

Zahakiel: Let's begin with an opening prayer.

Dear Father in Heaven, We give you thanks for this week's many blessings, which have attended us in all of our labors. We ask you now to bless us in this time of rest, in this time of fellowship, and that each will receive the gift from your Throne that you have prepared from the beginning of the Creation. This we ask in Yahshua's sacred name. Amen.

Barb: Amen

Elyna: Amen.

Adriel777: Amen

daphna: Amen

Nattie: Amen.

Zahakiel: Happy Sabbath to everyone. This is the third part of the "Subtle Snares of Satan" study. Last time we met, we spent some of the meeting reviewing the previous Seven Snares from the original study, and then the rest of it looking at one of the more widespread and truthful-sounding mental and spiritual traps, the idea that "Nobody is perfect."

This week, we are going to look at two more snares, and they will be two that are fairly close together in core concept, these being "Wait," and "I will think about it." Both of these snares are delaying tactics. They are the way that the flesh avoids the call to step into the light to be examined and cleansed, for the flesh loves concealment, darkness, and ignorance, as in these things its nature can flourish and there is no pressure (as the flesh perceives it) to change.

Yah desires His people completely clean, polished like fine gold, and because gold is pulled from the earth, it is often covered with dirt and mixed with impurities. In order to make gold suitable for use, it must be cleaned – all the "obvious" dirt that clings to the outside must be washed away – and then it must be purified in the furnace to remove the hidden, internal imperfections. It must be heated until it melts, until it becomes able to change its shape, and the heat of this process also causes the other substances with which it is mixed to either sink to the bottom or rise to the surface.

Several times the Bible speaks of the sanctification process in terms that call to mind the refinement of metal, and we can easily see the parallels. Unlike actual metal, however, the "metal" of the soul must be presented to the Refiner willingly and this is not natural. In fact, the act of turning to Yahweh and denying one's flesh is so unnatural that some forms of Christianity do not believe it is possible at all. "You must be destined for Heaven from the beginning," the belief goes, "because natural man can never seek God." This doctrine is, in its basic statement of fact, quite true... and it has Scriptural support.

We read, "Yahweh looked down from Heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek the Almighty One. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Psalm 14:2, 3)

If we were to stop reading there, we would have to admit that it is entirely impossible to fulfill Yah's desire for human beings, either as a group or individually. And yet, "There were they [the fools and evil-doers] in great fear, for Elohim is in the generation of the righteous. Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because Yahweh is his Refuge." (Verses 5, 6)

There are righteous upon the earth, for Yah is with them, and the poor may take refuge in Him. Furthermore, very often in the Word we are told, "Seek Yahweh and His strength; seek His face continually." (1Ch 16:11)

"When thou sadist, 'Seek ye my Face,' my heart said unto thee, 'Thy face, Yahweh, will I seek.'" (Psa 27:8)

"For thus saith Yahweh unto the House of Israel, 'Seek ye Me, and ye shall live.'" (Amos 5:4)

Here we have history, sacred song, and plainly spoken prophetic doctrine indicating that the duty and salvation of man is to seek Yah. These verses were not written for the "chosen few," for if they were destined for Heaven anyway, they would not need any encouragement to do what they had been created in their nature to do.

Salvation is for "everyone that believeth," as the Scriptures tell us, (Rom 1:16) and it is written of Christ, "The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe." (John 1:7)

How, then, do we reconcile these two apparently conflicting ideas?

Ezekiel gives us the answer, as he speaks on behalf of the Creator, saying, "For thus saith Adonai Yahweh, 'Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out.'" (Ezek. 34:11)

It is possible to seek Yah's face, because – and only because – He has set it upon Himself to seek us out. We can love Him, and one another, because He first loved us, as 1 John 4:19 states the same idea. This is the essence of the concept called "Grace." It is unmerited, un-earned, undeserved, favor. It is the gift of faith that anyone may accept, unnatural as it is, un-flesh-like as it is, because Yah's love for us calls to us, even out of the darkness, even in the sinful flesh, to desire holiness in the innermost parts of the soul. Miracles are when Yah performs the impossible, and any soul that seeks Yah is the recipient of the greatest of miracles, seeing and desiring the Father's love.

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: The flesh strives against this process. It seeks to discourage, deceive, and distract. When it cannot do any of these things, it seeks to delay – and here is where the snares we are examining tonight come in.

"Given enough time," Satan reasons, "nobody will remain faithful to Yahweh. There will be many opportunities to take the seeker completely out of the way." If only he can prevent the soul from coming to Yah now, at the moment when the conscience is most awakened, then the battle is essentially won.

The two arrows in his quiver to prevent conversion from taking place when all else fails are called "Wait" and "I will think about it," which is sometimes phrased among those who are more familiar with the way that Christians speak, "I will pray about it."

Even before I became a Creation Seventh Day Adventist I had come to realize the dangers of these two attacks. I recall as a new SDA while I was still in high school, I used to speak to my friends about my newfound understanding. One boy in my class (I may have mentioned him at some point in the past) was the son of a Baptist pastor, and so he was initially receptive to my desire to speak about Biblical matters. Of course, it did not take long for us to come to the Sabbath – I had no victory message to share at that time, and so the Sabbath and the other commandments was my priority – and I went through all the standard SDA explanations about the importance of the Law and obedience, even in the New Testament. Since those arguments are doctrinally all correct, my friend had no defense against the truth of the matter, and so, after several days of fairly intense listening, he said, "All right, I cannot argue against what you are saying, but I cannot accept it yet either. You've done your job, and now you should leave me to think and pray about what you have said." He never became a Sabbathkeeper, and his interest in speaking with me died out altogether soon thereafter.

The same thing often occurs, and to perhaps an even greater degree, when discussing the Victory message, and the need for unity through baptism and Church membership. The more receptive can understand the doctrine, and even "like" it on an intellectual level. But they do not love it more than sin in many cases, and so they hear and internalize the whisper of the tempters, "This sounds good... but it's not time yet to accept it."

The two snares that Satan employs here are similar, but they are not exactly the same. The snare "wait" is a more general one, and it is the thought held by two sets of seeds in the parable that Christ spoke. You may recall from the Gospel of Luke's eighth chapter that the work of Heaven's messengers is compared to a man sowing seeds. Some fell on good ground and prospered, but three classes did not. Some fell on shallow earth on the wayside, others fell on rocks, and some fell on soil but were choked by thorns. Those that fell on the wayside or the rocks never really accepted the message. They did not encounter good soil; in other words, the Holy Spirit did not find good ground, a receptive nature, in which to set down roots and grow a spiritually sensitive conscience.

For these the temptation to "wait" is effective, because nothing is wrong with the seed. Nothing is wrong with the message; the problem is the soil, the environment of the soul, and when one waits, whatsoever it was that first attracted that soul to the message is made to dim, to seem less bright, over time. This is the demons' work on all who hear the Gospel and do not cling to it immediately. Doubt, distractions, and deception are permitted

to creep in, all because of the word "wait." The seeds may as well be on poor soil, or on rock, because once the seeds do not put down roots, they can be blown away, or snatched away by ravens.

The second snare, "I will think/pray about it" is what is at work among those who are choked by the weeds. The Spirit's work begins, and roots may start to grow, but as Christ explains of these particular seeds, "that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." (Luke 8:14)

That's an interesting verse, and brings to mind the snare we discussed last time, the notion that nobody is perfect. Those who are Christ's bring forth "fruit to perfection," by way of contrast to these other three types of hearers. But those who have heard the message "go forth," they begin to consider what the truth will mean to their lives, and then – like Yahshua in the wilderness – Satan shows them all the kingdoms of the world, all the pleasures and habits they have enjoyed, and says, "All these things you may have, if you bow down and worship me."

They hesitate.

They are not willing to surrender all and so, not willing to deny the truth altogether, they say, "I will pray about this. I will think about it."

It is certainly true that turning to Christ Yahshua is a "big decision." It is THE decision that the individual is called to make...but many mistake the magnitude of it with the difficulty of it. In other words, the flesh reasons that since it is a "big decision," it must take time to arrive at a conclusion; since it is a "big decision," it must be a difficult one to make. Well, if one is standing in the middle of the road and a truck is speeding in that direction, it is a "big decision" to jump out of the way. That one act determines life or death...but failing to decide immediately what to do IS a decision; the choice is made because time is permitted to elapse.

In just the same way, one who hears the Gospel is made aware of a lifeline of hope...and though it is a big decision, it need only be the work of a moment to come to a conclusion. If the hearer indeed desires righteousness above all else, the moment the choice is understood, that is the time to accept.

In my case, when I first heard the Victory message I was a recently un-lapsed conference SDA. I had little idea of the power of the Gospel, and so I needed to do some reading, and have some conversations with the Gospel messenger in order to understand what the choice was...but the moment I did, I decided that I could not let this Word depart from me. Once I understood what the Victory was, I could not say, "Wait." I could not say, "I will think about it," because thinking further with fleshly reasoning would not have brought about any deeper clarity. Heaven awaited my decision, and I knew that any delay would place me on Satan's ground.

When we present the Victory over sin to those with whom we speak, we also have a duty to express the urgency of the choice to which they are being exposed. It is not to frighten the hearer into a hasty decision, but rather to reveal the reality of the matter, and to disarm the temptation that "big" means "lengthy" when it comes to this decision. As it is written, "Go to now, ye that say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain,' whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." (James 4:13, 14)

We read of the Apostle Paul's experience as a prisoner, "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, 'Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.' "He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound." (Acts 24:24-27)

The record reveals that Felix was looking for a bribe in order to release Paul. At the same time, when he heard the Apostle speak, it is apparent that he felt conviction toward righteousness, for he "trembled." Unfortunately for him, his love of money, and power, and the reputation of his peers, caused him to delay. He did not, could not, deny the truth of Paul's words, but he sought a "convenient season" that never came. No doubt, he thought about it. No doubt, Paul prayed with him about his choice. Two chapters later, King Agrippa said to the servant of Yah, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (Acts 26:28)

Never would they have a better, more suitable messenger of Heaven, or better opportunity to hear the truth. But Felix and Agrippa heard Paul, and they did not let conviction lead their choices. They delayed, for the love of the world, and thus they remained prisoners in the spirit, even as Paul was a prisoner in the body.

I spoke last time about the Sabbath at the close of our discussion of the previous snare. I will do so again here. The temptation to "wait," when accepted by the mind set on flesh, is a violation of the Sabbath commandment. And while I have been applying this snare primarily to those who are in the valley of decision regarding salvation, it really applies to any spiritual duty.

Yah calls, and the Spirit responds. Those who are led by the Spirit say, "Here am I." They remain in the rest to which they have been committed, knowing that no obstacle will have power over the fulfillment of the mission they are called to undertake. The motivation to wait when Yah calls one to action can only be the result of discontent, with fear of the future, of whatsoever changes may be required in the process.

Similarly, saying "I will think about it," or "I will pray about it," when one already understands the decision being required is a violation of the Sabbath rest – because what

it really means is, "I will think about why I should not accept," or "I will pray that God shows me the error in this reasoning." There may also be other factors involved, such as Felix' desire to be bribed, but none of them indicate a joyful and trusting acceptance of the will of Yahweh.

Some may say, "Yahshua prayed about His calling in the Garden of Gethsemane," and that is true – however He did not do so with the intent at any point of denying what He understood His Father wanted Him to do. He said, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Mat 26:39)

Yahshua willingly accepted the will of the Father. His prayers were an expression of His honest and overwhelming concern about the great work He was about to complete, and whether it would truly be both necessary and sufficient to redeem mankind. There was no selfish desire, no attempt to find another, less unpleasant way to finish the work. He did not say within Himself, "I will pray to see if I don't need to do this," for in fact He had already told His followers several times exactly what He was expecting to occur. He had testified of this acceptance, saying, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day." (Luke 9:22)

Again, "The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." (Luke 24:7)

Should conversion be as painful to the flesh and spirit as crucifixion, perhaps one might be expected to have a "Gethsemane moment;" but the only sacrifice required to accept Christ, and His Gospel, and His Victory, is trust in the promises of the Word. The Gospel is "Good News." It is joyful tidings, and a message of hope, life, and love.

Should I say to someone, "I will give you a thousand dollars," and their response was, "Wait," or, "Let me think about that," it would be clear that something was wrong with them. Either they did not trust the offer was genuine, or they believed that they did not need or want the money. And if waiting and delaying is an indication of irrational thinking even in physical things, how much more does it indicate a problem with those eternal riches that do not fade away?

For the evangelist, the duty is to present both the Good News and the reason why it is "Good;" because the gift is necessary, and it is urgently needed by every man, woman and child.

For the hearer of the Word, the duty is to understand the decision clearly, and to reject the suggestions of Satan that a decision this large "must take time," and that there are many things to consider. When the choice is "life" or "death" there is only one thing to consider – does one love sin more than everlasting life?

When we speak of the Gospel, of baptism, of Church membership, we are really saying, "These are the things that pertain to everlasting life. Do you love these things? Do you want them more than you want the pleasures and dalliances of this world?"

It is my prayer, as it must be the constant prayer of us all, that we find a harvest of those who will answer these questions, not with "Wait," or "I will think and pray about it," but rather with a single word: "Yes."

Are there any questions or comments about tonight's study?

Adriel777: Amen

Elyna: Amen.

Marie: Amen

Zahakiel: If there are not, then I'll ask Bro. Luke to offer a closing prayer.

Elyna: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Elyna: I was looking for the verse that says "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."... So any delay at waiting is really a refusal of the calling, and I pray that none here delay answering any of His calls. The reference for this is 2 Cor. 1:20 End.

Zahakiel: Thank you for adding the reference, yes. And I noticed, while you were giving your comment, that I had my participant list panel closed... and that Bro. Luke's blackout has apparently lasted this long. So let us pray to close the meeting.

Dear Father in Heaven, We thank you for the many precious promises you have given to us. We thank you that you are called Faithful and True, and that the timing of your revelation to us is likewise perfect. We thank you for the gift of grace, by which each one of us here has been drawn to your salvation, and we thank you for the privilege you have given to us, to bring this message of everlasting life to others. May our words to the sin-sick and needy be wise, and may they have power over the temptations brought upon them by the enemy of souls, that they may overcome the snares, and rush to your arms for their inheritance. Bless us in the remaining Sabbath hours, and may our week to come be filled with your glory ever before us, for we ask this in Yahshua's name. Amen.

Barb: Amen

Elyna: Amen.

Adriel777: Amen

Naraiel: Amen

daphna: Amen

Nattie: Amen.

