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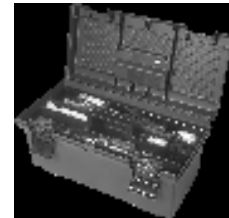
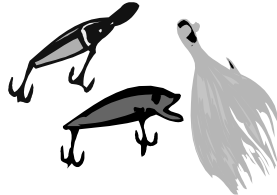
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SATAN'S TACKLE BOX

By Jeff Gay

Jesus called out, "Come along with me and I will show you how to fish for the souls of men!" (Mt. 4:19, Living Bible).



In the above passage, Jesus is calling disciples to His side and comparing their upcoming work to fishing for men's souls. Peter and Andrew easily understood this analogy for they were fishermen by trade. They would fish among the waters of men's free will. They would spread the Good News and men could freely choose salvation and jump into the boat themselves; no hooks or nets needed. They would call men to be all God had created them to be. They could enjoy the fellowship that had been lost in the Garden of Eden. An eternity of peace in God's aquarium (Heaven).

Satan has likewise called his minions to be fishers of men! However, the waters in which they fish are the brackish backwaters of men's baser instincts. They have nothing of eternal value to offer, so, in some respects, their job is more difficult. They also must appeal to man's free will, for they have no power to impose choice. The difference is that they must use hooks and nets to snag and ensnare, for all they offer is temporary excitement, power, and pleasure, but nothing of eternal spiritual value.

Satan has stocked their devilish tackle boxes with every imaginable lure, hand-crafted with meticulous care for its intended victim. There is at least one with your name on it (if you are a particularly discerning and devout Christian, there may be several waiting for you). "Everyone is put to the test by being attracted and seduced by that person's own wrong desire" (James 1:14, NJB). James warns us that the ungodly desires we have are the very ones by which we will be tested. Once we nibble at the bait, we are in danger of being hooked. From there, it's cleaned, filleted, and into the frying pan (hellfire) for a crispy coating.

We must always seek knowledge, for knowledge is power. The Bible admonishes us, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2Corinthians 2:11, KJV). Once we understand the methods by which Satan attempts to lure us out of Jesus' light into his (Satan's) darkness, we will be better equipped to withstand the relentless temptations his tireless workers place in our paths.

Our first understanding must be that Satan seeks our total and utter destruction. “The thief (Satan) comes only to steal and kill and destroy...” (John 10:10, RSV). He cannot stand that anyone would worship God instead of him and his counterfeit kingdom. Peter warns us in his first letter, “Be careful--watch out for attacks from Satan, your great enemy. He prowls around like a hungry, roaring lion, looking for some victim to tear apart” (1Peter 5:8, LVB). Is there any doubt that Satan is hunting you, desiring to tear you limb from limb and leave your bloody carcass to bake under the noonday sun? **He is relentless, untiring, and he doesn't play fair!**

Secondly, we must realize that all of Satan's tactics stem from untruth. Beware, though, many times he mixes in just enough truth that it sounds believable. If it's not all truth, if it doesn't line up with Scripture, it's not from God! In speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus described Satan's followers in this way, “For you are the children of your father the Devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning and has always hated the truth. There is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44, NLT). **He cannot help but lie: it is his nature.** With this groundwork laid, let us more closely examine some of Satan's techniques and the lures in his well-stocked tackle box.

The third thing we must know is that **Satan is very patient.** He will keep coming back, sometimes with the same lure, sometimes with a different one. Just as fish don't always bite on the same bait, so it is with us. Our desires, lusts, and weaknesses vary over time and Satan is always looking for an open door. Just because we have resisted and overcome one time or in one area does not mean we can let our guard down. We must be ever alert for the next temptation cast in our direction.

A CLOSER LOOK

Just as we must use different approaches as we angle for different species of fish, so it is as Satan's demons trawl for men's souls. For newer Christians living just below the surface, he might select a pretty, lightweight fly and deftly flit it across the surface of the water. A pretty, delectable morsel of little substance. For the more established believer, he might select a lure that involves multiple attractions of sight, sound, and motion. For the solid, long-time Christian living in the deep waters, a hook baited with a tasty worm is allowed to just hang there (patience is the key for these fish). Technique is equally as important as the selection of lure or bait.

Space prohibits a detailed exploration of each lure, but we will touch on ten of them so that an awareness can be developed. We must keep in mind that all these lures are used to deceive us and mislead us from the path of righteousness. Satan will use every lie he can dream up to keep us from fellowship with God and Jesus. He will tempt us and try to lead us into sin. After we examine some of the lures he uses, we look at the consequences of the choices we make, and the defenses available to us.

John writes in his first epistle, “For the world offers only the lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions. These are not from the Father. They are from this evil world” (1Jn. 2:16, NLB). All the lures in Satan's arsenal spring from two Master Lures; **Greed** and **Fear**. Virtually all sin is grounded in one or the other of these Master Lures. The **Greed** lures appeal largely to the physical senses and involve sensual pleasures (though, in many cases, they are not lacking in psychological appeal, as well). The **Fear** lures are largely psychological (or emotional) and internal, often with little basis in reality.

THE LURES

LURE # 1 - Rationalization: Rationalization is the process of making what is wrong seem right. It is commonplace in today's world. "Nothing is my fault. I didn't do anything wrong. If Johnny hadn't done such and such, I wouldn't have done what I did." Most people have no desire to take responsibility for their own actions, therefore, they can do whatever they desire, if they can convince themselves that it is right. Is Satan whispering this non-logic in your ear, tempting you to justify actions which you know are contrary to God's Word?

LURE # 2 - God doesn't (couldn't) love you: A lie straight from the pit of hell. Satan will try to convince you that since you sinned, you have no standing with God, there is no way He could love you. If you make one little mistake, God is through with you. Wrong! "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16, RSV). "But if we confess our sins to him, he can be depended on to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong. [And it is perfectly proper for God to do this for us because Christ died to wash away our sins.]" (1Jn. 1:9, LVB).

Lure # 3 - Justification by works (busy-ness): Satan will try to convince you that you must work to earn your salvation (or God's love). He will tell you that if you don't work hard enough, you will lose your standing before God. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God -- not because of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9, RSV). We are not saved **by** works. We are saved **for** works. In other words, we are saved through faith, but then we work because we love God and desire to further His Kingdom. Be careful that you don't get so involved in "good works" activities that you neglect worship and fellowship.

Lure # 4 - Guilt: Satan will tell you how badly you should feel for the way you have acted. The fact is, we should feel guilty when we sin, that's the way God designed us. The mistake Satan seeks to lure us into is sitting around and stewing in our guilt. Get on your knees, repent, and seek forgiveness. You don't have to carry the guilt alone, give it over to Jesus, then move forward.

Lure # 5 - Shame: Shame is a close relative of guilt. "You should be ashamed of yourself; what would people think?" Satan uses this avenue to close us off from fellowship with God and other believers. Once he has us isolated, he will really get down to work. Don't fall for this lure, you need fellowship and support to survive.

Lure # 6 - Disunity: Satan is always seeking to spread disunity among the body of Christ. He might choose any of a number of lures; pride, gossip, envy, fear, greed, false doctrine. One doesn't have to look far to find that disunity is spreading at an alarming rate. "But, dear brothers, I beg you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let there be real harmony so that there won't be splits in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose." (1Cor. 1:10, LVB).

Lure # 7 - Greed: Greed is a Master Lure and comes in many forms. It is simply defined as wanting more (many times, more than you need) or wanting what isn't yours (envy). It is the driving force behind many wars and a great majority of crimes. It takes many subtler forms as well, such as envy, covetousness, jealousy, gluttony, fashion slave, keeping up with the Joneses. "For the love of money is the first step toward all kinds of sin. Some people have even turned away from God because of their love for it, and as a result have pierced themselves with many sorrows." (1Ti. 6:10, LVB). We might go even further and say

that when we love anything more than we love God, it is rooted in evil.

Lure # 8 - Lust: Sexual lust is a powerful lure. It appeals to the strongest physical drive (other than hunger) many of us possess. It is exquisitely pleasurable. Satan, through the modern media, has conveniently blurred the line between love and sex; convincing people that jumping in bed is the same as love. In this way, people are devalued to the point of being throwaways. Use them and trash them when they no longer suit you. Then, there are the perverse lusts, child molestation, homosexuality, bestiality, sadomasochism, pornography, strip bars, and worse which the media is now promoting as "alternative lifestyles." "Therefore put to death your earthward inclinations - fornication, impurity, sensual passion, unholy desire, and all greed, for that is a form of idolatry." (Col. 3:5, WEY)

Lure # 9 - Gossip: We have all fallen for this lure. It is so common, so insidious, and so innocent, that most of us partake of it daily without even giving it a second thought. Before we engage our mouth in this idle pastime, consider the following story about Socrates (an ancient Greek philosopher):

In ancient Greece, Socrates was reputed to hold knowledge in high esteem. One day an acquaintance met the great philosopher and said, "Do you know what I just heard about your friend?"

"Hold on a minute," Socrates replied. "Before telling me anything I'd like you to pass a little test. It's called the **Triple Filter Test**."

"Triple filter?"

"That's right," Socrates continued. "Before you talk to me about my friend, it might be a good idea to take a moment and filter what you're going to say. That's why I call it the triple filter test.

The first filter is **Truth**. Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to tell me is true?"

"No," the man said, "actually I just heard about it and..."

"All right," said Socrates. "So you don't really know if it's true or not. Now let's try the second filter, the filter of **Goodness**. Is what you are about to tell me about my friend something good?"

"No, on the contrary..."

"So," Socrates continued, "you want to tell me something bad about him, but you're not certain it's true. You may still pass the test though, because there's one filter left: the filter of **Usefulness**. Is what you want to tell me about my friend going to be useful to me?"

"No, not really."

"Well," concluded Socrates, "if what you want to tell me is neither true nor good nor even useful, why tell it to me at all?"

We would do well to follow this sage advice in all our conversations; is it **true, good, and useful**? "A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow." (Prov. 25:18, RSV)

Lure # 10 - Fear: FEAR – False Evidence Appearing Real. There are many types of fear, but the most common may be the fear of what other people think of us. The fact is that most people are too busy worrying about what other people think about them to think about you. Most people spend most of their time (up to 95%) thinking about themselves. Do what is right in God's sight and let him be your Vindicator. "...you have vindicated me; you have endorsed my work, declaring from your throne that it is good." (Ps. 9:4, LVB).

The Double-Baited Lure of Confusion and Distrust: Many times, Satan will use his lures on others to stir up confusion and distrust to harass and distract God's servants:

"In Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went together to the synagogue and preached with such power that a great number of both Jews and Gentiles believed. But the Jews who spurned God's message **stirred up distrust among the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas, saying all sorts of evil things about them.** The apostles stayed there a long time, preaching boldly about the grace of the Lord. The Lord proved their message was true by giving them power to do miraculous signs and wonders. But the people of the city were divided in their opinion about them. Some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. A mob of Gentiles and Jews, along with their leaders, decided to attack and stone them. When the apostles learned of it, they fled for their lives." (Acts 14:2-6, NLT).

CONSEQUENCES

It is likely that we will all fall prey to temptation; it is a common human failing. James says, "For we all make many mistakes..." (Jas. 3:2, RSV). Temptation goes through a predictable cycle; desire, temptation, sin, and death. "...but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death." (Jas. 1:14-15, RSV). The good news is that we can repent when we fall into sin and learn from our error. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1Jn. 1:9, RSV). Don't believe Satan's lie that once you have sinned, you are lost forever! **Jesus died for you!**

DEFENSES

Our first line of defense is the **Bible**, God's Holy and Inspired Word. We must know and understand the Bible if we are to be able to discern Satan's lies for what they are. Secondly, **pray** always in all circumstances. Prayer and fellowship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit will strengthen you in all aspects of your daily walk and equip you to withstand Satan's temptation. Your third defense is **fellowship** with other believers, preferably in a local church, prison chapel, or regular Bible study. Make yourself accountable to the Body of Christ. Seek a mentor or accountability partner if you are particularly susceptible to a specific temptation. Lastly, **draw lines** in your life. Make decisions before you are faced with temptation. For example, many succumb to temptation while under the influence of alcohol. It might be wise to draw a line that says I will not drink alcohol. Perhaps certain types of entertainment incite your sinful desires (such as violence or lust). If you determine ahead of time not to expose yourself to these triggers, you have a much greater chance passing the temptation by. Jesus endured all the temptations Satan threw at him (see Mt. 4:1-11) by using many of these principles.

The basics (as adapted from the Life Application Bible): 1) Be aware; 2) Resist immediately, don't delay, don't dabble; 3) Have a plan (draw lines); 4) There are no harmless sins; 5) Temptation will strike at unlikely times and places; 6) Don't be surprised; 7) Don't nibble, no matter how tasty or attractive the bait might be. We are all tempted. Being tempted **is not** a sin. Giving into temptation **is** a sin. Consider this: If you are being tempted, you are probably on the right path! Don't be lured away. God will give you the strength to endure the temptation and He will provide an escape route. "But remember this--the wrong desires that come into your life aren't anything new and different. Many others have faced exactly the same problems before you. And no temptation is irresistible. You can trust God to keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it, for he has promised this and will do what he says. He will show you how to escape temptation's power so that you can bear up patiently against it." (1Cor. 10:13, LVB).

Remember the words of Paul, in his letter to the Romans, "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the

mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him” (Rom. 12:1-3, RSV).

PRAYER

Thank you, Heavenly Father, I now more clearly understand how Satan is trying to lure me into temptation and break my fellowship with You. Give me the discernment and wisdom to recognize his lures when he casts them my way. Forgive me for the times I have fallen into temptation and help me to learn to avoid the lures from Satan’s Tackle Box in the future. I invite the Holy Spirit to be my Guide and Counselor and I pray that I may hear His voice clearly as he warns me of impending traps laid by Satan’s workers. Help me to draw boundary lines of safety in my life to protect myself and my loved ones. I pray in Jesus’ Mighty Name. Amen.

For additional study: Rom. 7:7-25; Gen. 3:1-7; Mt. 4:1-11; 1Ki. 11:1-13; Jas. 1:12-18; Heb. 4:15-16; Gen. 39:6-12; Prov. 1:10-14; Dan. 1:8; Mt. 6:13; Titus 2:11-12; Ps. 1:1; 1Cor 10:13.