



Satan's Deadly Trap – Part 3
Various Scripture
GCSP – 10/03/2009

God always has a plan. Regardless of what we think or believe, God always has a plan. Whether your life is seemingly in turmoil or whether the blessings of God are raining down on you in immeasurable fashion, God always has a plan. In the good times and the bad, God always has a plan.

And God's plans are perfectly designed, arranged, and carried out in your life if you will relinquish control to Him.

As we studied the life of Joseph last week, I mentioned that no man, no woman, no child, and no demon can thwart the plan of God for your life; but you can. You and you alone have the ability to thwart God's plan for your life. God will never force you to follow Him and He will never force you to accept His multiplied blessings in your life. That choice He leaves up to you. But if you are yielded to His will, and you are following Him, and you are enjoying the blessings He has in store for you, no one or no thing can stop it.

Unfortunately we have a tendency to doubt and we have a tendency to not believe when things go sour down here on earth. I have used the phrase many times before, "Did it ever occur to you that nothing ever occurs to God?" Brother Dick tells us often that God is never walking the floors of heaven wringing His hands over what is happening here on earth. God has never said, "Uh-oh" or even had the thought cross His mind, "What am I going to do now?"

God does not panic over anything. God doesn't look down on this earth and say to Jesus, "Jesus, Sally is 34-years old and still not married because Bill gossiped about her and ran Jim off. Are there any other eligible bachelors left on earth for Sally?" Or, "Jesus, Scott got laid off last week, what are we going to do? Are there any other jobs available in America for Scott?" Or, "Susie got into a serious argument with Jeff and she is considering walking out on him. Is there anything we can do to save this marriage?"

This just doesn't happen with God. He is in control and all of His plans are still in motion and absolutely nothing happens on this earth that alters His plans and His purposes. This needs to be the understanding we have and we need the mindset that nothing can or will happen to me that is outside of God's sight or His control.

Now I'm not perfect by any stretch, but God has somewhat instilled this attitude in me at a very early age. No matter what the situation I am faced with I either think or say out loud, "Oh well." Now there have been times when I have needed to take some action but didn't, so having an "Oh well" attitude is not always the answer, but God has been developing the discernment I need in these issues of life that require action; and in the mean time, having the "Oh well" attitude has served me well.

There are very few decisions in life that need to be made on the spot; there are some but they are few and far between. Living with an unhealthy sense of urgency and panic will usually get you in trouble. Let the peace of God bring calmness in your life instead.

I have based this sermon series on **Luke 17:1a** where Jesus says, "**It is impossible that no offences should come**" (NKJV). Jesus told them and He is telling us that as long as our lungs are breathing and our hearts are beating we will be offended on a regular and ongoing basis.

I have also told you that the majority of the offences in your life will come from those who are close to you, simply because you have a much higher expectation from them. If a stranger treats you badly the level of offence you will carry over that incident will be lighter and shorter in length than if your spouse or close brother in Christ treated you the exact same way.

I have showed you in **Matthew 24:10-12** that there is a progression that follows an offence. Offence, if left unchecked will lead to betrayal; and betrayal, if left unchecked will lead to hatred. Once hatred has taken root you will have now opened yourself up to rampant deception in your life. You won't be able to see things from the perspective of truth. You will only see what Satan wants you to see.

And lastly, I showed you in **2 Timothy 2:24-26** that you are in "**the snare of the devil**" and that you are "**held captive by him to do his will**" when you allow offence to linger in your hearts.

Last week I gave you the illustration of how they capture and kill monkeys in the bush country of Australia; the trappers simply tightly fasten a small cage-like container to a tree and place a banana inside. The opening of the cage is so small that the monkey must flatten out his or her hand to be able to reach inside. But once they grab the banana their hand is now in a fist and will not fit through the opening. Even when they see the danger of the trapper approaching with baseball bat in hand, the monkey will not let go of the banana. They are free at any time to escape before getting their skulls crushed by that bat but they refuse to let go of the banana.

This is the same self-inflicted trap we are in when we refuse to let go of the offences in our lives; and we saw a beautiful picture of how God eventually works all things out for good when we refuse to be trapped by offence through the account of Joseph's life. We hopefully learned how to deal with offences that come at the hands of brothers and those closest to us.

This week we will look at the life of David and learn how to deal with offences that come from those who have authority over us. That could mean parents, bosses, leaders in the church, and even pastors.

And before we turn to this account of David's life, allow me to show you a familiar verse: **1 Corinthians 10:13**. Paul says, "**No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and 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, so that you will be able to endure it**" (NASB).

Please notice God's Word says "**the way of escape**" not "**a way of escape.**" That's significant. God has seen exactly what you are dealing with and He has the exact way of escape for you specifically. And if you follow His way of escape, what may look like an utter disaster will turn into abject victory – if you keep yourself free from offence.

Let's look at one more passage before we turn to David's life. Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **2 Corinthians**.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6

Paul is not only teaching us how to engage in spiritual warfare but he is teaching us to avoid and tear down the strongholds that are so easily erected in our hearts. The word translated as "**fortresses**" (**v. 4**) in the NASB refers to these strongholds I mentioned. In the spiritual sense in which Paul is using this term he means a prison of the mind. For it is in our mind that offences take root and it is then in our mind that Satan sets his snare to take us captive to do his will.

We must be on guard for once a stronghold is in place they are difficult to take down. The strongholds in ancient cities were tall towers placed strategically about ten to twenty feet behind the inside of the city walls. From that vantage point the leaders of the army could survey the threat and shout out the appropriate orders to best protect the city. If the invading forces could somehow tear down the strongholds they would have a clear path to victory for they would have cut off the primary mode of communication.

So what are the strongholds that plague us? What is it that we must be on guard against? Paul tells us it is simply anything that is raised up against the knowledge of God. It is our thoughts that are contrary to or even raise questions of doubt about God's Word. Every time we allow the philosophies of the world to dictate our lives in any way, we are erecting a stronghold for the enemy to further combat the things of God.

In application for our current study, every time we allow an offence to linger in our hearts and every time we hold unforgiveness for any length of time, we are erecting a stronghold for Satan's use in our life. The longer that stronghold remains, the longer Satan has you in his captivity to do his will, which obviously means you will be in direct opposition to the will of God for your life.

Turn with me now in your Bibles to the Book of **1 Samuel**.

1 Samuel 16:11-13

The prophet Samuel anoints the young teenager David to be Israel's next king and as the oil runs down from David's head the Holy Spirit comes mightily upon young David; and it says the Spirit stayed with him from that day forward.

On this side of the Cross we may miss the importance of that statement, so let me remind you of the fact that the Holy Spirit came and went in the saints of the Old Testament. The very next verse in this chapter says, "**Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul...**" (**v. 14**). I cannot say for sure but David may be the only Old

Testament person to experience the gift of the Holy Spirit for the rest of his life; he is the only one of which this is said at least.

How would you like to live your life with the possibility of the Holy Spirit leaving you at any given moment based upon your obedience to God's Word? Some not only believe this to be the case but teach it. But that is a perversion of Scripture. Yes, we can choose to not walk by the Spirit as we should, but that in no way means the Spirit has departed from us – and I will cover this and much more in our sermon series on the Holy Spirit that will be coming sometime in the near future.

For now, just understand that this filling of God's Spirit in David for life is a very unusual occurrence.

As I alluded to, the Holy Spirit left King Saul and he was then invaded by an evil spirit (and as a side note, when **v. 14** says this evil spirit was from the Lord it simply means God allowed this evil spirit to possess Saul, not that God was the instigator of this happening). The king's servants figure that some soft and soothing music may be the answer for Saul's fits of rage brought on by this evil spirit, so they send for young David.

It is impossible to know how much time has elapsed since David's anointing, but regardless, armed with the knowledge that he has been anointed as the next king of Israel, David now finds himself in the palace. Not only does his skillful playing of the harp sooth the king's mind, **v. 21** tells us that Saul loves David and makes him his armor bearer. Saul then sends message to David's father to allow David to move into the palace, and it is so.

David sees the pieces of the puzzle beginning to fall into place as he now lives in the king's palace, eats at the king's table, and has found favor in the king's eyes.

Even though David lives in the palace, he still travels back and forth to tend his father's sheep at this time. On one of these occasions Jesse instructs David to go check on three of his older brothers who are in King Saul's army arrayed against the Philistines at a place called Socoh. And we all know the account of David and Goliath that takes place next.

After David kills Goliath the king is thrilled and now has David at his side as they rout the Philistines and return home. Word of the valiant efforts of young David reach the city even before Saul and David do, and they are thus greeted by a throng of women dancing and singing to the victorious soldiers. David again must be thinking that God's plan for his life is unfolding before his eyes; how great is this?

But then as they approach the words of the songs become clear: "**Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.**" From that day forward Saul viewed young David with suspicion and disdain, for he now knew that the only place David could go from there in the eyes of the people was to the throne.

Saul loved David and used David as long as it benefitted him, but now that in his mind David is a threat, he begins plotting for an opportunity to kill David. How quickly everything seemed to be falling apart. Fast forward a bit in the account, and even

though David is now the King's son-in-law, he is on the run from town to town and cave to cave. Saul is pursuing David, and a handful of men who are loyal to him, with 3,000 of his finest soldiers with one purpose: To kill David.

David has to be asking himself, "Why is this happening? Where is the plan of God in all of this?" David is completely shocked at what has happened. He doesn't understand how all of this could happen to him. He is desperately searching his mind and his heart for anything he has done to that has brought this on.

How hard is it on you when you are offended by someone in a position of authority over you, especially when we are talking about someone you love and has expressed their love toward you? Are you not seemingly imprisoned by your thoughts during these times?

The Sunday before I tendered my resignation at the last church I pastored, Connie and I sat in their quarterly business meeting and watched as one-by-one the people we had grown to love turned their backs on us. Only one man stood up for us that attended the meeting. When Connie and I got in the car to head home I turned to her and said, "It's over."

I kept trying to figure out what had happened. Everything had fallen into place over the previous 3-4 years to get me to where I believed God's plan for my life was in full motion. Now I am one week away from resigning, wondering how this Chicago kid ended up in a remote mountain valley, not knowing if anyone outside of our friend Bernie, and a few others outside that church, would even give us the time of day anymore. That church didn't pay me much, but what little they did pay was desperately needed. What went wrong? What did I do to cause this disastrous outcome?

One day, while David and his men were hiding in a cave from Saul and his army, the king steps into the cave to "**relieve himself**" as Scripture delicately puts it. David's tiny band of soldiers, see this as the opportunity of a lifetime to kill Saul before he kills them. But David only cuts the corner of Saul's robe off and waits.

Turn over a few chapters in your Bible with me to **chapter 24**.

1 Samuel 24:5-11; 16-17

For the time being, King Saul realizes that he is foolish to want David dead and both part in peace. In **verse 20**, Saul even declares that David will one day replace him as king of Israel, so once again all seems well and the plan of God is again moving forward in David's eyes.

A little time passes and Saul once again sets out to pursue and kill David.

1 Samuel 26:5-8

Once again, Saul is in David's hand, and Abishai is just waiting for the command. He has the spear, he has the mindset, and he has the opportunity to kill Saul. Abishai is poised and ready, just waiting for the word from David; but the word doesn't come. I can hear Abishai telling David, "Listen man, don't you remember just two chapters ago how Saul was trying to kill you? And he's going to try to do it again now after he wakes up! This is

a classic case of self defense; no court in the land will convict you. Now, come on, just give me the word."

Now beloved, let me make something clear here, Saul is not a good guy. In one of the chapters we skipped over he destroyed an entire village, including 85 priests of the Lord because they had helped David and his men by feeding them and giving them shelter.

There are two kinds of leaders, and let's apply it to the church by saying there are two kinds of ministers: There are those who love their ministry, or more appropriately their position in that ministry, and those who love God. Those who love their ministry will protect it regardless of the cost; those who love God won't worry because no one can take God from them.

Saul loved his ministry, or his position, not God.

It seems as if Abishai has some pretty compelling arguments for killing Saul:

- Saul is a murderer.
- Saul has an army of 3,000 out with the sole purpose to kill David.
- God has anointed David as king of Israel.
- God has put this entire army into a deep sleep so that they could walk right up to the king – why else would God do this?

All these reasons make sense and sound good, and if David was carrying an offence against Saul he could feel totally justified in giving Abishai the word.

1 Samuel 26:9-12

David again makes sure that Saul knows his life was spared even though he could have easily killed him, and once again Saul seemingly repents and they depart.

It would have been easier to take matters into his own hands; after all it is inevitable that David is going to be king. The nation is a mess under Saul's leadership and they desperately need a godly king, but David chooses to leave any matter of vengeance in God's hands.

How many Christians today have a heart like David's? We no longer use spears but we are adept at using our tongues aren't we? But beloved, we may as well be using spears and swords for **Proverbs 18:21** says, "**Death and life are in the power of the tongue...**"

John Bevere says in his book, *The Bait of Satan*, "*Churches split, families divide, marriages shatter, and love dies, crushed by an onslaught of words launched in hurt and frustration. Offended by friends, family, and leaders, we take aim with words sharpened by bitterness and anger.*"

Beloved, when you realize that nothing can come into your life without God allowing it, it really sets you free because anything you go through – anything – God will use as a stepping stone for your life if you respond in obedience.

I could have torn my previous church apart. I had made a few minor mistakes and had asked forgiveness for them. But for another year Connie and I were slandered and maligned, falsely accused of all manner of evil, and shunned by many. Ridiculous and unbiblical words were spoken and all of that could have been exposed. For the few of you here tonight that were appalled at all that did happen, it could have been immensely worse. But something inside of me, which I now know was the Holy Spirit, kept telling me to let it go.

And as I confessed two weeks ago, even though I realized I was still holding on to some of that hurt, God is the One who can and will handle things perfectly. Looking back I now see that the 18 months we spent at that other church was necessary in my development as a pastor and a preacher. Without that experience, Grace Church would never have been born. God's plan wasn't falling apart in my life it was being formed through the fire of refinement.

How can I hold onto offence when God used it to strengthen me for this? Do you know how much God has blessed Grace Church? Do you really see it? Do you know that we have a story to tell about God's faithfulness and provision that probably 99% of Christians never even get a whiff of? And do you know that all of this could have just been a pipe dream if Connie and I stood up for ourselves and fought back?

Now beloved, I don't say that as a matter of pride or for you to think more highly of us than you should, but this is the power of offence. I firmly believe that we would not be here in this building tonight, awaiting our debt-free building to go up across the street on our debt-free property, if Connie and I had chosen to defend ourselves rather than turn it over to God.

Now maybe God would have raised up another man to start this church, and maybe things would be right where they are now, but at the very least Connie and I would not be here; and who knows if we would even be in the ministry?

Let me say one more thing in closing about those in authority over you, who may offend, or should I say will offend, you at one time or another. The Bible is clear that God has ordained those who hold positions of leadership, whether in government or the church. This does not mean that all of them are godly men and women, just that God has placed them there for His purposes. So if God has placed them in these positions, isn't it also possible that God may have revealed things to them that He hasn't revealed to you? Isn't it possible that God at times leads them in directions He hasn't shown you?

This is no excuse or defense for sinful behavior, and Scripture is clear about how to deal with that, but it is something to think about the next time your boss or your pastor does something you don't like.

Francis Schaeffer said, *"You must not lose confidence in God because you lost confidence in your (leader). If our confidence in God had to depend upon our confidence in any human person, we would be on shifting sand."*

Let's pray.