

## What's the Message – Lesson 99

In our lesson this time, Jesus teaches us more about our relationship with God.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. Merciful Father, we thank You that your patience and loving-kindness towards us are unlimited. Because of that, we ask that through Your Holy Spirit, all we think and say and do may be pleasing in Your sight. Use our lives as a light to the world, that all may know You and your love for us. Amen.

Last time Jesus taught us about God, that He is to be recognized as our Father and we are to be His children and a blessing to the world. Jesus also taught us about the nature and will of God, and that He loves us so much that He sent His only Son to die in our stead. But Jesus still has much more to teach us about our relationship with our heavenly Father. And that will be our subject today.

Once again, let us go back to our first few studies in Genesis, in particular, Lesson Three where we stated: “There are two types of relationships: both vertical and horizontal. If my vertical relationship with God is not right, there is no way that my horizontal relationships within myself, with others, or with God’s creation can be positive . . . as it was intended.”

Now, the question we face is this: “Since Adam and Eve fell for the deceit of Satan, and we are now in our sinful natures the enemy of God, how can this correct relationship with God be accomplished?” Jesus teaches us the way by making clear the contrast between the negative and positive aspects that affect our relationship. Satan only used one type of bait for his trap in the Garden of Eden, but he has much more artillery to throw at us, so let’s begin with the negative aspects that threaten our relationship with God. What can we do to offset the power of Satan? Dale, would you please read Matthew 26: verse 41?

*Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

So we need help from outside ourselves. How do we get that? We pray to our Father in heaven in the name of Jesus. But there is more. How do we deal with an un-healthy preoccupation with the things of this world? The parable Jesus taught about the sower who went out to sow his seed gives us guidance with this trap of Satan. Dale, please read Luke 8:14.

*And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.*

And what is the outcome of those who put their emphasis on the pleasures of this life? Dale, please read Mark 8: 35-36.

*For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?*

The lures of this world are only temporary, in no way can they compare with the eternal blessings God holds for us. But are there more subtle traps that Satan holds before us? Dale, please read Mark 7: 20 – 23.

*What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man.*

And who among us can say that they are not guilty of all the items you just listed? The bottom line is this: whom will we serve, God or Satan? And what does Matthew 6:24 have to say in this regard?

*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the*

*other. You cannot serve God and Money.* This reminds me of our Old Testament Lesson 59 when we looked at the episode of Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. In 1<sup>st</sup> Kings chapter 18, verse 21 we read: *Elijah went before the people and said, How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, then follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him.*

And let us not forget the words of Joshua we learned back in Lesson 43 about being faithful to the Lord, or turning away to serve the gods of the Amorites. We don't have the idols of the Amorites here to tempt us, but we do have many false gods that rise up to tempt us such as pride, power, lust, and greed. And these are the arrows that Satan shoots at us every day. So what can we do, Teacher?

We remember what Jesus taught us when He faced Satan head-on. Jesus said *You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve* (Mt. 4:10). This is our proper relationship with our heavenly Father. And this relationship can grow when we recall passages such as Matthew 22: 34 – 40, where the point is emphasized that we should *love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.* This should then lead us to the story of Martha and Mary, when Martha was busy in the kitchen but Mary was hanging on to every word of Jesus. Martha complained that she was doing all the work and Mary should help her, but Jesus taught Martha about the priorities of eternal life (Luke 10: 38 – 41). Likewise, we should seek out every opportunity we have to not only hear, but to learn more of God's Word. And when we have learned more of God's Word, then we turn to John 14:23 and read: *If a man loves me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home with him.* And with that, Jesus teaches us, man will achieve the relationship with God that was intended from the beginning.

In our next lesson, Jesus will teach us about our responsibilities and blessings as a child of God.