

Something You Will Take With You

Do You Pay Attention to Satan?

When I was in graduate school, I had severe insomnia. I for several days could not sleep at all at night. Classes were miserable as I had to fight the entire time staying awake. My eyes burned and I suffered from headaches constantly. Finally I could not take it anymore and so I went to the campus doctor. She was an old, former army doctor and she told me I needed to go see a counselor. It was she told me “a psychological problem”. I went back to my dorm room thoroughly confused. I had no real issues, no problems that were distressing me. Classes were not that tough,. I had been praying fervently to regain my ability to fall asleep but now I started wondering if I was facing a Satanic attack. One afternoon I went into my dorm room and prayed for deliverance from any attacks of Satan and that God would free me of insomnia. After I finished praying, I happened to pick up the bottle of allergy medicine I used each day. Absent-mindedly I looked at the label and at the bottom was a list of possible side effects. The first was insomnia. Figuring I did not need anything else to add to my sleeping problems, I stopped taking the medicine. That night I slept like a baby and never had insomnia again. I am not sure if I was suffering at that time a Satanic attack or just the consequences of not looking carefully enough at the labels of the medicine I was taking but I do know the Bible insists we will and do experience satanic attacks and we need the help of God to overcome them. Our big Idea today is faith in Christ is developed over time and mature faith is a crucial part of your growth if you are to live victoriously and well.

As we continue to study the armor of God, we come upon the fourth part of the armor, the shield of faith. Here is what the Bible says about it. **In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.** (Ephesians 6: 16 NIV) There are a couple points to make here. First, the wording in the original Greek language indicates that these flaming arrows will keep burning if you do not use the shield of faith to extinguish them. They will not just go away or stop impacting your life. The only way to stop them from wrecking you or others is by using the shield of faith. Second, the evil one is Satan. There is no one else it could be based on the title “evil one” usage in other parts of the Bible. Satan has you in his sights and he will go after you. It is not a matter of if but when, and how.

Keep in mind that Satan’s goal with you is not to make you miserable and disrupt your day although he may do that. His goal is to cut off the relationship between you and God. That was what he tried to do with Adam and Eve in the garden, it is how he worked with Cain when Cain decided to kill his brother Abel. It was his sole intention when he went to God wanting to go after Job. Pay careful attention to what Satan insisted in their conversation. He told the LORD that if God took away his possessions and wrecked his family, Job would not be so loyal to God. **“But stretch out your hand and strike everything he owns, and he will surely curse you to your face.”** (Job 1: 11 CSV) Later when that didn’t work and despite losing all his children and livestock, Job was still loyal to God, God and Satan again conversed. Satan asserted that if God attacked Job’s body, he would reject the LORD. **“But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.”** (Job 2: 5 CSV) Both times you can clearly see that the objective of Satan was to get Job to cut off the relationship between Job and God, or as Satan put it, **“curse you to your face”**.

Satan honestly does not care what happens to you. It is fine with him if you are as happy as can be or as miserable as possible. If you are disconnected from God and living as if He does not exist, Satan is satisfied. His attacks are not all intended to make you shrivel up in pain, sometimes they are designed to fulfill your lusts or satisfy your goals. The flaming arrows are not always projectiles of pain, sometimes they are granters of gain. In Job’s case, Satan was certain that because Job was doing so well, if all the success and contentment were taken from him, Job would do as Job’s wife recommended, curse God. He didn’t though and that is where Satan miscalculated. Throughout the suffering of Job, he put his faith in God being good, being one day available to him. Never did he become an atheist or turn to paganism or witchcraft. Always, even as his friends distracted him with their accusations and bad theology, his focus was on God despite his misery, despite the unfairness of his circumstances. Job never questioned the reality, authority or presence of God. Satan’s goal was not to wreck Job’s life, it was to unhitch his relationship with God so that Job no longer cared if there was a God or not. The most famous utterance of Job is one of the most beautiful declarations of faith found anywhere across time and reveals how full of faith Job remained. **I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;** (Job 19: 25-26 NIV)

Your best defense against the attacks of Satan, whether they come like they did against Job or if they are like the flaming arrows flung at Solomon, is faith. Not just faith everything will work out in the end but faith in Christ as your Savior and the keeper of your soul. It is Satan's goal to cut off the relationship between you and God, it is faith that keeps that relationship alive. The book of Hebrews famously defines faith. **Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.** (Hebrews 11: 1 NIV) To maintain your relationship with God who you cannot see or hear or touch, that is crucial to possess. Later it is noted, **And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.** (Hebrews 11: 6 NIV) Faith is comprised of four components. 1. Faith is being sure of your hope coming to pass. 2. Faith is being certain that even though you don't see something, you still know it is there. 3. Faith is theological always; it is believing that God exists. 4. Faith holds to the certainty that God rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

Let's consider one more aspect of faith. It will be an integral part of your life forever and it is crucial that you develop it now if you are going to make the most of your life with God in this life and the one to come. **And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.** (1 Corinthians 13: 13 NIV) Lost in the enthusiasm Paul and all of us have for love is the assertion that faith is an integral part of eternal life. Just as hope and love exist eternally as part of the operating system of all born again Christians, so too does faith. And that is an odd discovery. Faith is the stuff of not having enough concrete evidence to make your determinations, to state your case. Won't we have all the evidence in hand that God exists and that He rewards us for being loyal to Him? It is rather obvious why love would be a part of our lives as we live in eternity but faith? That seems odd. Keep in mind though that our relationship with God and with all in our life will be an ever-expanding life of growth. We will not be static, we won't reach the end of development as we will never be God. Faith will be integral to that growth and a constant part of it. As such, faith like love must be of prime importance to you to develop now because just as it is with love and hope, you will take faith with you. The more you gain now, the better it will be as you move forward. Faith is what cements your relationship with God, and it is how you perfect your life in the most important ways. If you are not working on developing faith, you are making a huge mistake.

It is a such a top priority of God to nurture and advance your faith that He will even risk your frustration with Him and let Satan disrupt your life to make sure you become a master of faith. Like exercise, proper diet and hygiene, faith is not developed without significant effort and sacrifice. There are three ways God advances your faith. 1. He remains physically hidden from you. It is counter-intuitive, but faith is rarely improved by sight. No one had a better glimpse into the majesty of God than the people of Israel in the days leading up to and after their exodus from Egypt. And yet most of them not only lacked faith in God, they even rebelled against Him, wrecking their lives in the process. 2. He forces you to depend on the Bible, the church, circumstances and the special guidance of the Holy Spirit to know what to do and how to live in alignment with Him. The disciples no longer had Jesus physically with them, but they did their greatest work after He left them on the Mt of Olives. It takes effort to listen for the supernatural voice of the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire you but you can become great at it if you believe God will guide you. 3. He will destabilize your life. Faith develops most vigorously when God lets Satan take you into a crisis. When God wanted to build David's faith, He sent him Goliath. When God wanted to build Ruth's faith, he sent her widowhood. When God wanted to build Hezekiah's faith, He sent him the Assyrian army. When God wanted to build Sarah's faith, He sent her infertility. When God wanted to build Job's faith, He sent him Satan. The Lord will do the same with you and you will complain and argue and grow angry and God will patiently go with you through the fire as He did with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and it will have one goal in it, to build your faith in Christ and make you a grown up in God's Kingdom. Your most important goal in life is to build up your relationship with God and learn to trust Him completely. Our big Idea today is faith in Christ is developed over time and mature faith is a crucial part of your growth if you are to live victoriously and well. I receive thousands of prayer requests from around the world and each one involves a fiery arrow from Satan. More importantly, they are a sign that God is building their faith supernaturally and doing the same for me as I pray for them. Let us live inspired by the difficulties we face, knowing full well we are being transformed through them by God into magnificent creatures of faith.