of Tri-State Crematory told authorities that the incinerator had not worked for some time. The company that made the incinerator said the Marshes had turned down all offers to service the unit since 1984. A two year recommended service call costs \$795. The average cost to the family for a basic cremation is about \$1,200. What was the payoff for neglecting this small expense? Why did this happen for so many years? No one really knows, but maybe what resulted in unbelievable negligence began during one busy month. "I need to get that fixed ASAP. Let's be sure to take care of that tomorrow. Maybe next year we can afford it." The Marsh Family was known as a good family. Maybe you are known as a good person- a good family. And yet there is that one "thing" --that one vice-- you need to fix. "I'll work on it tomorrow." And tomorrow turns in to next month, and then next year. And soon, you are overcome with the mountain of sin that surrounds you, the corpses of your own making that are too numerous to hide.

Grant Williams chose an unusual pet. The 19-year-old from the Bronx bought a python for \$300. It turned out to be a bad decision. Williams was found dead of asphyxiation in the hallway outside his apartment. A neighbor found him lying in a pool of blood, with the 13-foot snake wrapped around his neck. It had turned on him, taking his life. Williams had decided to feed his pet a live chicken. Experts say the 44-pound python must have gone wild over the scent, attacked its owner, and mistaken his master for his meal.