

UNHOOK!

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February 24, 2013

Sermon in a sentence: Quickly remove any 'hooks' Satan has used to capture you; he is only interested in destroying you.

Scriptures: Phil. 4:4-9; Judges 13:24 – 16:31; 1 Kings 2:12 – 11:43; Rev. 2:12-28; 1 Cor. 6:12

Phil. 4:4-9 NASB Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Childhood reflection from Port Royal, Jamaica, Police Training School "Surgery": Dad cutting hooks out of the bodies of unwitting fishermen who accidentally sat on or grabbed hooks by mistake, or were hooked by other fishermen.

People often play games for fun. Harmless, innocent games, just to pass the time. Some folks get a little more risky with their games and even use weapons. Many people just love to take risks.

In this lesson, we look beyond games to real life, where people begin 'playing' with sin and wittingly or unwittingly get hooked.

The enemy of our souls will always present various sin options to us, keenly observing which ones we fall for. He starts small and does everything possible to get a small hook into us. Everything is free at first and temptation just seems so easy.

Although it is painful, it is easy enough to remove one small hook, but if we don't, the devil has the opportunity to insert another, and another and another....

While one small hook may not be enough to drag us away from God, many small hooks definitely do the job.

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The first thing we read about Samson in the Book of Judges is that he went down to Timnath and became infatuated with a young lady there. She was not an Israelite and worshiped a pagan god. Samson's parents tried to keep him from getting hooked up with her and failed.

Although the Lord was definitely working through Samson, the devil had exposed a weakness he could exploit that could lead to Samson's downfall.

Some time later, Samson again went into enemy territory and found himself a Philistine prostitute. Another hook was inserted. Even though the Lord helped him escape capture, it was clear his weakness was growing. He judged Israel for 20 years, but he just couldn't seem to stay away from pagan women.

At around the 20-year mark, he is seen again in enemy territory, chasing Delilah. This was not the first time he had ended up in such a situation. It was not the first time he was being closely questioned to reveal his personal secrets. He felt he was strong enough to withstand anything Delilah could throw at him, but he was sadly (and fatally) mistaken.

The fact that we are children of God and greatly used by Him is no protection against the wiles of the devil. If we allow Satan to hook us and we blatantly walk in paths of unrighteousness, we open ourselves to disaster. We are not nearly as strong as we think we are!

But Samson thought: As long as I can still feel the Spirit of God from time to time, I'm OK!

An old proverb goes something like this: "Sin will take you places you never thought you'd go, make you to do things you never thought you'd do, make you stay longer than you thought you'd stay and pay more than you thought you'd pay"!

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Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived (1 Kg. 3:12). He ascended the throne after his father David's death and immediately began to show the depth of his God given knowledge, favour and wisdom.

However, one of the first things he did, early in his reign, was to marry Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kg. 3:1), bringing pagan worship into his own home. There were also 'high places' in Israel used in the worship of false gods and he permitted this worship to continue. He even participated in such practices (1 Kg. 3:3).

God warned Solomon that such actions would lead him away from God's favour, but he did not take heed. In fact, he kept marrying foreign, pagan women until he had accumulated 700 wives, plus 300 concubines! This was not a matter of a sexual addiction, but rather his attempt to create political and economic alliances, and to ensure peace during his reign. Of course, he allowed his wives to worship their false gods and joined them in their sin. As the Lord had told him it would be, they turned his heart away from God (1 Kg. 11:1-10). Upon his death, the judgment of God fell upon his house and only two tribes remained with his son.

God will try to help us, warn us and lead us away from destruction, but if we do not take heed and remove Satan's hooks, we will be destroyed.

The men mentioned above were not pagans who did not know the God of Israel. They were people who were called of God and placed in positions of great power and influence. They consistently experienced His power at work in their lives and knew Him intimately.

Thus we see the danger many Christians face. They are very familiar with God, may be greatly used by God, but want to play with sin at the same time. Some are hooked on the blessings of God, and as long as they can feel His presence from time to time, and have a 'religious high' every once in a while, all is well. It is entirely possible for a person to be gifted and anointed of God, experiencing and enjoying His presence, yet on their way to destruction because of demonic hooks they have allowed to be set in their spirit.

The Lord's messages to the churches in the Book of Revelation give us a view of hooks that afflicted the saints of God in the 1st century. (These messages have a very contemporary sound to them!)

The church in Pergamum (Rev. 2:12-16) had some very good qualities – they held fast to the name of Jesus and kept the faith. At the same time, however, they engaged in idolatry and immorality, possibly even to the extent of wife-swapping (possible meaning of Nicolaitanism).

The church in Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-28) also had some exceptional qualities: love, faith, service, perseverance and ever increasing good works. At the same time, they tolerated teaching that supported immorality and idolatry.

Sin deceives us and blinds us.

Sin destroys our relationship with God.

**Sin causes us to lose everything God had blessed us with.
Eventually sin kills.**

We need to pay close attention to the hooks the enemy has been using to catch some of us:

- **Ungodly entertainment: movies, music, magazines**
- **Sports**
- **Fashion**
- **Ungodly relationships**
- **Fornication and adultery**
- **Pornography**
- **Love of money**
- **Substance abuse**
- **Inordinate desire for material things; covetousness**
- **Desire for power**

Now is time to begin the nasty, even bloody work to unhook ourselves from the things Satan is using to destroy us. The more hooks we allow him to insert, the harder it will be for us to escape. If we do not begin the process now, the results may well be fatal – both physically and spiritually.

How do you know if something has hooked you? If you're thinking about it all day, speaking about it all day or acting it out all day, you are hooked. If you cannot put it down and leave it alone for a good period of time, you are hooked. If something has power over *you*, rather than you having power over *it*, you are hooked. If there is a relationship you cannot walk away from in order to please Christ, you are hooked. As the apostle Paul said:

1 Cor. 6:12 NASB All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

Child of God – refuse the devil's bait and unhook yourself from his various enticements. Instead, let us hunger and thirst after righteousness and be hooked by God to life more abundantly on this earth, and eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord!