



Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices

To keep saints sad, doubting, and questioning: Pt. 5

Introduction

Although I'm not a huge fan of Marvel's newer movies, I loved almost everything before *Avengers: Endgame*. My favorite character in the Marvel Universe is Bucky Barnes, The Winter Soldier. Bucky was originally a friend of Captain America, but he was captured and brainwashed by Hydra (the bad guys) to become their most dangerous assassin. He killed countless people, but Captain America eventually defeated him, reminded him of their friendship, helped undo the brainwashing, and got him help. Eventually, he was recovering and making amends on his past and the people he hurt. Then a man named Helmut Zemo tracked down the old guard who controlled the Winter Soldier, and he learned the brainwashing techniques to, once again, enlist the Winter Soldier for his purposes.

After framing and capturing Bucky, he reminded him of all the things he had formerly done. Then he began reading off his trigger-words. Immediately, Bucky is brainwashed, saying, "At thy Command," in Russian, and he finds himself back in that miserable condition doing things he doesn't want to do. Later in other Marvel movies and shows, Bucky has a bad reputation among other characters, and they will often highlight his previous failures to discourage him. Although there are many elements that differ from ours, it's a helpful illustration for how our past can be brought up in ways that hinder our present. Satan will remind you of your relapses into sin in order to keep you in sad, doubting, questioning, and miserable conditions.

Device: "By suggesting to the soul his frequent relapses into the same sin which he formerly addressed with particular sorrow, grief, shame, and tears, and which he also prayed, complained, and resolved against."

Definition: Says Satan, "Your heart is not right with God; surely your state is not good. You only flatter yourself to think that God would eternally own and embrace one such as you, who complains against sin, and yet relapses into the same sin; one who pours out tears and groans to confess your sin, and then always falls back into that same sin."

I confess this is a very sad condition for a soul after he has obtained mercy and pity from the Lord, after God has spoken peace and pardon to him, and wiped the tears from his eyes, and then have him turn back to folly. Ah! how do relapses lay men open to the greatest afflictions and worst temptations. Ah! how they make the wound bleed afresh! They put a sword into the hand of conscience to cut and slash the soul... Relapses give Satan an advantage; they make the work of repentance more difficult; they make a man's life a burden, for they raise such fears, terrors, horrors, and doubts in a soul.

***In what ways have you experienced this in your own life?**

Zechariah 3:1-10: Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. 2 And the Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! ... 3 Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. 4 And the angel said to those who were standing before him, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” And to him he said, “Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.” 5 And I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord was standing by.

6 And the angel of the Lord solemnly assured Joshua, 7 “Thus says the Lord of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here. 8 Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch. 9 For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua... I will engrave its inscription, declares the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day. 10 In that day, declares the Lord of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree.”

***How does Zechariah 3 encourage you to resist Satan when he stands to accuse you?**

Remedies

1. God has nowhere promised that souls who convert and unite themselves to Christ will never fall again and again into the same sin after conversion.

“I cannot find in the whole book of God where he has promised any such strength or power against this or that particular sin in such a way that a soul should be forever, in this life, put out of a possibility of falling again and again to the same sins. And where God does not have a mouth to speak, I must not have a heart to believe.”

“God will graciously pardon those sins of his people, which he will not in this life totally subdue in his people.”

“Though by grace they are freed from the dominion and damnable power of every sin, and from the love of all sin, yet grace does not free them from the indwelling of any one sin. Therefore, it is possible for a soul to fall again into the same sin. If the fire is not wholly put out, who would think it impossible that it should catch and burn again and again?”

***When was a time you kept falling into a particular sin and wondered why God wouldn't deliver you from it?**

2. The most renowned saints relapsed into sins formerly repented of.

“Lot was twice overcome with wine; John twice worshipped the angel; Abraham did often deceive, and lay his wife open to adultery to save his own life, which some heathens would not have done! David in his wrath was resolved that he would be the death of Nabal, and all his innocent family; and after this, he fell into the foul murder of Uriah.”

“Though Christ told his disciples that his ‘kingdom was not of this world,’ yet again and again and again, they desired to be high, great, and glorious in this world. Their pride and ambitious desires put

them on the path of striving for pre-eminence and greatness in the world, when their Lord and Master told them several times of his sufferings in the world, and of his going out of the world. Samson is by the Spirit of the Lord numbered among the faithful worthies, yet he often fell into gross immorality. Peter, you know, relapsed often, and so did Jonah. A sheep may often slip into a pit – just as a swine can.”

***What do you find encouraging or discouraging about this?**

“These things happen so that they may see their own inability to stand, or to resist or overcome any temptation or corruption, and that they may be taken off from all false confidences, and rest wholly on God, and only upon God, and always upon God.”

“These things also happen for the praise and honor of the power, wisdom, skill, mercy, and goodness of the physician of our souls. He alone can heal, help, and cure when the disease is most dangerous, when the soul is relapsed and grows worse and worse, when others say, ‘There is no help for him in his God,’ (Ps. 3:1-2) and when his own heart and hopes are dying.”

“Perhaps the prodigal son sets out for us a Christian example of relapse, for he was a son before, and he resided in his father’s house. Then he left him and spent everything. Yet, he was not quite undone – but he returned again. The prodigal saw the compassion of his father all the greater, who gladly received him after he had run away from him.”

Luke 15:3-5, 7: Which of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing... Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

3. You must consider the difference between voluntary and involuntary relapses.

“Involuntary relapses are when the resolution and full bent of the heart is against sin, when the soul strives with all its might against sin, by sighs and groans, by prayers and tears, and yet out of the weakness of the soul is forced to fall back into sin because there is not enough spiritual strength to overcome. Now, though involuntary relapses must humble us, they should never discourage us. God will freely and readily pardon these.”

“Voluntary relapses are when the soul longs and loves to ‘return to the flesh pots of Egypt’ (Ex. 16:3) – when it is a pleasure and a pastime to a man to return to his old ways. Such relapses reveal that a man has been blinded, hardened, and ripened for sin. Thus, there is a great difference between a sheep who, by weakness, falls into the mire – and a swine who delights to wallow in it; between a woman who is raped, though she fights and cries out, and an alluring adulteress.”

***Why is this a necessary distinction to make? Are you encouraged or convicted by it?**

Conclusion

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