

## DON'T TAKE THE BAIT

- A. Introduction: We're talking about the importance of learning to praise God continually. To praise God, in its most basic form, means to acknowledge Him by talking about who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do. Heb 13:15; Ps 34:1 Ps 107:8,15,21,31
1. When we praise God it glorifies Him and opens the door to His power in our situation. Praise is the voice of faith and a strength that stops the enemy and stills the avenger. Ps 50:23; Ps 8:2; Matt 21:16
  2. For the past two weeks we've been talking about the importance of understanding how the devil (the enemy) works in the midst of life's trials so we can learn how to effectively deal with him through praise to God. We're going to continue our discussion in this lesson.
- B. Mark 4:14-17--Jesus said that the devil comes to steal the Word of God. His goal is to get us to disbelieve or disobey God and be rendered unfruitful in this life.
1. Satan uses life's trials to accomplish his purposes because we're all more vulnerable to his tactics when we're stirred up physically and emotionally.
    - a. Troubles test or expose our faith. It's easy to believe what God says when things are going well. But, it's different when all hell breaks loose. In those times we find out what we really believe.
    - b. Nowhere does the Bible tell us to beware of the devil's power. Rather we are told to beware of his traps. Jesus said that people get offended when trials come (v17).
      1. Offended means to be led astray or into sin. It comes from the Greek word SKANDALON which literally means the trigger of a trap on which bait is placed which, when touched, springs and causes the trap to close ensnaring the animal.
      2. The devil cannot make you abandon God's Word. Rather he must talk you into it. He sets a trap for us by presenting us with thoughts that undermine our confidence in God and/or directly contradict His Word.
  2. Eph 6:10-13 is a powerful passage written by Paul (a man who received the message he taught directly from Jesus) about how this process works and how we can be protected.
    - a. He's about to conclude his letter to the Ephesians and he exhorts them to be strong in the Lord and the power of his might (v10). Then he tells them how to do it—Put on or be clothed in the armor of God so that you can stand against the wiles (strategies and deceits) of the devil (v11).
    - b. Nowhere does the Bible tell us to beware the power of the devil. Rather we are warned against his wiles. The word wiles is METHODIA in the Greek. It means to trace out methodically. It is translated strategies, cunning, schemes, method. Our word method comes from it.
      1. It is made up of two words: META (with) and ODOS (a road). The devil has one road, one method he uses against us: mental strategies.
      2. II Cor 2:11--Paul wrote in an earlier letter to the Corinthians: We are not ignorant of Satan's devices (NOEMA). The root word (NOUS) is mind, a mental perception, a thought. The devil works on our minds.
        - A. II Cor 11:3--Paul cited Eve as a specific example of what the devil does. He works on our minds in an attempt to beguile (seduce wholly, delude, deceive) us through subtlety (adroitness, skill in a bad sense, trickery).
          1. Gen 3:1-6--When we examine what the devil did to Eve we find that he engaged her on a mental level. He challenged God's Word by presenting her with suggestions (or thoughts), half-truths, misquotes, lies.
          2. He enticed her to focus on what she could see and feel and stole God's Word from her by persuading her to disobey it.
- B. In his remarks to the Ephesians Paul states that we must use God's armor to stand against the devil's strategies. God's armor is His Word. Ps 91:4--His faithful promises are your armor and protection. (NLT)

- c. In Eph 6:12 Paul reiterates that our struggle is with the devil and his workers (fallen angels). We wrestle with them. Wrestle comes from a word that means to vibrate or sway. These beings attempt to sway us from God's Word through mental strategies.
- d. Paul restates in v13 that we must take up God's Word (armor) to withstand in the evil day and still be standing when the attack is over.
  - 1. Withstand is translated "resist" the devil in James 4:7 and I Pet 5:9. What do you resist? The wiles of the devil. He presents us with lies which we must resist with the truth, God's Word.
  - 2. Eph 6:13--Therefore put on God's complete armor, that you may be able to resist and stand your ground in the evil day [of danger], and having done all [the crisis demands], to stand [firmly in your place]. (Amp)

- B. The battleground with the devil is in the arena of our mind. To recognize and deal with his strategies you must have some understanding of what goes on in your mind.
  - 1. We all have thoughts or inner considerations in our minds. We can initiate thoughts or will (choose) to think them (go through a process of thinking). But we also have random thoughts in our minds.
    - a. Matt 15:19--Jesus (speaking of unregenerate men or those who have not been born again) said that evil thoughts come out of our heart (inner man, the seat of desires, passions, impulses, etc.)
      - 1. If you are born again you've got a new nature and in your heart of hearts want to do the will of God (lesson for another day). Sinful thoughts don't come out of your recreated human spirit.
      - 2. But your inner man is made up of spirit and soul (mind and emotions). Your soul was not directly affected by the new birth. Both your mind and emotions are still vulnerable to the devil's methods and strategies. That's one reason our mind must be renewed (another lesson).
    - b. We all (even born again people) have random thoughts, thoughts you did not initiate. The devil influences us through random thoughts. It's clear from scripture that he is able to present thoughts to our mind. We looked at the examples of Eve and Peter (Matt 16:23)
      - 1. Consider another example. I Chron 21:1--Satan provoked (pricked) David, a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), to number Israel (take a census). Provoked means to seduce.
      - 2. David decided he need toknow if he had enough fighting men to advance his purposes. God's Word to Israel was always: Your strength is not in numbers and military might. I am your strength (Ps 33:16; Ps 20:7; Prov 21:31). Yet the devil persuaded David to abandon this Word.
    - 3. We're all vulnerable to these strategies (I Pet 5:8). That's why we can't be ignorant of how the devil works (II Cor 2:11).
  - c. We all have strongholds in our mind or learned thinking patterns built up over a lifetime.
    - 1. They are based on life experience, input from the culture, other people and they become our automatic response to life. Any new information taken in has to pass through that filter (or is interpreted through your warped perspective) sometimes causing you to mishear what is said.
    - 2. These must be exposed by God's Word, broken down and replaced by healthy, godly patterns. (lessons for another day).
  - d. We all talk to ourselves. It's that internal conversation that goes on continually (self-talk). What we tell ourselves is based on and reinforces our view of reality.
    - 1. Matt 6:25--In the context of telling His followers they don't have to worry about where the necessities of life will come from Jesus said: Take no thought. Although it's translated "don't worry or be anxious" in many translations, the root word means to divide. The idea is distraction. Don't be distracted.
    - 2. When you're facing an economic trial (whether it's too many bills and not enough paycheck) thoughts begin to fly: What will I eat? How will I live. Some are natural thoughts that you initiate based on what you see. Some are random thoughts from the devil (You're going down. What are you going to do?). Some are your automatic responses (I always mess up).

Nothing ever goes right for me).

3. v31--Jesus said we make the thought our own by speaking it. He exhorted His listeners: Put your focus back on your Heavenly Father. He feeds the birds and cares for the flowers. You matter more than both. He'll take care of you (26-33). In other words, praise or acknowledge God in the face of the trial and the enemy's attacks: I matter to Him. He'll take care of me.
4. Satan presents us with lies and seeks to wear us down through mental attacks. In David's battle with Goliath we see an example of how the devil works on our minds. I Sam 17
  - a. The Israelites were facing the Philistines at the valley of Elah. The Philistine champion Goliath issued a challenge: Send a man out to fight me. If he defeats me, Israel wins. If I defeat your man you become our slaves. v8,9
    1. For forty days, twice a day, he bombarded Israel with this threat or mental harassment. He was intimidating to look at because of his size and everyday he brought the possibility of their defeat and enslavement before them producing great fear and discouragement. v11,24
    2. Goliath defied them (v10). Defy means to carp at, defame. He twisted the truth, calling them them servants of Saul (v8) and armies of Israel(v10) when they were God's army (v26,36).
    3. This is how the devil works. The Greek word translated devil is DIABOLOS. It is made up of two words: DIA (penetration) and BALLO (to throw). It literally means hitting something again and again until you penetrate it. He keeps firing thoughts at us.
  - b. How do we know that the devil was active here since he is not mentioned? Goliath was an unbeliever through whom Satan worked. He's been working on minds since the Garden of Eden.
    1. There are no new temptations (I Cor 10:13) He works through mental attacks and his goal is always to convince us to disbelieve or disobey God (II Cor 11:3; Eph 6:11).
    2. These attacks were bait. The devil, through Goliath, landed the seed of doubt: There was no way Israel could not win. God's Word to them was: Your enemies will fall before you by the sword (Lev 26:7,8). Yet Israel took the bait. They believed the lie that they couldn't defeat Goliath and they couldn't.
  - c. Not David. He went into battle with the armor of God's Word, praising Him by proclaiming His past help and promise of provision: I'll take your head off with a sword. v34-37; 46
- C. Some of the devil's best strategies come through the questions that arise when troubles come our way.
  1. "Why did this happen? This is so unfair." We take (entertain) those thoughts and they're soon followed by: After all you've done. You've been faithful. You pray and pay your tithes. You work in the nursery. That guy professes to be a Christian but lives like the devil and he's getting away with it.
    - a. These are all natural, reasonable questions. But the devil takes advantage of them (and us) if we don't know how to rightly answer them from the Word of God. He adds and inflames thoughts.
    - b. Life in a sin cursed earth is neither easy or fair. But ultimately all will be made right. (Lessons for another day). You must recognize that you're vulnerable when those questions start flying.
  2. So much of our thought life is spent going over and over the same things, replaying them in our head, stewing over: What am I going to do? How is this going to work? What's going to happen?
    - a. Yes there are times when you don't know what to do and you need to think things through. But going over and over something for which no there is no apparent workable solution is a waste of time and is actually counter productive because it undermines your faith and saps your strength.
    - b. If you are going over and over something that's not bringing you to a workable conclusion, there's a good possibility that you are getting "help" with your thought processes in the form of fiery darts or random thoughts designed to produce fear, doubt and discouragement in you. You're fully in the ring with the devil and you will lose. You've taken the bait. He's trapped you.
      1. Eph 6:16--We need to take the armor of God and resist the fiery darts of the wicked one. Three kinds of arrows were used at the time this was written: regular arrows, arrows dipped in tar and set on fire before launching, and fiery darts. They were hollow and filled with

combustible fuel that exploded on impact. These were used to trick the enemy.

2. When they were flying at your fortified position fiery darts looked the same as regular arrows.

They did not seem deadly. Many of the thoughts that come to us don't seem deadly so we entertain them and they "explode" in our mind as fear, doubt, etc.

c. II Chron 20:12--Remember Jehoshaphat? He didn't know what to do so he put his focus on the Lord: We don't know what to do, but our eyes are on you. Don't take the bait. Put your focus on Jesus through His Word.

3. Ps 56--This psalm was written when David was on the run from King Saul and the Philistines seized him in the city of Gath. It's a good example of how to fight these mental battles we all face.

a. Notice, David didn't deny the problem (v1,2,5,6) nor did he deny that he was afraid (v3). But there is also no hint of: What am I going to do? How could God let this happen? It's so unfair. Saul's been a terrible king. I just want to do God's will. How can I figure this out?

b. Was the devil offering any bait to David to influence his behavior? We have to presume he was based on what's been discussed thus far. But David didn't take the bait. He responded: I choose to trust God (v3,11). Then he expressed his trust by praising God and His faithfulness.

1. v4--(I will trust) in God whose promises I extol (Harrison); v10--in God whose promises I commend, in the Lord whose assurances I praise (Harrison)

2. This word praise (v4,10) is HALAL. It means to shine, to make a show, to boast, shout. David proclaimed: I'm going to boast about God and His faithfulness.

c. It doesn't make sense to shut down the mental conversation and acknowledge God in the face of a trial but that's what David did. He refused the bait and closed down the wrestling match.

1. v4,11--This is not bigger than God. v7--They won't get away with this. You'll make things right. v8,9--You care for me. You'll defeat my enemies. v13--You've helped me before.

You won't fail me now.

2. All of these concepts come from God's Word which reveals God's character and His works. David didn't know what to do but he did not take the fiery darts of the enemy. Instead he chose to focus on God by boasting about Him and His goodness.

D. Conclusion: We still have more to say but consider these thoughts as we close this lesson.

1. This is not a technique or a formula to stop your immediate trouble. Responding to life's challenges with praise to God comes out of and is based on your view of reality.

2. Accurate knowledge from God's Word will change the way you see things. It will expose and break down the strongholds in your mind and help you recognize and resist Satan's fiery darts.

3. Eph 6:11-13--God's armor is more than just a verse from a devotional book. It's a complete body of information that changes the way you look at life. The greatest gift you can gift yourself is to become a consistent, systematic reader of the New Testament—cover to cover, over and over. It will make you unbeatable in the challenges of life. More next week.