

“The Great Escape” (2 Timothy 2:8–26)(2.19.20)

2 Timothy 2:8–26 (NIV84)

8 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, 9 for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained. 10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

11 Here is a trustworthy saying:

If we died with him,

we will also live with him;

12 if we endure,

we will also reign with him.

If we disown him,

he will also disown us;

13 if we are faithless,

he will remain faithful,

for he cannot disown himself.

14 Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. 15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. 16 Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. 17 Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. 19 Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.”

20 In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. 21 If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

22 Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23 Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. 24 And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

The word of God for the people of God.

Title: The Great Escape

LET US PRAY.

INTRODUCTION:

Today, let us examine the war for your soul. Not yours alone, but the eternal soul of your loved ones; the eternal soul of your neighbors; the eternal soul of your coworkers.

In Paul's second letter to his protégé, Timothy, there are strong warnings. Endure, hold fast to your faith; quarrels, chains, gangrene, ungodly, evil, foolishness, stupidity, traps, snares, captivity and the Devil. Paul's admonitions and encouragements tell us how to live; but more than that, how we, as the Lord's servants, should behave towards others.

One of my favorite movies is the World War II Prisoner of War story of The Great Escape. It is based on the true account of a mass escape from a specially designed German POW camp in occupied Poland. Today, the word Nazi is universally equated with evil. Adolf Hitler's plan for the Third Reich was to literally take over the world.

Stalag Luft III was constructed, staffed, and equipped to prevent escape. The sandy soil, raised barracks, and seismic microphones would prevent tunneling. The fences were high and strong. The guards were competent and well trained. There were guard towers, dogs, search lights, and machine guns. There were files on all the prisoners with their backgrounds and history.

The escape plan was bold beyond imagination, hoping to free over 200 men and cause havoc behind enemy lines. As always, there were complications. On that frigid winter night, 76 men did escape. The Gestapo was called in for an extensive search effort. Only three men ended up escaping from enemy territory. Twenty three of the recaptured were returned to POW camps. The other 50 were killed in ones and twos.

Paul tells Timothy and us that the Devil has taken people captive. They were entrapped, they were snared by the Devil. The captives are not able to free themselves on their own. They need help. Our help and God's power.

BODY:

First let's talk about these various traps that I have put on display up here.

Simple box trap.

Live trap. Bait.

Leg trap.

Snare.

Next, let us look at the way the Devil captures people.

He is the Deceiver and a Liar. He has his files on each and every one of us. He knows our history, our weaknesses, and our tendencies. He knows our routines, our paths and our propensities. The Devil uses {1 John 2:16 (NIV84)} ... everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—they come not from the Father but from the world.

Here is a rather simple example: Last Monday night, I was at Pray and Play for Upward Basketball volunteers. Sarah Mostafa from the Fellowship of Christian Athletes said to me, "I don't know how old you are, but you

are a role model for us.”

Instead of saying thank you; instead of saying to God be the glory; instead of combining those two ideas; I grinned and said, “I’m 63 years old.” Then I ran out onto the court all puffed up. Later, I repented, “Lord, why do I keep falling into that trap?”

The Devil can use other people to help take you captive or keep you captive. The traps and snares can be camouflaged by people milling about. Look at how much fun they are having. You have heard the clichés: Birds of a feather flock together and Misery loves company.

At first sin is made to seem nothing but pleasant and the awful consequences are hidden. Oh, that high is euphoric and so cheap too. What a nice escape from my problems or an adventure when everything is so dull. But then you need more to get that same feeling; and more; and more. Now it is expensive. Now it is controlling. It takes primary importance in your life.

There are people that are called High-functional alcoholics. Their addiction is hidden. To the outsider, they appear pretty normal. In fact, at work, they can be a top performer. But, they are not living the life they are called by God to live. Some potential or gift is left unused and shrivels up. A relationship is starved; and then others. It comes to the point where they are a hollow shell of what God has created them to be.

Another snare of the Devil is to cause us to doubt the LORD. He says things like, “The Bible was written by men. It is man’s opinions. Parts may be true, but there are lots of mistakes and contradictions. It doesn’t apply to us today. It certainly doesn’t apply to you. Don’t be one of those fanatical Christians.”

Or maybe the Devil is whispering this, “God is not the good, good father. He doesn’t really want what is best for you. Are you supposed to give up everything you like to do? He doesn’t want you to have any fun. God is holding out on you. If you do ‘this,’ you will be like God.”

This is a popular trap today. God is love. God is love. God is love. He is all mercy, slow to anger, forbearing till the end. A loving God would never condemn his children. Everyone on earth is God’s child; so, you are covered. Don’t pay any attention to that word righteousness, or what Jesus says about hell. When Jesus said be holy or to be perfect as my father in heaven is holy and perfect, he knew that it is impossible.

“New Testament Christians are not required to follow anything in the Old Testament right? In fact, be a Red Letter Christian. Then you only have to listen to the words of Jesus in the Bible. And then, only the words that make you feel good about yourself.”

The Devil delights in denying the reality of his true nature and the nature of evil. Oh yeah, he’s the red devil with the pointed tail, horns, and a pitch fork. If he even existed, he would be easy to spot. No, the hell of the Bible isn’t a real place. Surely you have heard people joke that they would prefer hell so they could party with their friends. They smile and laugh as they tell you.

The saddest situation are the self-righteous that believe that true religion consists of rites and rituals. They are trapped, thinking that being church people gets them into heaven. They take Communion. They put their money in the plate. They pat the preacher on the back. But, they do not love the Lord and they do not love their neighbors. Maybe there is a deeply hidden bitterness. Or their heart is hardened with unforgiveness.

They are trapped in a box of their own making. The Devil just provided the tools for them to construct it. Paul knew first hand that he had been trapped in his thinking. He was a Pharisee of Pharisees. Jesus was not the long awaited Messiah. When he was called Saul, he actively pursued and punished Christians for being people of The Way. Everything changed for Saul when Jesus knocked him off his high horse on the Road to Damascus.

Jesus commissioned Paul in Acts 26:17–18 (NIV84),

“I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

Like Paul we have been freed from the snare of the fowler to help others to escape captivity.

(Dissect 2 Timothy 2:24-26) Please read this with me.

- God
- Satan
- Captives
- The Lord’s servant

Paul describes the Lord’s servants as righteous, faithful, loving and peaceful. We are to be in a real relationship with the Lord. We are to have pure undivided hearts. We are to be peacemakers, kind, patient and gentle.

“It is a suggestive fact that the dove, which is regarded as the emblem of gentleness, has no gall-bladder.” We are called to be gentle as doves, to be free of gall.

Proverbs 15:1 (NIV84) A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

CONCLUSION:

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, read voraciously on many subjects. He especially loved to read the writings of the ancient fathers of our faith. In Wesley’s diary entry for July 30th, 1736 he wrote, “I read Macarius and sang.”

“The Christian journey, Macarius warns us, is a struggle, a spiritual combat that continues right up to the end of our life: “I have not yet seen any perfect Christian or one perfectly free” (H. 8:5).

Christianity, as Macarius understands it, involves much more than assent to reasoned arguments or outer obedience to a moral code. It consists above all in the awakening of our spiritual senses, so that we attain a direct, palpable awareness of God’s Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts.

Thus the true Christian must engage constantly in the inner spiritual combat to fight against sin and the evil powers. God is there testing the sincerity and steadfastness of the human will.

... [the one] who hears the word comes to repentance and, after this through God’s providence grace withdraws for the development of the man. He enters into training and the tactics of war. He enters into the struggle and conflict against Satan. And after a long race and struggle, he carries off the victory and becomes a

Christian.”

One of the many promises of Psalm 91:3 (NIV84) Surely [the Most High, the Almighty] will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. The author of Hebrews 3:13 (NIV84) tells us to encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.

The Enemy is real and He is no joke. We are in an actual battle for our own and every immortal soul. Beware of the wiles of the Devil. You CAN be free of his snares. And, we must help others engineer The Great Escape. Amen and amen. Let us pray.