

SATAN'S DEADLY TRAPS (#s 7, 8)

7 The Hamster Trap You have seen the hamster cage. It is either wire mesh or glass so you can watch the hamster throughout the day. You have the pet for enjoyment and you feed it and keep the cage clean so you can laugh as the pet runs but never goes any place. The hamster jumps on the wheel platform which causes the wheel to turn. To prevent falling from the platform the hamster runs. No matter how fast or slow the pet runs the wheel turns and the hamster goes nowhere. The **hamster trap** is similar to the **Maze trap** in that in both cases expended energy doesn't solve the problem or lead to freedom. The difference is that **in the hamster trap** the hamster doesn't seem to be looking for a way out—he runs for exercise and enjoys the food provided and the protection from enemies and dangers; but doesn't seem to want change. The **maze trap** indicates dissatisfaction with circumstances and the determination to find a better life. Some Bible verses will apply to both traps.

Have you ever felt like no matter how hard you work, all the things you do, how much time, energy, even money that you spend—you don't seem to be going anywhere? You **question what your purpose is**—or why you don't seem to be progressing or accomplishing anything worthwhile? **The answer** to this problem is to pursue God and His purpose for your life. **Jer. 29:11** declares that God has a good plan and purpose for our lives. In **Ps. 20:4** we learn that God wants to grant our heart's desire and fulfill all of our purpose here on earth. **Ps. 32:8** assures us that God will instruct and teach us in the way we should go and guide us individually with His own eye. **Jesus said** to follow Him and He would make the disciples fishers of men. God will do the same for us. So **the key is to discover** what God's purpose for our individual life is.

There is a place and a work for every person who was ever born. No two of us will be exactly the same—this is the wonder of our creative God. **Rom. chap 12** sets forth the **variety of gifting**, skill and ability that God instills within each and every living being. **And verse 1** informs where and how to begin—present ourselves to be **living sacrifices—serving the Lord** as He guides us. When we do so God will **renew** our minds from pursuing worldly and selfish pleasures, and our lives will be **transformed—or patterned** after God's nature—and we will work to fulfill **His** divine purpose. The good news is that there is a place and task or tasks which we are gifted to perform during our life on earth.

Want examples? **Gideon** was a farmer minding his own business when God tapped him on the shoulder and commissioned him to defeat an invading army. Consider **Hannah (1 Samuel 1)**, a barren woman who engaged in intercessory prayer, got the unsolicited attention of the prophet, and God granted her request—she birthed a son named Samuel, who became one of the greatest prophets in Israel. There was **Rahab**, the harlot, in Jericho (**Joshua 2**), who befriended the two Israeli spies and helped them escape—she had an open heart to worship the God of Israel and as a result of her kindness, God spared her family when Jericho was destroyed. Consider **Esther and Mordecai (Book of Esther)**, captives in Persia who kept their faith in God. When the edict went out that on a certain day all Jews could be killed, God used both Esther and Mordecai to spare their deaths, and the deaths of all Jewish captives throughout the 127 provinces of Persia. Want more examples? How about the **boy with the lunch basket** whose food was multiplied to feed five thousand (**John 6:9**); or the slave girl in Syria who told her mistress about a prophet in Israel who could heal Naaman's leprosy (**2 Kings 5**); finally, **the widow of Zarephath** facing starvation, who prepared her last meal and shared it with Elijah—and God honored her obedience by providing food every day until the rain came and food could be harvested (**1 Kings 17**). These examples show that no one is too insignificant or unimportant to be used by God.

So—No more running in circles. No more confusion, discouragement, depression or sense of failure. We have presented our bodies and lives to serve the Lord **as He chooses**—in the ministry role **He has designed for us**. No jealousies with how God uses other people. **We concentrate** on what God wants us to do. With renewed minds focused on what God wants, our lives will be transformed. There will be **spiritual gifting and power to enable us** to endure until the victory comes.

8 The Flea Trap When I was a boy in pre-WW-II days a circus came to our country town of 900 people. One of the events that intrigued me was the man who had a flea in a jar without a lid. He boldly proclaimed that he could leave that flea in that jar and it would never jump out. Now I had a mangy dog and knew about fleas and I knew that a flea could jump way higher than the height of that jar. Later in life I read about fleas and learned that a captured flea was put in a jar with a lid tightly screwed on. **The flea would jump** and jump and jump—each time hitting its head on the lid. It took awhile for the flea to realize that jumping was injurious to itself and it gave up. When the flea quit trying to jump out of the jar the lid could be removed and the flea would never again jump. Some people are like that. After a few tries are unsuccessful they will quit trying. It may be in sports, music, arts, business, marriage, it doesn't really matter. It may even be in resisting temptation. It may be

a few unanswered prayers that will cause you to quit praying for difficult things.

Believers are called to be winners not losers. A great example in the Old Testament is **David at Ziklag**. Returning from battle he and his troops were tired, hungry and longing to see their wives and children. As they neared Ziklag they saw the smoke and then the burned city (**1 Sam. 30**). They were exhausted and hungry and homesick for family—but **the families were gone**. At the height of their weeping and sorrow his own men turned against David and picked up stones to kill him. **When David realized** he faced death at the hand of his own troops he knew his only hope was in God. He asked permission to pray one more time. And during that prayer he **enquired of the Lord** and the Lord said pursue the enemy and recover your loved ones. Someday I would like to ask David to recite that motivational speech to his men—because it turned the hearts of his fighting men and they dropped the stones, picked up their weapons, and followed David one more time. They overtook the enemy, rescued all family members, and were enriched by the enemies possessions. The lesson is simply this: **DON'T GIVE UP! DON'T QUIT!** With God all things are possible (**Matt. 19:26**).

In 2 Cor. 11 Paul lists a lot of hardships, troubles, suffering, shipwreck, betrayal—he was even stoned and left for dead—but **he never gave up; he never quit**. He wrote that he could **do all things through Christ** Who strengthens him. He proclaimed that **God's grace** was sufficient for him in the greatest trials. You don't have to get caught in the devil's flea trap. **Believers are not meant to be quitters—but over-comers and conquerors through Christ Who strengthens them.** During the lowest point in WW- when London was being bombed daily and the future looked hopeless to many in England, Sir Winston Churchill was asked to speak to a graduating class. He walked into the auditorium with a cigar in his mouth; strode to the podium and looked for a long moment at the graduates. Then he removed the cigar from his mouth and spoke **8 powerful words: "Never give up! Never! Never! Never! Never! Never!"** Then he put the cigar back in his mouth, turned, and walked out of the room. Soon the tide turned and Germany was soundly defeated.

In review—you need not be the victim of the **maze** trap, (running this way and that and never finding the door to freedom and purpose); the **pumpkin** trap (getting too close to sin); The **frog** trap (procrastination); the **monkey** trap (greed and selfishness); the **trivia** trap (distraction); the **caterpillar** trap (loyally following a bad leader); the **hamster** trap (running but "going-nowhere"); or the **flea** trap (giving up). **You need not be a victim** in one of **Satan's deadly traps**. When we read the final chapter in the Book of Books it is clear **who wins and who loses**. From Genesis to Revelation the devil does his best but comes up a loser time after time. **Yes—Satan won the battle of deception** with Adam and Eve—but he lost the battle to cancel God's plan of redemption. **Satan succeeded in prompting Selfish and prideful Cain** to kill his righteous brother Abel—but another son was born named **Seth** and he preserved the genealogy from **Adam to Noah, Abraham, Moses—and eventually to Jesus Christ and Eternity**. And don't forget **Enoch**—a righteous man who walked and talked with God and God took him into eternity by-passing death. **Noah** believed God and relaunched the human race. And then there was **Abraham, Isaac, Jacob**....and the list goes on...and on...and on.

All these—and many others—were victorious over the devil. Yes—they had their time in one trap or another—but they **called** upon the Lord, **trusted** in His power and promises, and **gained** the ultimate victory. **The devil lost every time. The link** between men and women of faith **from Adam to the final faith hero** was never broken—**bent perhaps here and there—but never broken!** To drive home the reality of **who wins and who loses**, consider this scene in the devil's den of iniquity where **Satan is sitting** in a drunken stupor. **He thinks** he has finally destroyed God's plan of redemption. Jesus had been crucified and the devil and his minions have been celebrating since Friday night. **This is Sunday morning** and the drunken celebration continues. **The devil is sitting** in a reflective mood. A demon draws near and whispers in Satan's ear: *"He's alive.! Jesus is alive! The tomb is empty! The Disciples have seen him. The news is spreading all over Jerusalem that Jesus rose from the dead—and I checked it out—the tomb really is empty!"* Satan **dropped his head** toward his chest and muttered to himself: **"I lost again!"**

Settle it in your heart **mighty man of God**—You were born to be a winner. **Abide in Christ and YOU WIN!—and the Devil loses again, and again, and again! AMEN!**

"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." James 4: 7

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