

CHECK

Scripture Reading: Read 2 Corinthians 2

Castle. *En passant*. Queen's gambit. Sicilian defense. **1. e4 e5 2. Qh5?! Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6?? 4. Qxf7# 1-0**. Mate. If any of these terms or notations made sense to you, chances are you have played a game or two of chess sometime in your life. Avid chess players enjoy the thrill of challenging their opponent in a duel of intellect and strategy, played out on a 64-squared checkerboard, sixteen chess pieces versus their opponent's 16 pieces. The goal? Checkmate your opponent's king!

In today's chapter reading, we find a game of chess in play. Oh, it's not a literal chess match but there is no question that it is a game of chess as play unfolds. It just takes place in the spiritual realm instead of on an actual checkerboard. Notice what Paul says: "...in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes." Did you catch that last sentence? Read it again. "For we are not unaware of his schemes." Whose schemes? Satan's schemes. Paul's language implies that Satan has a plan, a strategy if you will, that he seeks to employ.

How does he go about his plan? What's the devil's gambit? Fortunately, for us, the Scripture provides us with guidance on the devil's moves. It's why we don't have to be ignorant or unaware of Satan's schemes. He uses the same moves again and again. He comes with temptation, snares, hindrances, harassment, and oppression. He seeks to sow seeds of division in the body of Christ. He comes with deceit, lies and false doctrine. When these are no longer effective, he comes with intimidation and persecution.

For what purpose? Satan's goal is always the same: to checkmate us. According to Paul in 2 Cor 4:4, his plan for unbelievers is keep them out of the kingdom through blinding their eyes to the truth: "*The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*" Jesus references this blinding through another word picture in the Parable of the Sower when he speaks of the birds of the air, representing the devil, who come and steal the seed that was planted. For believers, Satan's plan is to make us ineffective in kingdom work and to develop a wedge between us and the Lord. One thing to be aware of, and it's something many believers miss at first, Satan doesn't have to take you out today. Like a master chess player, he can wait and move his pieces into position when we're not aware so that we walk into his trap. We end up losing pieces and, if we're not careful, the game!

The good news? There is a defense to the enemy's attacks and it's not the Sicilian defense. No, it's Revelation 12:10, James 4:7, Ephesians 6:10-18, and I Peter 5:9. These defenses are effective because the Chess Grandmaster, Jesus Christ, checkmated the devil and won the game for us at the cross. Just check out His plays in the game from I John 3:8, Colossians 2:15, and Revelation 20:10.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: If you haven't already, read through the Scriptures in the last paragraph. Ask the Holy Spirit to impress those plays upon your heart so that you, too, can walk in the Lord's triumphal checkmate of the devil (2 Cor 2:14).

Take-a-way: *When the devil says check, remind him that he has been checkmated!*