



Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices

Satan's Devices to keep Saints from holy duties, Pt. 1

Introduction

Buddhism describes life as being lived in six different realms. One of the realms of existence is the realm of the Hungry Ghosts. “The inhabitants of the Hungry Ghost Realm are depicted as creatures with scrawny necks, small mouths, emaciated limbs and large, bloated, empty bellies. This is the domain of addiction, where we constantly seek something outside ourselves to curb an insatiable yearning for relief or fulfillment. The aching emptiness is perpetual because the substances, objects, or pursuits we hope will soothe it are not what we really need. We don't know what we need, and so long as we stay in the hungry ghost mode, we'll never know. We haunt our lives without being fully present.”¹

Although addiction is a great example of this, it's not the only way we live as hungry ghosts. The world we inhabit vies for our affection, and we enviously pursue the things of this world with great discontentment. By getting us to fall in love with the world, Satan will shift your love for God to a love for the world, and thus, keep you from holy duties and religious practices.

Device: “By presenting the world in such an attractive dress, as to ensnare the soul and win its affections.”

Definition: He represents the world to them in its beauty and finery, which proves a bewitching sight to the world of men. No sooner does he cast out his golden bate and we are ready to play with it, and to nibble at it. Ah! how many professors in these days have for a time followed hard after God, Christ, and ordinances, until the devil has set before them the world in all its beauty and finery, which has bewitched their souls so that they have grown to have low thoughts of holy things, and then to be cold in their affections to holy things, and then to slight them, and at last, with the young man in the gospel, to turn their backs upon them.

Ah! the time, the thoughts, the hearts, the souls, the duties, the services which the inordinate love of this wicked world eats up and destroys! Where one thousand are destroyed by the world's frowns, ten-thousand are destroyed by the world's smiles! The world, siren-like, sings to us, then sinks us! It kisses us, and betrays us, like Judas! The honors, splendor, and all the glory of this world, are but sweet poisons, which will much endanger us, if they do not eternally destroy us. Ah! the multitude of souls that have glutted on these sweet baits and died forever!

The inhabitants of the Nile are deaf from the noise of the waters; so, the world makes such a noise in men's ears that they cannot hear the things of heaven.

¹ Gabor Maté, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction*, pg. 1 (Introduction)

*According to Brooks, how does Satan use the world to keep us from holy duties? In what ways have you experienced this?

1 John 2:15-17: Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and all its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

*Why does the Apostle John command us to not love the world or its things? What aspects of the world have won your affections? How have you noticed this squashing your love for God?

Remedies

1. You must get a better acquaintance and better assurance of more blessed and glorious things.

“That which raised up their spirits (Heb. 10-11) to trample on all the beauty, finery, and glory of the world, was the acquaintance with, ‘and assurance of better and more durable things.’ You joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. ‘They looked for a house which had foundations, whose builder and maker was God.’

“The main reason why men dote upon the world and damn their souls to get the world, is because they are not acquainted with a greater glory! Men ate acorns until they were acquainted with the use of wheat. Ah, were men more acquainted with what union and communion with God means, what it is to have ‘a new name, and a new stone, that none knows but he who has it.’ Did they but taste more of heaven, and live more in heaven, and had more glorious hopes in heaven, ah, how easily they would have the world under their feet!”

“There are goods for the throne of grace – as God, Christ, the Spirit, adoption, justification, remission of sin, peace with God, and peace with conscience. And there are goods of the footstool – as honors, riches, the favor of creatures, and other comforts and accommodations of this life. Now he who has an acquaintance with, and assurance of the goods of the throne, will easily trample upon the goods of the footstool.”

Basil of Caesarea: ‘Give me money that may last forever, and glory that may eternally flourish; for the fashion of this world passes away, as the waters of a river that runs by a city.’

Colossians 3:1-5: Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry.

*According to Paul (and Thomas Brooks), how can we overcome our love for the world?

*What does this look like?

2. Dwell upon the vanity of the things below, as well as upon the impotency of all worldly goods.

“This is the sum of Solomon’s sermon, ‘Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!’ This is what our first parents found, and therefore named their son Abel, or ‘vanity’. Solomon, who had tried all these things, and could best tell the vanity of them, preaches this sermon again and again.”

“It is sad to think how many thousands there are, who can say with the preacher, ‘Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!’ – they’ll even swear by it! – and yet follow after these things as if there were no other glory, nor felicity. Such men will sell Christ, heaven, and their souls for a trifle, who call these things vanity – but do not cordially believe them to be vanity – but set their hearts upon them as if they were their crown, the top of their royalty and glory.”

***Why do we say ‘all is vanity’ but don’t believe it? What’s an example?**

“Chrysostom once said that if he were to preach a sermon to the whole world, gathered together in one congregation, and had some high mountain for his pulpit from which he might have a prospect of all the world in his view, and were furnished with a voice of brass as loud as the trumpet of the archangel, he would choose to preach upon no other text than that in *Psalm 4:2*: ‘O mortal man, How long will you love what is worthless and pursue a lie?’

“Tell me, you that say all things under the sun are vanity, if you do really believe what you say, why do you spend more thoughts and time on the world, than you do on Christ, heaven, and your immortal souls? Why do you then neglect your duties toward God to get the world? Why do you then so eagerly pursue after the world, and are so cold in your pursuing after God, Christ, and holiness? Why then are your hearts so exceedingly raised when the world comes in and smiles on you, and why are you so much dejected, and cast down, when the world frowns on you?”

***What would it look like to take God’s Word seriously, remembering the vanity of things below?**

3. Seriously consider that the great things of the world are very hurtful and dangerous to the outward and inward man, through the corruptions that are in the hearts of men.

“Oh, the rest, the peace, the comfort, the contentment – that the things of the world strip many men of! Oh, the fears, the cares, the envy, the malice, the dangers, the mischiefs, that they are subject men to!”

Ps. 30:6: I said in my prosperity, I shall not be moved!

“They often make men carnally confident. The rich man’s riches are a strong tower in his imagination. They often swell his heart with pride, and make men forget God, and neglect God, and despise the rock of their salvation.”

“King Henry the Fourth asked the Duke of Alva if he had observed the great eclipse of the sun, which had lately happened. ‘No,’ said the Duke, ‘I have so much to do on earth that I have no leisure to look up to heaven.’ Ah, that this were not true of most professors in these days! It is very sad to think, how their hearts and time are so much taken up with earthly things, that they have scarcely any leisure to look up to heaven, or to look after Christ, and things that belong to their everlasting peace!”

“Sicily is so full of sweet flowers that dogs cannot hunt there. And what do all the sweet contents of this world do – but make us lose the scent of heaven!”

4. Seriously consider that true happiness and satisfaction is not to be had in the enjoyment of worldly good.

***If you assessed your heart’s love for the world, where would it say true happiness is found?**

“True happiness is too big and too glorious a thing to be found in anything below that glorious God – who is the Christian’s summum bonum – his chief good. True happiness lies only in our enjoyment of a suitable good, a pure good, a total good and an eternal good. God alone is such a good – and such a good can only satisfy the soul of man.”

“The blessed angels, those glittering courtiers, have all felicities and blessedness, and yet they have neither gold, nor silver, nor jewels, nor any of the beauty or finery of the world. Certainly if happiness was to be found in these earthly things, the Lord Jesus, who is the right and royal heir of all things, would have exchanged his cradle for a crown; his birth chamber, a stable for a royal palace; his poverty for plenty; his despised followers for shining courtiers; and his poor provisions for the choicest delicacies. Certainly, happiness lies not in those things which a man may enjoy – and yet be miserable forever.”

“Certainly, happiness lies not in those things which cannot comfort a man on his dying bed. Is it honor, riches, or friends – which can comfort you when you come to die? Or is it not rather faith in the blood of Christ, the witness of the Spirit of Christ, the sense and feeling of the love and favor of Christ, and the hopes of eternally reigning with Christ?

Gregory the Great: ‘He is poor whose soul is void of grace – not whose safe is empty of money.’

“A man may have enough of the world to sink him – but he can never have enough to satisfy him!”

***In what ways has this lesson challenged or exposed your love for the world?**

***Where do we go from here?**

Conclusion

May we examine our own love for the world and its things, so we can remember that true happiness is found in Christ alone, everything under the sun is vanity, and seek the more blessed & glorious things.

***Prayer Requests for the Deceased and Remedies in your lives, as well as in those you know & love.**