

# **Life's Little Lessons III**

## **Satan's Art of War**

Written in the sixth-century BC by Chinese general Sun Tzu, The Art of War has been a guide for military thinking for centuries. But it has also been used by men and women in a wide variety of other arenas, including leadership, management, business, politics, and sports. What Sun Tzu wrote about military warfare can help followers of Christ to understand the tactics of our spiritual enemy: "All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near."

Likewise, the spiritual warfare that Satan wages against us is also based on deceit. In fact, the very first sin was the result of the enemy's deception. Notice what Paul said: "I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2Cor. 11:3).

This truth is what gives such importance to our Lord's warning that Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44), ever seeking to deceive us. What is our defense? To saturate our hearts in the truth of God's Word. Only God's inspired truth can protect us against the deceptions of the enemy. God's truth is the best protection against Satan's lies.

## **Webster's Responsibility to God**

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil" (Ecc. 12:13-14).

At one time, Daniel Webster was considered the greatest of all living Americans. He was outstanding as a statesman, lawyer, orator, and leader of men. Twenty-five national leaders attended a select banquet in his honor. One man at the banquet asked Mr. Webster, "Sir, what is the greatest thought that ever entered your mind?" Without hesitation, Webster replied, "The greatest thought that ever entered my mind was the thought of my responsibility to God." As he spoke, he wept, excused himself from the banquet, and went outside to get control of his emotions. When he returned, he talked for thirty minutes about man's responsibility to God. (From Carl G. Johnson, Bethany Fellowship Press)

## **Rudd's Hunger for the Dawn**

"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned" (Matt. 4:15-16).

A man named Rudd told what it is like to live at the North Pole during three months of darkness. You never see the sun. He said, "I ached and hungered to see the dawn." Then one morning in February he climbed atop the wind-swept ridge and sat quietly, facing east; the sky was a gray sheet. Then it became a pale blue, which deepened. There was a silent rush of color as the sun rose. Rudd stood blinking with frozen tears on his cheeks." (From The Minister's Manual, by James W. Cox, p. 290)

For those who sat in darkness and in the region and shadow of death, Light has dawned. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (John 8:12)

## **Valjean's Lesson of Grace**

“Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7). In Victor Hugo's novel *Les Miserables*, Jean Valjean served a 19-year sentence for stealing a loaf of bread in order to feed his sister's family. Finally, he is set free. A bishop is the only one who will befriend the embittered man. Valjean rewards him by stealing some of his silver. He is caught red-handed by the police. The bishop is called to the police station to prefer charges. Instead of doing that, he brings Valjean his candlestick holders as well. Valjean is forever changed. He extends grace to an orphan child and raises her as his own. He forgives the policeman who wanted to put him back in jail. Finally he dies, holding in his hand the two candlesticks that the bishop gave him. This embittered man learned to extend mercy because mercy had been extended to him. Let us show mercy because we will receive judgment without mercy if we show no mercy.

### **The Rattlesnake Bites Itself**

“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” (Matt. 5:21-22). “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1John 3:15).

It is said that a rattlesnake, if cornered, will sometimes become so upset that it will bite itself. That is exactly what the harboring of hate and resentment against others is - a biting of oneself. We think that we are harming others in holding these grudges and hates, but the deeper harm is to ourselves. (From *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, p. 180)

### **Adam's Loss of Joy**

After Adam and Eve disobeyed God, joy was lost. God expelled them from their garden home to prevent something worse from happening. If they had eaten from the tree of life after eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they would have lived forever in their sins. Life outside the garden was not easy. Adam and Eve had to work hard for their food. The reality of death was everywhere, and animals preyed on one another. Even worse, the couple's firstborn son murdered his younger brother. What could be worse? Sin had pierced their lives, and the couple could not stop the joy from draining out.

But God had a plan to restore joy. Joy was lost in the Garden when death came, but joy returned through birth—the birth of God's own Son. “I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people” (Luke 2:10). Jesus grew up to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, and raise the dead. But this was just a small taste of joyful things to come. God entered our world, experienced our sorrow, and conquered death, giving us hope that He will keep His promise to end pain, and eliminate sin, sorrow, and death through the Gospel (John 11:25-27; 1Cor. 15:1-4; Rev. 21:4).

### **A Beggar's Thanksgiving**

Many years ago, as the story is told, a devout king was disturbed by the ingratitude of his royal court. He prepared a large banquet for them. When the king and his royal guests were seated, by prearrangement, a beggar shuffled into the hall, sat down at the king's table, and gorged himself with food. Without saying a word, he then left the room. The guests were furious and asked permission to seize the tramp and tear him limb from limb for his ingratitude. The king replied, "That beggar has done only once to an earthly king what each of you does three

times each day to God. You sit there at the table and eat until you are satisfied. Then you walk away without recognizing God, or expressing one word of thanks to Him."

### **A Poor Man's Happiness**

A businessman once overtook a man trudging through the snow, humming to himself. He talked with him and found that he was very poor. Finally, he asked him if he did not think he would be happier if he were rich. "No sir, all the rich men I work for never laugh."