

# Resisting Satan's Bait

Dear friends,

Satan wants to devour you. What are you doing to resist his bait? 1 Peter 5:8, 9 says, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers (and sisters) throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings." Lacking self-control and not being alert, many have taken Satan's bait. This bait comes in so many sizes and shapes. It can be bait to lie, steal, cheat, have sex outside of marriage, or drugs, the list goes on and on. When people do not resist Satan's bait, standing firm in the faith, they find themselves devoured in hopelessness and depression. The fact is you can be victorious. 1 Cor. 10:13 says, "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."

One of Satan's favorite temptation or baits is offense. Proverbs 18:19 says, "A brother (and a sister) offended is harder to win than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle." Often this offense is a result of something said or done to us by someone who is close to us. David describes this in Ps 55:12-14 when says, "if an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God."

It could be a husband, a wife, a brother, a sister, child or parent, a close friend, any one we care for deeply who says something or does something that offends. When we take Satan's bait by letting the offense turn into bitterness it isn't long until we find ourselves devoured by hatred. This trap is awaiting us unless we recognize the bait and let forgiveness prevail.

Eph. 6:10—13 gives us practical advise on resisting the devil's bait. It says, "be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything to stand." These verses don't say if the day of evil

comes (the day Satan baits you) it says when. Each and every one of us will be baited by Satan at sometime. The question is will we take his bait and be devoured.

This bait can be an offensive remark or action on the part of another person. The bait could be in the form of money that has been left out. You see it. You need it. It's been sitting there for two or three days. You know whom it belongs to but as time passes you start listening as Satan tells you, "If anybody is that stupid to leave money laying around they deserve to have it taken from them. Go on and take it." Finally you take Satan's bait. Now you're trapped. You're a thief. Satan has you where he wants you. Now what are you going to do. You can keep it and may even be able to get away with it but as a result you have shut God out of your heart and mind and decided to live life Satan's way. The other choices you have are to repent of your sin, return the money and get back to living for God. After all didn't Jesus say, "What good will it be for a person if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul" (Matt 16:26, Mark 8:36, Luke 9:25).

When it comes to personal offenses Satan baits you in much the same way. Someone says or does something to you. You are baited. Then the devil whispers to you, "That person had no right telling you that. You don't need to take it. If you ever had a reason to get upset you have one now." You take the bait. You blow up and you give the greatest out burst you ever live to regret. So many marriages and dear friendships have been devoured by that one who walks around like a roaring lion (see 1 Peter 5:8,9), because one or both parties refuses to resist Satan's bait.

Do you have your full armour on so that you can stand your ground when Satan baits you and the day of evil comes? In order to stand firm and resist Satan's bait Paul says, we need to put on the full armor of God. In Ephesians 6 verses 14-18 Paul describes this armor as the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sharp two-edged sword of the word of God. If you are not familiar with the full armour of God and have not been putting it on, chances are you have been eating the devil's bait and now are caught in his trap. When you are entrapped and a stronghold has developed in you, all Satan has to do is push the right buttons and here you come ready to do his work. 2Cor.10:4, 5 tells one how he or she can be set free from Satan's trap or stronghold. "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up

against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

Eph. 6:16, 17 tells us that these weapons include the shield of faith, “with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one,” and the sword of the spirit “which is the word of God.” All this only makes sense when we understand the knowledge of God, who is the creator of heaven and earth. This knowledge of God is revealed in John 3:16--18 where it says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” In the light and power of this knowledge of God we can demolish every argument and pretension that tries to get us to take Satan’s bait. We are further told that if we are going to resist Satan’s bait and temptations we are to take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor.10:5). This is what it is meant by putting on the helmet of salvation. Instead of listening to Satan’s lies “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” It is very difficult to take the bait and then lie, steal, cheat, get bitter or do anything else contrary to the word of God when we take every thought and make it obedient to Christ.

While we must be careful not to take Satan’s bait we must be even more careful that we don’t let him use us to bait somebody else and lead them into sin. In Luke 17:1, 2, 3 Jesus said to his disciples, “Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves.”

As we read these verses (and for that matter so many other parts of Scripture) it is easy for us to think that they certainly apply to someone else who is much more evil than we are. After all isn’t it the seductive woman who is trying to get the innocent guy that Proverbs described. Or what about the playboy who is constantly plotting out how he is going to get his next victim? Then there is the dirty old man lurking in the shadows for little children. We rationalize that these certainly must be the ones Jesus is taking about when he says that, “it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.”

As we read on in verses 3-6 we see that Jesus is including much more. He is telling us instead of trying to response even more hostile to the one who offends we should, “rebuke him” (of course with love) and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven time in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, ‘I repent,’ forgiven him.’”

Wow what a contrast to how we normally respond. If someone does us wrong we want to be the first to tie that millstone around his neck and throw him or her in the sea. Instead Jesus tells us to rebuke him in love and forgive him. He also tells us to watch ourselves lest we knowingly or unknowingly through our actions or words are leading others to sin.

When Jesus spoke these words to his disciples in Luke 17:1-4 their immediate response was “increase our faith.” They knew it was impossible to forgive someone over and over unless faith was involved. We would rather tell them, “If I told you once I told you a hundred times. Why don’t you ever listen to me?” Instead of making excuses as why they couldn’t do what Jesus just told them the disciples simply said, “Increase our faith!” To this Jesus replied, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it will obey you.’”

The mulberry tree Jesus was referring to was that offense or wrong from our past that has gotten down deep into our being to the extent that anything that slightly resembles it sets us off. So much of our relationship with God and others is filtered through all the mulberry trees of the past. To help you better understand this let us go to Hebrews 12:15-17 where it says, “see to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, through he sought the blessing with tears.”

How we need to exercise immediately our mustard seeds of faith and believe God to throw those “mulberry trees” and “roots of bitterness” out of our lives. We have taken so much of Satan’s bait that he has created strongholds in our lives until the slightest things sets us off. We need to cry to God at this moment for freedom, a freedom that only Jesus Christ can give. As we receive His forgiveness and the freedom it provides, we need to let it flow into every area of our lives.

It's the forgiveness that Jesus provides that sets us free and keeps us from continually taking Satan's bait. Perhaps the last three pieces of armour that we mentioned earlier from Ephesians 6 has a lot more to do with forgiveness than we realize. They include the shoes of the gospel of peace, the breastplate of righteousness, and the belt of truth.

The shoes of the gospel of peace are forgiveness in action. The gospel of peace is the good news resulting from forgiveness first given to us by God through Christ and then flowing from us to other people. There are so many who are running around with the shoes of bitterness and unforgiveness. There is no peace in their life. As a result they are constantly taking Satan's bait and finding themselves further entrapped in resentment, hostility, and hatred. While this is taking place Jesus is standing by holding out the shoes of the gospel of peace and saying, "come unto Me all of you who are burdened with unforgiveness and I will give you rest and peace."

The breastplate of righteousness is the forgiveness that God has made available to all of us both now and for all eternity. When Satan tries to bait us by firing his arrows of anxiety and hopelessness at us, we can resist them by knowing that we are a new creation in Christ made righteous through His death and resurrection.

The belt of truth is the forgiveness that holds all the other armour in place. Jesus is that truth and life who extends to us the forgiveness we need and then frees us to forgive others.

We can and will resist Satan's bait as we cloth ourselves in the armour of forgiveness including the helmet of salvation. Remember this helmet of salvation involves taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Think about how much joy and peace is awaiting you in life as long as you stay away from Satan's bait. Yes Jesus has come to set the captives free. Let us now go forth living each day victoriously by faith in that freedom and hope that Christ provides.

Yours in Christ's service,

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