

Msg #128 of Scripture Beneath The Surface

“How Many Lies Can Satan Tell?”

With Randy Smith

(269) 763-2114

Preparation Ministries, Inc

PO BOX 475 OLIVET, MI 49076

preparationministries@gmail.com

(Please feel free to call, or send messages)

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So, anyway, let's go on with today's message. Today I'd like to talk about influences. You know, we're influenced every day by many things. Whatever we receive into our minds every

day influences our everyday words and actions. God has designed us to be creatures that react to stimulation. We react to sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. These are our five physical senses, and they influence our everyday words and actions.

In the Garden of Eden, Eve was also subject to the influence from these five physical senses when Satan tempted her with his lies. Naturally, Satan's influence was not good influence, and Satan's influence caused her to begin to wonder if God's word was actually true or not. It might seem like such a little thing, but if you stop to think about it, Eve would never have sinned if Satan could not have planted a lie into her mind. Of course, we never completely escape temptation, but, God does limit the amount of temptation that Satan is able to present.

Now, let me ask you something. What do you think Eve should have done if the next day she had seen the serpent hanging from another tree? Would you suggest that she should go over to the serpent and strike up a conversation? Ha! Of course not. I'm sure you would be one of the first people to tell Eve to stay away from that silly snake. After all, as the old saying goes, once burned, twice shy. Sure, we go through life all the time subject to the influence of Satan's lies. However, for our own safety, we need to avoid Satan's lies whenever possible. If we subject ourselves constantly to Satan's temptations, then the influence that he brings into our minds will eventually overwhelm us, and the end result will be sin.

One of the questions that new Christians sometimes ask is, "how can I make sure I stay on the narrow path? I don't want to take any chances of losing my salvation now that I have it." Of course, there are several things which a Christian can do to safeguard their salvation. But, one of the most important things they can do to ensure their safety is to avoid evil influence whenever possible. In the book of Matthew, chapter 13, we have the parable of the sower of seed. Jesus was telling this parable concerning the seed which was sown on different kinds of soil. The part of this parable I'd like to zero in on is the part about seed which is sown outside of the good garden ground, where the roadside thorns and weeds grow up. The Bible doesn't say that the seed could not grow there, but rather that it does grow, but when it grows, the thorns also grow up around it. The result is that the thorns choke out the good seed. Let me read verse 22. It says, "Also, he that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the word; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful."

Now, notice that Jesus gives the interpretation as referring to a person who hears the word of God. This is the most important part. Jesus is talking about someone who hears and receives the gospel. It may be something brand-new for them, or it may be something they've known for a long time, and resisted for a long time. Or, they may have accepted the word in the past but have been backsliding for a long time. Either way, they finally receive the word of God, taking it into themselves. Now, the question is, how do we ensure that we don't lose our salvation once we have gained it. And, the answer is that we need to make certain that we avoid evil influence whenever possible. Jesus was trying to tell us that the thorns represent the influence from the world that comes from the things around us, and the people around us.

God allows us to be tempted, but the Bible makes it clear that we are never given more than we are able to bear. God knows how much temptation we can stand. He also knows how much evil influence we can process in our minds without being overwhelmed. Sometimes Christians make the mistake of thinking they can put themselves in the place of evil influence and that God will keep them from being overwhelmed. But although the Scripture says that God will not give us more than we are able, it never said that we humans would not give ourselves more than we are able. That's one of the biggest mistakes Christians make. We put ourselves into places of great evil influence, where the lies of Satan are allowed to come in freely. Then, when we finally stumble and fall into temptation, we turn around and blame God for giving us more than we were able to bear. But, it's not God's fault when this happens. It's our own fault for putting ourselves in jeopardy.

So, how many lies can Satan tell? As many as you will let him. Just as it would be pretty silly for Eve to look around in the Garden of Eden for the serpent so that he could tell her some more lies, it's pretty silly for Christians to go looking for trouble, too. Your mind is susceptible to outside influence. Whatever you let into your mind has to be processed by your brain. Then, when you overload your brain, it becomes confused. All day long people allow their minds to be influenced by good things and bad things, and by good people and by not such good people.

Let's take a look at the parable of the sower of the seed again. Matthew 13:22 said that one of the things that would destroy the seed was the cares of this present life. For new Christians, it is a new life they're living. But there is a great temptation to go back to the every day comfortable things that we have known for so long. It's a great temptation to go back to the current friendships we had, and expect our old friends and acquaintances to embrace our new Christianity. I had a close friend once who got saved shortly after I did, but continued to hang around with some former friends of his who were not saved. I warned him about the influence from the unsaved friends, but he shrugged it off, saying that God would protect him from the evil. About a month later my friend came back to me and said, "you were right. It is too dangerous to hang around with non-Christians. I didn't think it would bother me. I thought I was stronger than that. But after a little while I found myself talking like them, and cussing like them, and laughing at their jokes."

You know, it's not easy being a Christian. Actually, it's the hardest job in the world. Sure, our strength is in Jesus Christ, but we are also subject to that wily devil who has more tricks up his sleeve than a magician. But we can protect ourselves to a great extent if we will look for the opportunity to protect our eyes and ears from influence that would destroy God's spirit within us. You yourself know what you were like before you were saved. Now, think about it. Were you a good influence on those people around you? If you knew anyone who was a Christian, were you a good encouragement to them? Now, seriously. Before you were a Christian, were you a help or a hindrance to others around you? And of course, you know the answer to that as well as anyone. It works the same way with the shoe on the other foot. If you're hanging around the same people that you hung around with before you were saved, your chances of maintaining a good consistent Christian lifestyle are not that good.

Now, consider this. One of the major pitfalls of new Christians is to think that they are going to go back and save their former friends and acquaintances. This seems to be in line with scripture for spreading the gospel. But, I want you to think about something. When God calls you to be a Christian, he does not call you directly into the ministry. When you are a new Christian, you are a baby. Before you can help someone else learn how to walk, you've got to learn how to walk yourself. Before you can feed other people the meat of God's word, you've got to first get yourself past the milk of the word. For a new Christian, the most important thing is to grow strong. In order to grow up to be a strong Christian, you've got to make sure that this seed that was planted in you has good ground in which to grow. You've got to make sure that the soil you are growing in is soil that is good and deep. You've got to water the seed that was planted in you with more water of the word.

Think of it this way. If you wanted an apple tree in your backyard, and you went down to the local nursery and purchased a young apple tree and brought it home, you would be thinking about all the good apples that you would get some day from that tree. Well, what do you think would happen if you brought the tree home, took it to the back porch, whirled it around your head a couple of times, and slung it out into the middle of the backyard, and just let it lay there to see how it would grow? That would be pretty silly wouldn't it? What's the chances of that apple tree actually growing up and bearing fruit? What you're going to have to do is dig a hole where you want the tree, then fill that hole partially up with good rich soil. Then, plant the tree in it. Fill the hole up the rest of the way and tamp the soil down firmly. Then you're going to water that tree. If necessary you will stake the tree with wires to keep it from tipping over. You're also going to spray it as necessary to protect it from insects. You might wrap the trunk, or fence around it, in order to protect it from animals.

Now, think about it. If you invest 50 bucks into an apple tree, you wouldn't want to lose your investment. How much more is your salvation worth? Isn't it worth taking as many precautions as possible to safeguard it? The salvation that Jesus gave you is the most precious thing that you can have, because it is eternal life. There is nothing on this earth that can compare in value. You wouldn't let someone come along and harm your apple tree, would you? Then why would you allow someone to come along and cause harm to your most precious possession?

You know, of all things on earth, there is nothing that will be more instrumental concerning your own salvation more than you yourself. The decisions you make will determine who and what will influence you. If you want to preserve your salvation, then you don't need to spend your time with other people who reject Jesus Christ as Lord. Leave that for a later date when you have matured in the faith and are strong enough to stand against the temptations. Sure, you may still have to work with people you worked with before, but there's nothing in the Bible that says you still have to play with the same people you played with before. Guard yourself. Take care of yourself. Watch. Read your Bible. Listen to sermons. Pray. And whatever you learn, put it into practice the best you can. I know that sometimes you may be in a situation, such as with an unsaved spouse, where you have little choice in the matter of who you fellowship with. In this situation you will trust God to help you, and he will. But if you have choices, then you must

make good choices. God will not give you more than you are able to bear, but if you give yourself more than you are able to bear, then instead of God protecting you, he will have to be bailing you out of trouble all the time.

In the parable of the sower of the seed, we read of this seed being sown on different kinds of soil. But actually, you are not just one seed that was planted, but you are also the sower of seed. Every day you need to sew more of that good seed into good soil. This is for yourself, not others. You need to constantly sow the word of God in good soil so that you might be a garden that bears much fruit. To do this, you have to set priorities for yourself. You're going to have to make time for God. You can only do that by taking time away from something else. We are 24-7 creatures. 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In order to have time for God, you're going to have to create it. Let me give you a personal example for this.

Many, many years ago, I was a struggling new Christian. And, like many Christians I was having difficulty keeping my mind focused on reading my Bible. I would read a few verses and my mind would trail off onto other things. Then I would shake my head, take a deep breath, and start reading again. Three or four verses later my mind had trailed off again. I would get up from the table and walk around the house. As I entered the living room I would hear whatever current program was on the TV. I would sit down and watch the TV program, thinking that when the program was over I would return to my Bible reading. I figured I would be refreshed by that time. When the program was over I would go back to my Bible and read a few verses until my mind trailed off into oblivion, and then I would get up and wander back into the living room and watch some more TV. Finally, God gave me some insight, and so I changed my angle of attack. What I did was to determine that I would read my Bible for an hour, and during that time I would not allow myself to do anything else. I wouldn't let myself watch TV, I wouldn't let myself get something to eat, I wouldn't go outside, nothing. So here's the way it went. I would start reading my Bible until my mind fuzzed out. Then I would get up and walk around, but not allowing myself to eat, watch TV, or become involved in anything else. What actually happened was that I would get bored with walking around the house. I wouldn't let myself do anything else, and I was bored with just walking around, so eventually I would set back down at the table and read some more of my Bible.

Basically, I read my Bible so I wouldn't be bored. But what it actually did was to bring me back to God's word over and over again until I got used to reading my Bible, and until my mind eventually was able to focus on the word of God more consistently. The TV was there, and the refrigerator was still there, and there was still the opportunity for outside activities, but when I refused to give my time up to the other things, the time for my Bible reading won out. I needed the proper influence in order to continue to grow as a new Christian. The refrigerator didn't have the kind of food I needed for spiritual growth, and the TV presented a spirit far different than God's Holy Spirit. If you want more of God, and you want to take a firm hold on eternal life, then the best thing I can suggest to you is to take whatever steps necessary to stop the worldly influence that comes into your mind through your eyes and ears. You don't have to listen to

Satan's lies. He never runs out of lies, and you can become overwhelmed long before he is ready to give up.

Let me give you a little insight. Whether you realize it or not, Satan has set up a world social system. This system is nothing like God's system. It's not based on heavenly things, but is based on earthly things. Satan's world social system is based on the physical aspects of the human body, and the emotional aspects which affect it. Satan does not want you to be a born-again spirit being in Jesus Christ. He wants you to be focused on everything in your fleshly environment. Your fleshly environment is the carnal environment. It is the environment of natural man instead of spiritual man. Satan wants you to stimulate your flesh, but he does not want you to stimulate your spirit. He wants your flesh to grow fat, and your spirit man to grow lean.

God has allowed Satan to establish a strong world social system in these last days. It is a diabolical system, and more deceptive than practically every person in the world realizes, including Christians. In fact, Christians seem to be more deceived than those who are unsaved. The unsaved are blind concerning the greatness of God and his son Jesus, but Christians are blind concerning the diabolical influence which opposes righteousness.

If you are a new Christian, or have recently re-dedicated your life to Christ, then one of the greatest dangers facing you is the continual bombardment of Satan's lies coming through the news and entertainment media. Books and magazines are written to circumvent the laws of righteousness, and television and movies flaunt wickedness to the max. I have said this many times, and I will say it again. The television programs and movies are Satan's greatest deceptive tool in the history of this world. Through the medium of news and entertainment, the people of Earth are bombarded with Satan's lies. His world social system is firmly in place, and it is subtly undermining today's Christian church. Few Christians recognize the diabolical influence of television and movies, but they are the very foundation for distribution of Satan's lies throughout the world. If you have just made a decision to serve Jesus with your whole heart, then the best thing you can do is to rid your home of these devilish devices. And yes, you may think I am being an extremist. And do you know what? You are absolutely right. My Christianity is extreme. And, I encourage you to make your Christianity extreme also.