

## THE SNARE ALWAYS AWAY FROM YOUR EYES

While growing up, hunting for us was life. We hunted everything that would give us meat except the mighty and powerful of the wild. Laying traps and spreading out snares along the routes of our preys was an exciting adventure that meaningfully and gainfully occupied our out of farming and harvest seasons. At the onset of the rainy season and during the evenings after the day's labour on the farm, spreading out and laying snares for the Guinea fold particularly, was an interesting last gamble that ended the day and may send you home smiling with some meat for the pot. Every evening with game in hand, attracts an unusually warm welcome home by those waiting at that end.

The Christian life is a life grown and seasoned through surmounting the pits of trials and surviving the snares and traps of temptations. The route through the Christian journey is latten with testings, trials and temptations, all set for the growth and development of the spiritual sinews and muscles of the child of God. The faith of the Christian person does not ever grow, mature and stand stout without the back and forth splashing and bashing of those storms and waves of life set to season it. If the Christian must robustly grow, then as important and needful as the Word is as food for his soul, its reality, strength and power in the believer in Christ, must be subjected to the merciless crucible of the devil in its twin vice-like jaws of trials and temptations.

Jesus fresh and hot from enduring forty sun scorching days and forty long and cold nights of fasting, thus spiritually arming himself for the great task of the ministry that was ahead of him, had Satan right there waiting to test the genuineness of his claim to being the Son of God. Typical of Satan, an expert and genius of packaging and repackaging, he had these trials so beautifully and irresistibly packaged in great and enticing offers.

He, in the first place, put together a test for Jesus' appetite-bread knowing he was hungry; secondly, he packaged a testing of the intervention, protective and rescuing ability of God the Father; and thirdly, is whetting Jesus' appetite for power by a plausible painting, packaging and offering of a no mean position and power package. These are three areas of life by which the children of God are commonly tempted and tried.

Hunger tests our control over our appetite, our faith in Christ Jesus, is tried by the temptation to knowingly and yet naively taking dangerous risks in a bit to prove that you serve a living and an all powerful God; and distracting and plausible offers to positions of authority and power are dangled at us to test our gullibility for power.

The devil knowing the future of every child of God, will set those traps and lay those snares soon after you set to begin the adventure of life and the exploit thereof. And normally,, what we do with those traps and snares at those early hours of life, determine where and how we end up in life.

Trials and temptations are like land mines. You do not see them, but they are there dangerously buried and lying in the ground with no mission but to steal, kill and to destroy. For the soldier, the more of the land mines he detects, discovers and picks up, the safer the battle field becomes, and the more sensitive and smart he gets to be in detecting them. So also is the believer in Christ and the soldier of Christ. Along the way of his walk with Christ, are lined up the faith mines of trials and temptations. These like the land mines, are not seen but you run into them in your daily walk with Him. Grace, faith and courage powered by the searching, counseling, courage imputing and directing Holy Spirit, enable your courageous and glorious detecting, surmounting, surviving and passage through them. Is it no wonder then that the apostle Paul having listed several of the trials and temptations that the children of God daily face, and riding on the experience of victory over them said, "No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

Unlike some infections and diseases, surviving one temptation after another does not give you immunity. Rather it runs you into and sometimes, much fiercer ones. Indeed, the more mature you become as a Christian, the more the temptations and trials multiply and just as the tougher they become. There is always a last trial and a last temptation.

A biblical example may suffice:

Job had in his hey-days withstood the greatest test of his life. He had remained unfeignedly loyal to his master David by not abandoning him for the more flamboyantly attractive and over ambitious son of the King-Absalom. But he got to be insensitive and careless as he came to the end of his life. He had given up His loyalty to the king and gone to side with Adonijah a weakling and a coward. This did not auger well for him. Indeed, that last temptation marked his ruin. (1Kings2:28-34).

As we journey through life as children of God, we must be careful to live in the consciousness and sensitivity that there is always another temptation and probably the least yet the last and the determinant of our final and eternal fate. If we do not watch it, we find ourselves thrown into the gutter of our dirty, sinful and ungodly choices, swept away by the dirty waters of the garbage that gutters, especially in the developing world are typical of. In other words, we may have survived many temptations, but the last may become "the stroke that broke the Carmel's back."

The Hausa Proverb has it that "In ka ga gemu danwunka na cin wuta, ka sa ruwa a kan na ka." Meaning "if you see your brother's beard on fire, put water on yours." This then calls for alertness. Ever be sensitive to the fact that where a fellow Christian pilgrim like you has failed and turned back, may equally be the point of your giving up and yielding to temptation. So if you think you are standing firm while you see others falling, be careful that you do not fall (1Corinthians 10:12). For no temptation has seized you except that which is common to man. And if you live to overcome one, you must live in the fact that your God is faithful and though temptations come, He will never let you be tempted by a new temptation-that which is not common to man and neither would He let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will provide a way out so that you can stand up under it

(1Corinthians 10:13). Since with life and continues walk with the Lord, temptations may be ceaseless, and in view of the fact that you may have proven more than a conqueror over many, you must be alert and on guard over that which you think may be the least to tempt you, for they may be the subtle and most dangerous traps or snares of the enemy. Even the areas of your life over which you have had victory in the past, may still visit you again to tempt you anew. And if you are not spiritually awake and watching, they may cause your stumbling and falling. Therefore never let a spiritual weak spot develop in your life; leave not a crack for the devil; don't you allow him a room-a spiritual vacuum in your life. Fresh victory over the devil, trials and temptations, must not leave you presumptuous. Never you conclude that "The possibility of me having gone through the worst of crisis, I am gone for the better on my spiritual journey without ever turning to the world again." Staying on this plain, may be the most deceitful and most dangerous of spiritual spots to dwell. Just ensure that you keep your connection with the Lord, espouse him without wavering, for that is your sure safeguard. Never you try to predict likely areas of temptation, for that is when the least suspected area becomes your Waterloo. For most often than not, the least likely things surprise you as the greatest source of danger. The persecutor, spoiler and frustrater of a great spiritual event, is the mole that digs the ground and the weevil that bores the grain. These least and unexpected things come to bear such a great negative consequence on the outcome of great and glorious spiritual events. They appear weak and insignificant, without any force and not dominant, yet they are there anyway, and set to rent their havoc. As such, if you are not sensitive, alert and on the watch, they will surprise and shock you as they take you off guard and trip you off your fit of faith. Therefore, that you have stood your faith ground and remained true to God under immense and intense pressures of trials and temptations, keep on. Beware of the undercurrent; yield not in; never you faint, fail and fade away. Never be given to abnormally putting your life to retrospect. Look not forward with fear, but having your spiritual antennas up and sensitive; ever be alert, maintain a sharp memory before God, of your relationship. Be warned, for it is said that an unguarded strength is in the actual sense, a double weakness. This is so because it is where the least likely temptations will take advantage and be effective in sapping your strength. Note that most Biblical characters fell to the sword of their strong points and never the cowardice of their weaknesses.

Do you have a good record of a great walk with the Lord? Has your journey with him been so wonderful? Are you still enjoying such a great walk with Him? Has this journey been tried and tested? Have you been tempted? Have you survived trials, testings and temptations? Has surviving many of such made you think you stand? Then be careful lest you fall. Remember that temptations are like land mines. The least and last of them may not yet have been detected and confronted. Therefore ever live in the consciousness that there may still yet be the least, the last and most dangerous of them.

Note that for as long as life lives on in you, you remain vulnerable. The devil, your adversary will never stop prowling and seeking you to devour. His snares and traps are all over the place. Will you watch and ever remain watching? Will you guard and ever remain on guard? Keep alive and active the Holy Spirit the greatest scrutinizer of all human desires and intentions. Never let your spiritual fervor dies down, but constantly fan it to flame. Jesus Christ in you and he in grace, is

the power that overcomes all that comes to disgrace you. Remain in him and he in you and He will give you your life for a prize, so that even if Satan in testing you takes you to hell, Christ will pass you through it with your life intact and firmly held as a prize.

Testings, trials and temptations make when you stand them. They however steal, kill and destroy when you allow yourself enticed and entrapped by their snares.

Be alert, watch and remain ever vigilantly watching and the devil who never wishes you well, can never take advantage of you.

“JOAB HAD DEFECTED TO ADONIJAH, THOUGH HE HAD NOT DEFECTED TO ABSALOM” (1Kings 10:28).

IF YOU THINK YOU STAND, BE CAREFUL THAT YOU DO NOT FALL (1Corinthians 10:12).

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