

# The Bait of Satan

## Lesson #6

**Luke 17:1, Acts 24:16**

### Escaping the Trap—Revenge

The Greek word in Acts 24:16 for *exercise* is *askeo*. Vine's Expository Dictionary defines *exercise* as "to take pains, endeavor, exercise by training or discipline."

Sometimes others offend us, and it is not hard to forgive. We have exercised our hearts so they are in condition to handle the offense; therefore, no injury or permanent damage results.

Some offenses will be more challenging than those for which we've been trained. This extra strain may cause a wound or injury after which we will have to exercise spiritually to be free and healed again. But the result will be worth the effort.

### Maturing Through Hardships

We grow in the tough times, not the easy times. Hard places will always come in our journey with the Lord. We cannot escape them, but need to face them for they are part of the process of becoming perfect in Him. If you choose to run from them, you will seriously hinder your growth.

As you overcome different obstacles, you become stronger and more compassionate. You will fall more in love with Jesus. If you have come out of hardships and do not feel this way, you have probably not recovered from the offense. Recovery is your choice. Some people get hurt and never recover. As cruel as this may sound, it was their choice.

Maturity does not come easily. If it did all would attain it. Few reach this level of life because of the resistance they face. There's resistance because

the course of our society is not godly, but selfish. As a result, to enter into the maturity of Christ there will be hardships that come from standing against the flow of selfishness.

Paul had returned to three cities where he birthed churches. His purpose was to strengthen the souls of the disciples. However, it is interesting to see how he strengthened them. He encouraged them by:...*exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."* Acts 14:21-22.

He did not promise them a life of ease. He did not promise them success according to the world's standards. He showed them that if they were going to finish their course with joy they were going to meet up with much resistance which he called tribulation.

If you are rowing on a river against the current, you will have to row continuously in order to progress against the flow of the river. If you stop rowing and relax, you will eventually flow with the current. Even so, when we are determined to go God's way we will meet up with many tribulations. The trials will all show the answer to one main question. Are you going to look out for yourself as the world does, or are you going to live a self-denied life?

Peter put it so well: *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.* I Peter 4:12-13

Notice that he compares the extent of suffering to the extent of rejoicing. How can you rejoice to that extent? When His glory is revealed, you will be glorified with Him. This glorifying is to the degree that you allow Him to perfect His character within you. So don't look at the offense. Look at the coming glory. Hallelujah!

## **Reconciliation**

*You have heard that it was said to those of old, "You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment" But I say to you that*

*whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, "Raca!" shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, "You fool!" shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.* Matthew 5:21-24

Jesus continues this comparison throughout this portion of His message. First He quotes the law that regulates our outward actions. Then He shows its fulfillment by bringing it into the heart. So in God's eyes a murderer is not limited to the one who commits murder; he is also the one who hates his brother. What you are in your heart is how you really are!

Jesus clearly delineates the consequences of offense in this portion of His sermon. He illustrates the severity of holding anger or bitter offense. If one is angry with his brother without a cause, he is in danger of judgment. He is in danger of the council if that anger bears fruit and he calls his brother "Raca!"

The word *raca* means "empty-headed," or fool. It was a term of reproach used among the Jews in the time of Christ. If that anger reaches the point where he calls a brother a fool, he is in danger of hell. The word *fool* means to be godless. The fool says in his heart there is no God (see Psalm 14:1). In those days to call a brother a fool was quite a serious accusation. No one would say such a thing unless the anger they bore had turned to hatred. Today it would be comparable to telling a brother, "Go to hell," and meaning it.

Jesus was showing them that not dealing with anger can lead to hatred. Hatred not dealt with would put them in danger of hell. Then He said that if they remembered their brother was offended with them, they were to make it top priority to find him and seek to be reconciled.

Why should we seek with such urgency to be reconciled—for our sake or for our brother's sake? We should go for his sake that we might be a catalyst to help him out of the offense. Even if we are not offended with

him, the love of God does not let him remain angry without attempting to reach out and restore. We may have done nothing wrong. Right or wrong doesn't matter. It is more important for us to help this stumbling brother than to prove ourselves correct.

### **Asking forgiveness of one who is offended**

The apostle Paul said: *Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.* Romans 14:19

This shows us how to approach a person we have offended. If we go with an attitude of frustration we will not promote peace. We will only make it difficult for the one who is hurt.

### **Approaching someone who has offended you**

Now that we have discussed what to do when we offend our brother, let's consider what to do if our brother offends us. *Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.* Matthew 18:15

Many people apply this scripture verse in a different attitude from the one Jesus was intending. If they have been hurt, they will go and confront the offender in a spirit of revenge and anger.

But they are missing the whole reason Jesus instructed us to go to one another. It is not for condemnation but for reconciliation. He does not want us to tell our brother how rotten he has been to us. We are to go to remove the breach preventing the restoration of our relationship.

*Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.*

II Corinthians 5:18-20

The word of reconciliation begins on the common ground that we all have sinned against God. We do not desire reconciliation or salvation unless we know there is a separation.

Since we are to imitate God (Eph. 5:1), we are to extend reconciliation to a brother who sins against us. Jesus established this pattern: Go to him and show him his sin, not to condemn him but to remove anything that lies between the two of you and thus be reconciled and restored.

What happens if we have the right attitude and attempt to reconcile with someone who has sinned against us, but he or she won't listen? *But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that "by the mouth of two witnesses every word may be established." And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.* Matthew 18:16-17

### **The bottom line**

If we keep the love of God as our motivation, we will not fail. Love never fails. When we love others the way Jesus loves us, we will be free even if the other person chooses not to be reconciled to us. Look carefully at the following scripture verse. God's wisdom is available for all situations. *If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.* Romans 12:18

He says, "If it is possible..." because there are times when others will refuse to be at peace with us. Or there may be those who conditions for reconciliation would compromise our relationship with the Lord. In either case it is not possible to restore that relationship.

God is this way with mankind. He is not willing that any should perish. But He will not compromise truth for a relationship. He seeks reconciliation with true commitment, not on superficial terms. This develops a bond of love that no evil can sever. He has laid His life down for us. We can only do likewise.

Remember that the bottom line is the love of God. It never fails, never fades, and never comes to an end. It seeks not its own. It is not easily offended (I Corinthians 13:5)

The love of God is the key to freedom from the baited trap of offense. This must be an abounding love, a love that continually grows and is strengthened in our hearts.

So many in our society today are deceived by a superficial love, a love that talks but does not act. The love that will keep us from stumbling lays down its life selflessly—even for the good of an enemy. When we walk in this kind of love, we cannot be seduced into taking the bait of Satan.