

March 4, 2001

2 Corinthians 2:11

This verse should be understood with,

Deuteronomy 30:29 *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

Thus we see that if we try to get deeper into the devices of satan than what is clearly revealed in the word of God, we are getting into areas forbidden by the Lord. God has given us all we need to know in His word. And the basic purpose of His giving to us the understanding of His word is so we might *do all the words of this law*.

Satan means adversary, accuser, enemy. Satan is the great adversary of God and man. Satan will do all he possibly can do to hinder the work of God among those who are trying to please God. And God shows us a very basic goal of satan – it is to hinder God's people from doing ***all the words of this law***. (Deut. 30:29.)

Here in our text, we see that our adversary has a goal, and that goal is to *get an **advantage** [4122] over us **advantage**: To gain or take advantage of another, to overreach: To be covetous; One greedy of gain. ...*

Satan uses devices to **gain what belongs** to God. WHAT BELONGS TO THE LORD? **Faith, loving service and obedience**. In other words, satan gained an **advantage** over **Eve** when she yielded to his temptation to **covet** the only thing that was forbidden in the Garden. Satan gained from her what belonged only to the Lord – that is, her **loving obedience** to God's word and her service. And through Eve, satan gained from Adam what belonged only to the Lord – his obedience and loving service.

He effectively used a major human weakness, covetousness, to move man away from faith in the loving goodness of the Creator. Satan undermined man's loving service and obedience to the Lord God.

2 Corinthians 2:11 *Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

To really get the full impact of v. 11, we need to look at its context, which includes vv. 1-9.

Apparently the church at Corinth had followed the Apostle's instructions (1 Cor. 5), and they had exercised church discipline against the man that was living in sin. According to the context here, the man repented of the sin, and made it right according to God's requirements. Now Paul is telling them to forgive (v. 7) the man, and to reinstate him back into fellowship with the church.

V. 11, Paul tells them that if they **do not forgive the man**, the adversary will gain an advantage over them. Satan will gain the upper hand among them, and they will have no one to blame for the problems that will develop but themselves.

Note that satan did not ride roughshod into and over the church, nor over the individuals in the church. If the people did not follow Paul's instructions and forgive the man, they permitted satan to do his dirty work.

Paul warned then that because of the danger their unforgiveness was doing, they were to **waste no time** in restoring the one who had repented of his sin.

Note that we can certainly be too harsh on others. We all are inclined to be harsh, particularly if the deed is done against a family member. We want others to arrive to where we are, and we forget that it took 20 years for the Lord to bring us to a tolerant place in our lives.

We are not told here what advantage satan would gain by the people's unforgiveness. Maybe satan would lead them to take harsher measures if they did not take the man back; maybe satan would cause the man to give up on trying to follow the instructions of the Lord. The man had repented, and if they did not restore him to fellowship, what kind of testimony would it be to him and those around him? The forgiving spirit restores fellowship with those who repent and turn. God restores fellowship to the repentant, so should we.

for we are not ignorant of his devices. We know his plans, his thoughts, his skills, his cunning and his strategy. *We are not ignorant* of his devices, nor are we ignorant of the many individuals and families he has destroyed; we are not ignorant of the many churches he has ruined, nor are we ignorant of the nations he has usurped.

He perverts wisdom, knowledge, love, understanding, concern, authority and submission. We can count on satan perverting whatever we can name. He is continually looking for areas he can pervert.

1 Peter 5:8 *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*

To do this perverting, he has a **great many devices** to not only hinder, but to prevent us from doing that which is pleasing in God's sight and the work of the Lord.

Paul warns these people that satan is slick. The devices he used are well hidden and effective. The Apostle tells them at the end of this letter that most of satan's devices are very well hidden under the cloak of righteousness. The most effective devices satan uses against individuals and against churches are works which seem righteous.

for we are not ignorant of his devices. We have the word of God which exposes him. There is no reason to be caught unawares by anything the devil may throw at us. When we accept any of satan's many offers, we give him permission to work in our families and in our church. But we have God's word, so there is no reason to be caught in satan's destructive trap.

Scripture gives us all of satan's devices, so we will not be caught unaware. But **I can only over one** today. I want to deal with the **context** of 2 Corinthians 2:11, for that is the most important thing, or Paul would not have placed this statement there. But when we consider Satan's devices, we must remember Paul's warning:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. 2
Corinthians 11:13-15

Here we see that the *devices* satan uses to gain the advantage over us many times come from the most unlikely sources. That is what makes them so dangerous.

The things satan uses to gain inroads into our lives, into our families and into our church are from the most **unlikely** sources. Satan uses people we know and trust (they, I am sure, don't realize how they are being used).

Satan used **Adams** wife to get him to depart from the Lord.

The **first device** we want to look at is found in our text, V 7, **forgiveness**.

The danger here was that the people were not putting the past in the past, though the man had made it right. They are warned that if they do not forgive, then the devil would gain an advantage.

How do we know when we unforgiveness controls us?

If we keep **bringing up what someone** did in past. We bring it up not only in our words, but in our thoughts.

If we **rejoice in our hearts** if something bad happens to that person who we have failed to forgive.

You may say, Bro Need, the man made things right, so it is only right that they forgive. But how about those who do not make things right? I don't know that I can forgive them.

Unforgiveness, whether toward those who have made it right or to those who have **ignored** the situation, focuses our attention on the person and not the Lord as it should be.

And our unforgiveness will turn into bitterness a **feeling of anger and ill-will towards someone:**

HEB 12:14 *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; 16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

In our day of the destruction of the family, we see many innocent people being hurt. It is easy to get bitter. (Nor can we take up an offence for another.) Bitterness will do several things:

- a. rob us of the power of God for daily life.
- b. defile others around us.
- c. destroy us and those around us who are the most important to us.

And obviously, our immediate family are the ones who are in the most danger of being defiled by our unforgiveness and bitterness toward someone.

How many times have we **seen families** and **churches** destroyed by unforgiveness and bitterness, but the people refuse to face up to the problem? Rather than admit that the problem is from within, they insist on blaming those around them **MAYBE OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS, FRIENDS, RELATIVES, THE PASTOR, THE CHURCH.**

What about forgiveness? How can we handle it?

Let me give a few answers here:

Romans 12:14 *Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. 15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. 16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. 17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written (Deut. 32:35, Paul preached from the Old Testament), *Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.**

Hebrews 10:30 *For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.* (Again, the Old Testament is being expanded here, particularly Deut. 32:35, 36 & Ps. 135:14.)

How must unforgiveness and bitterness be dealt with?

1) it must be confessed to the Lord as a sin, and confessed to the one our actions are against, **if they know we have a problem with them.**

James 5:16 *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

2) the person whom we feel deserves our bitterness and hard feelings must be turned over to the Lord for His just dealing.

3) after we make the confession, if we still cannot leave the situation in the Lord's hands, we need to confess that inability to Him, and cast ourselves upon His mercy, and plead for His grace to enable us to gain the victory. **THE POWER TO DO RIGHT ACCORDING TO HIS WORD COMES FROM HIM.**

3) Notice the context of **Romans 12:19, vv. 1-21**

A) v. 1, we must give ourselves over to the Lord. And thus we say that if He wants to persecute us with others, that is His business.

B) v. 2, we must renew our mind that is, we must learn to think new thoughts and look at things in a different light. This comes from reading, memorizing and meditating on God's word.

C) v. 3, we must **think soberly** that is, we must realize the danger we are in and the danger we have placed our family in with our unforgiveness and bitterness. We must realize and confess to the Lord that we cannot help ourselves.

D) we must cast ourselves upon the Lord to work all the things in us that He wants in us.

Does this mean I must restore fellowship with that person even though that person has done nothing to make the situation right?

Not necessarily. We are speaking here of what takes place in the heart. The perceived wrong must be turned over to the Lord for Him to take care of it.

The choice is ours. We can deal with bitterness and unforgiveness in the way pleasing to the Lord, or we can sit back and watch our families and church go down the tubes.