



How Satan Gains Access to Work in our Lives

Part 4: Religious Matters

Continuing on in our study of the avenues through which Satan and his forces gain access to our lives, we will look next at the area of religious matters and the various ways Satan can trip us up in the guise of true spirituality. While we can readily recognize the many overtly **false religions** of the world that place another supposedly divine being in the place of the true Creator God, Satan's clever deceptions can take place even amidst mainstream Christianity in our own country. Because Satan can never measure up to all that God has to offer as he competes with Him for man's devotion, he must use clever means of deception to allure man to himself.

For this reason we must be very careful about following any seemingly **aberrant teachings** of the Word. While our hearts and minds must certainly be open to growing in new understandings of Scripture, whenever a particular teaching seems contrary to the traditional views of the recognized Church, we must carefully discern whether it is truly coming from the Holy Spirit. While at times false teachings may be purely a matter of ignorance, at other times they arise from a person's own fleshly desire for acclaim or from an ungodly spirit as an effort of Satan to pull us away from Christ. Following either leads us directly or indirectly under the influence of Satan's forces and can establish a foothold for their further deceptive work in our lives (Mat. 7:15; Rom. 16:17-20; 1 Tim. 4:1; 1 John 4:1; Jude).

The way to evaluate whether a seemingly new or varied interpretation of Scripture is truly coming from God is to look at the fruit in the life of the person teaching it and the effect that it has on the Church body. Wisdom that comes from God will be delivered in a spirit of humility, gentleness, and mercy. It will harmonize with other teachings of the Word and resonate with the inner spirit of other godly individuals who are well-versed in the Word. In contrast, a spirit of jealousy, belligerence, self-exaltation, hypocrisy, and strife mark the one whose wisdom is not from God, but earthly—or even demonic (Mat. 7:15-20; James 3:13-18).

Rationalism, or allowing human reasoning to supersede the Word of God in establishing truth, is one type of false teaching that Satan uses to infiltrate and weaken the “Christian Church.” Scripture clearly states that the depths of wisdom and knowledge revealed in God's Word are beyond human comprehension and that the reasonings of even the wisest men are “useless” and “foolish” in comparison (Rom. 11:33-36; 1 Cor. 3:19-20). Yet some individuals, upon encountering parts of the Bible they believe cannot possibly be taken literally or truly mean what they say, feel they are doing the Christian community a service by using human wisdom, or reasoning, to come up with an alternative explanation that “makes more sense” to them. In reality, this questioning and redefining of “what God says” exactly replicates the pattern of Satan in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1), and falling for it can put man into the same Satanic snare that it did for Adam and Eve (Rom. 6:16). Faith in God's Word is the defining characteristic of a true Christian. It is what binds us to God Himself (Eph. 2:8; Heb. 11:1-6; 1 Peter 1:6-7).

Whenever we doubt what God says or operate outside of faith, we fall into dangerous territory, and our defense against the evil one is greatly weakened (Rom. 14:23; Eph. 6:16; 1 John 5:4).

Legalism is another doctrinal deviation that masquerades as true spirituality within many churches yet denies a key feature of the Gospel message. Christ came to set us free from the binding restrictions of the Law, which were never intended to make man righteous but only to lead him to the Cross where justification is made possible through faith alone. Through His sacrificial death Christ has attributed *His own* righteousness to every believer, accomplishing what the Law was incapable of doing (Rom. 4:13-24; 8:2-4; Gal. 3:19-25; Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 10:1). He also imparted His Holy Spirit to indwell and guide us in holy living (Rom. 8:9-11; Gal. 5:16, 18, 22-23). To follow the Law or any man-made, external system of rules as a means to attain godliness not only denigrates the work of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, but also places oneself under a curse and in bondage to Satan (Gal. 3:1-5, 10-14).

Many **divisions** within the Church also have Satanically-inspired roots, and participation in them is seen by the spiritual realm of darkness as a step in their direction, which can open the door to further solicitation on their part in one's life. While some divisions are necessary to maintain doctrinal purity and to make God's true servants evident (Luke 12:51-53; 1 Cor. 11:19), those based on foolish speculations, petty differences, or social status are displeasing to God (2 Tim. 2:23; Titus 3:9-11). God desires His Church to be united in one faith with one mind and one purpose (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:3-11; 12:18-27), not divided over cultural differences or minor discrepancies of Scriptural interpretation.