

27. What satan doesn't want you to know -Part 3

April 21, 2013

For the last two weeks, we've been learning about the weapons that satan often uses, but he doesn't want us to know. We are going to learn more about them today Sunday. I am sure that there are many more weapons in his arsenals, but three of them come to my mind – Discouragement, Temptation, and Deception.

A. DISCOURAGEMENT

You may have heard this illustration, but it is worth repeating:

One day satan wanted to show off all of the weapons he uses. All of them were attractively displayed. There were Envy, Jealousy, Hatred, Malice, Deception, Temptation, Persecution, Compromise, Fear, Pride, Idolatry, and other weapons of evil on display. All the evil imps and demons exclaimed "Ooh," and "Aah."

Right in the middle all by itself was a harmless -looking, wedge-shaped tool very much worn down, but was displayed on the most beautifully decorated stand. One of the demon commanders asked satan what it was, and he answered with glee and pride, "That is Discouragement." The next question came quickly: "And why is it displayed better than any other weapon of yours even though it is plain looking and it is more worn than these others?"

"Because," replied satan, "it is more useful to me than all these others. I can pry open and get into a godly man's and woman's heart with discouragement when I cannot get near them with any other weapon. Once I get inside, I can use him in whatever way suits me best. It is worn well because I use it on everybody I can, and very few people even know it belongs to me."

Discouragement can set you back like none other. You can be at the pinnacle of your spiritual journey with Jesus. But a little discouragement wedges its way into your heart and it can trigger a massive spiritual and emotional avalanche in you and pull you all the way down before you realize what and how it happened.

That is exactly what happened to Elijah the prophet of Israel. In 1 Kings 18, there was a serious rumble on Mount Carmel between the 850 false prophets and a lone prophet of God, Elijah. These 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the false god Asherah wanted their gods to burn their sacrifice with a fire coming down from heaven. They did everything they knew to make their gods bring forth fire. Nothing, nada, zilch. A very embarrassing moment for them in front of all the people around.

Then, Elijah stepped up and prayed to the Lord a simple prayer that could be said under 24 seconds. Boom! The fire from God came down and scotched the entire sacrifice extra crispy. Elijah commanded the Israelites to kill all 850 false prophets and they did. What a victory to the Lord and I am sure that Elijah was floating on spiritual cloud 9. But out of the blue, a discouragement came upon him like an avalanche. He ran away like a little puppy with his tail tucked between his legs.

1 Kings 19:2-3 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." 3 And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.

Let's not be so harsh on Elijah, guys. You know that famous phrase – "Hell has no fury like a woman scorned."

Did you notice something was missing between Elijah getting the message from Jezebel and running away? Prayer. In a moment of fear, he forgot all that God had done for him during the last three years. He did not seek God for help, nor guidance. He didn't depend on the same God who threw down a ball of fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice and had 850 false prophets killed. He took his eyes off from God to himself. Now he was walking by sight, not by faith. It is no wonder Elijah was totally discouraged.

That is exactly what happens to us if we do not seek the Lord. We have to run from our enemy satan all the time, because we would be submerged in discouragement. When Jesus tells us to seek first the Kingdom of God, it is not only to keep the right priority in our hearts, but also it is to protect us from the evil ones.

Whenever we are fearful and discouraged from the situations we are facing, that is the greatest evidence of the lack of our prayer and dependency on God.

A 19th Century American Missionary William Ward said, "Discouragement is dissatisfaction with the past, distaste for the present, and distrust of the future. It is ingratitude for the blessings of yesterday, indifference to the opportunities of today, and insecurity regarding strength for tomorrow. It is unawareness of the presence of beauty, unconcern for the needs of our fellowman, and unbelief in the promises of old. It is impatience with time, immaturity of thought, and impoliteness to God."

Now I am going to talk to two groups of people:

1) If you are one of those who is a thoughtless person and says discouraging and despairing words to others as a joke or just a thing to say, here are three theological words for you – "Don't say it."

You are not helping anyone by saying discouraging and despairing words, even if it's the truth, to those who are already down and out. If people try to avoid you even though you don't have body odor, it might be a good sign that you are a more of discourager than being an encourager. Look for ways to encourage others with kind words.

2) If you think that God is calling you to be in ministry or you are already in ministry, expect that you will experience discouragement frequently.

Hang onto the Lord in prayers and His Word. Remember that the Lord called you, not a man.

B. TEMPTATION

I like what the Great Reformer Martin Luther once said, "You can't stop a bird from flying over your head, but you can stop him from building a nest in your hair." A bait is not a sin, but a bite of it is.

There are four major misunderstandings regarding temptation:

1) We fall into temptation out of the blue.

We fall into temptation, because we set ourselves up for that trap.

2) God is disappointed and displeased when we are tempted.

Jesus was tempted, yet He didn't fall for it. God isn't disappointed by temptations that come our way. He still loves us even when we sin. We need to make ourselves right with the Lord by repenting from our sins and turn away from them.

3) We overcome all temptation by isolating ourselves from it.

Look at the monks in monasteries. They are isolated from the world, but in their minds, they still have struggles with temptations. Just because someone is isolated from temptation, it doesn't mean that he or she is not going to be tempted. That person has to submit oneself to God first. Then walk away from the temptations.

4) When I am spiritually mature, I will no longer be harassed by temptation.

As we grow mature in the Lord Jesus, temptation does not get any easier. But we can know how we can avoid temptations. We run to God.

Though temptation is not limited to lust only, but we cannot study about the horrendous power of temptation without mentioning what king David faced when he saw Bathsheba bathing in 2 Samuel chapter 11. It was not that he was a single guy for a long time, or had he never known a woman. He already had six wives and who knows how many porcupines, uh, I mean, concubines he had.

When he accidentally saw a naked woman, as a godly man, he should have turned away from the tempting scene and walked back into his room. But what did he do? He stared at her and coveted her. When a soft-footed servant reminded David that she was the wife of one of his own soldiers, nothing mattered to David except having one night stand with her.

At the moment being sucked into temptation, God is quite unreal to us. That person loses all reality and the knowledge of the upcoming consequences of the foolish action and most of all, the love of God for him or her. The only thing that counts at that moment is fulfilling one's carnal desire. Satan does not fill us with hatred of God, but with simple forgetfulness of God.

So, are we doomed against temptations from satan? Absolutely not. Though Jesus could easily have defeated satan's temptations with His divine power when He was tempted for 40 days and nights in the wilderness, He made an example for us in Matthew 4. Each time satan brought an enticing temptation to Him, Jesus said, "It is written..." He was using the Word of God as His weapon.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.

We will study more about using the Word of God as an offensive weapon against satan later.

C. DECEPTION

Deception is one of the foundational weapons of satan.

Revelation 12:9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

John 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

The first deception to the first couple of mankind happened in the Garden of Eden:

Genesis 3:1-5 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, (1) "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" 2 And the woman

said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ' You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' " 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "(2) You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and (3) you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

We need to dissect how satan deceived Eve so that we will be prepared for his deceptions against us in future.

1) Questioning God's Word

Satan was so cunning. He didn't flat out deny that God had spoken. He simply questioned whether God had really said what Eve had thought He'd said. He implied, "God doesn't really love you, Eve. If God really loved you, He would let you eat of any tree that you want. So when He said you cannot eat of this tree, He's holding something back from you that you really need to look into."

If Eve had not listened to satan questioning God's Word from the first place, she would never have fallen. That is why the Bible says, " Resist the devil and he will flee from you," in the Book of James chapter 4. It's because Eve was talking to him that she fell into his trap. Don't converse with him! Satan's lies are so subtle.

He also does that in the life of the believers. If satan says to us, "Do you really believe the Bible is the Word of God? Do you really think you're saved? How do you know that Jesus died for you, you miserable sinner? You don't deserve the love of God, you hypocrite." Don't listen to satan.

When you sin, that's all the more reason to pray and ask God to forgive you; when you sin, that's all the more reason to go to church and get help and support from your Christian friends; when you sin, it's vital that you read the Word of God to see what it has to say to you. Then, obey what the Bible says right away .

2) Denying God's Word

First, satan questioned God's Word. Then he denied His Word by saying, "You shall not die" in v4. Satan tried to portray God as a conniving jealous mean master who doesn't want to share good things, such as the fruits from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, with Adam and Eve.

3) Substitutions for God's Word

In verse 5, here comes the ultimate bait for the mankind: " You will be like God, knowing good and evil." This old lie has been repackaged in many different wrapping papers of religions.

Mormonism claims that we are little gods. New Age movement cries out that there is gods within all of us. All we have to do is enlighten ourselves to achieve that divine stage. Even Kenneth Copeland and some of his fellow heretic teachers of the Word of Faith movement claimed that we are little gods since we are the children of God.

Satan knows that if he uses total lies, people would detect his lies right away . So he mixes his deceptions with the Word of God. By doing so, he adds the credibility to what he uses to deceive people.

The world is filled with the people who not only are deceived by satan about the truth of God, but also don't care to know His truth because what God says in His Bible goes against how they want to live.

The only way to survive in a world of deception is by trusting the One who will never deceive us. That is Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. But anytime a person rejects Him, it leaves them open to tremendous deception.

D. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Whenever we are fearful and discouraged from the situations we are facing, that is the greatest evidence of the lack of our prayer and dependency on God.
- 2) Temptations are definitely going to come your way and mine. When we know the Word of God, we can deflect the blows that come against us and strike out offensively.
- 3) The only way to survive in a world of deception is by trusting the One who will never deceive us. That is Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.