

A Close Look @ "The Big Squeeze"

Romans 12:1-2; Daniel 1:1-7

[When Scotty went off to college, he was the best & brightest from the youth group @ BSPC. Well, ^{AFTER He Graduated} instead of staying w/in striking range of his home, Scotty decided to attend a University 1K miles away, far, far from his home in the buckle of the Bible Belt. W/in a week, Scotty discovered his 3 suite mates were reprobate party animals, -- hostile to the Xn Faith. In class, ^{some} Faith was not just challenged -- his Faith was attacked almost every day. W/each passing week, Scotty was becoming more & more confused about his Faith -- & he was beginning to compromise away his convictions a little here -- a little there.

When Scotty came home for Christmas break, I asked, ^{So,} "How are you doing these days in school?" "Academically, I made the Presidents list this semester. Spiritually, I feel pressure to conform -- great pressure to compromise."] As Scotty spoke those words, a Vs came to mind, *Romans 12:2 (Phillips Translation)* "...do not let the world squeeze you into its mold..."

^{world} > @ college, Scotty was experiencing ^{something known as} "The Big Squeeze." A fallen world -- a world that opposes the God of the Bible -- was applying pressure on Him. Pressure to conform. Constant pressure. Intense pressure to compromise his spiritual integrity. Ultimately, that pressure comes from the devil. *1st John 5:19*, "We know that we are the children of God; & that the whole world is under the control of the evil one." All over the world, the devil has an active army under his command working FOR him & AGAINST the Lord.

Friends, if you mean business for the Lord -- if you are trying to work out in your life what it means to be a 7-day-a-week, wash-and-wear believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you *know* what a difficult task it is to deal w/the pressure people put on you -- pressure designed to derail the train of your discipleship. Being committed Xn is no picnic -- no walk in the park.

Just ask Daniel. When it comes to "TBS," Daniel can say, "Been there, done that." This AM as we consider what happened to this believer named Daniel, we discover 4 strategies a Babylonian ruler named Nebuchadnezzar used to attempt to draw Daniel away from his commitments to the Lord -- strategies designed to squeeze Daniel into the mold of ^{the Babylonian} a fallen culture. These 4 strategies are the same strategies the devil uses *today* to pressure ^{us} to compromise our commitments to God.
You-me

Problem

1. Satan ^{usually -energized Freed world} uses the strategy of ISOLATION. Against us

Vv 1-4... These Vv are a coin w/2 sides. On the one side of the coin, the Capital City of the Kingdom of Judah has been surrounded, attacked, plundered. Jerusalem -- the city of God -- had fallen into the hands of the enemy. The best & brightest young men ^{had} been carted off like so much cattle -- ripped away from family & friends -- relocated in a city as corrupt as NO, NYC, & Washington, DC combined.

There's a song the Jewish DJ's used to play on the Top 40 stations in Jerusalem = "Psalm 137". In the lyrics of that song is a question, "How can we sing the Lord's Song in a foreign land?" Well, that's a real problem because *nobody* in Babylon knows the ^{lyrics} tune to the *Lord's* song. Instead, the Babylonian radio stations pulsate w/the beat of blasphemous music directed *against* God. Indeed, from 1 perspective, seems like the malignant forces of evil have won the day.

Lord has 2 do what

Well, ^{As LEE CARSO on ESPN WORLD SALES} not so fast, my friend. The other side of the coin is this: The reason Jerusalem fell was to prove a point. The point is this: *God keeps His promises*. That's right. Way back in Deut. 28, God promised to Judah, "If you do not serve Me -- obey Me -- fear me as a nation, if ~~IN GOD WE TRUST~~ becomes nothing more than a slogan on your nation's currency -- I will hand ^{this nation of} Judah over to her enemies."

Friends, when God makes a promise, God dots the "I" -- God crosses the "T" of every promise He makes. Judah went down because *as a nation* Judah abandoned God & God's ways (still believers *in* the nation; but *as a matter of national policy*, the nation had abandoned the Lord). Now, the nation of Judah has fallen -- the cream of the crop has been relocated in a land that does not know The Living & True God.

How does it affect

So, you have 4 faithful believers pulled up by their roots -- 4 believers ^{into} *transplanted* the *hostile* environment of another country / ^{another} culture. Just think. No positive influences. No church to attend. No Bible studies in which the absolute Truth of God's Word is taught. No positive role models. No daily illustrations of what it means to be a citizen of the church. No fellowship. No association w/a covenant

community of believers.

That's the strategy of isolation. You move a believer *away* from positive godly influences & something happens to ~~them~~ ^{His/Her} commitment to the Lord. [RUM @ USM 5 weeks had not attended any small group BS / large group BS / met w/the campus minister. But I DID show up for the cookout! "How's it going spiritually for you?" "I'm struggling." "Want to see *why* you are struggling?" "Let this pile of charcoal briquettes represent our fellowship. When we meet, study, pray together, the fire of spirituality blazes in our lives. Now watch this." ...took a pair of long tongs -- removed a briquette from the pile. Then we talked for awhile longer. "Now, what's happened to that briquette separated from the fire?" "It's...cooled off." "BECAUSE...?" "It was removed from the fire."]

Starts to

Community is programmed into us

I got the point. Friends, godliness is a furnace filled w/the fire of worship -- BS -- fellowship -- encouragement -- accountability to other Xns. When we are removed from that fire, our Faith WILL grow cold. Don't deceive yourself. We are RELATIONAL people created by God to live a life of Faith *in community w/other believers.* You CANNOT live the Xn life all by yourself. To stay fired up for the Lord, you need to be in contact w/the word -- in contact w/other Xns. Make no mistake about it. Satan WILL use ISOLATION against you -- IF you let him.

2nd STRATEGY: Lucifer ~~uses~~ uses to Pressure You to compromise. CONTACT Pts BS/Prayer/Fellowship. ENGINE of SPIRITUALITY with MISSION.

2. Satan uses the strategy of INDOCTRINATION.

Vs 4c... There's a process of RE-education here. "...to teach the language -- literature of the Babylonians..." In other words, Nebby wanted to train Daniel & his 3 buds to think like Babylonians rather than like believers. So Nebby gave these men a CHALDEAN education.

Friends, notice here how LANGUAGE is a powerful tool of education. Words mean things. Words shape reality. Definitions structure how people think about issues. [...debate team @ USM, Dr. Don George, "Whoever defines the terms sets the agenda -- wins the day."]

Just ask Susan [...a co-ed @ Moorehead State Univ...an art major. ^{SINCE} ~~so~~ when the Student Govt. Assn. suggested that 4 murals be painted on the 4 walls of ~~the~~ dorm lobby to celebrate the diversity of the University, Susan volunteered to paint a mural on 1 of the walls. Well, Susan was a Xn, so she painted this clever mural...school of fish w/1 fish going the other way = an IKTHEUS fish w/the symbol of the cross...Title of the mural: "Go AGAINST the flow."



> That's ALL

^{SUSAN}
 2 weeks after ~~she~~ finished the mural, the Advisory Board of MSU called Susan in to inform her they would be painting over her mural. "Why?" Now listen to the language. They said, "Some students, faculty, & alumni are *offended* over the use of Xn symbolism @ a state-supported university. Especially since Xny represents to many of our people a *narrow-minded* attitude of *intolerance, fanaticism,* and *extremism.*" In other words, Xny was demonized by the faculty & leaders of that University. ^{NOT tolerated}

Now, you may be thinking, "Well, I don't attend a school." That does NOT matter. Every day, you are being educated. The classroom is your den / living room / bedroom -- wherever your TV is. The professors are the members of the media who use language to shape what THEY think you ought to believe on any given issue. It's called "newspeak." If the media says something often enough, people become conditioned to believe what they say. You need to know you are the target of a massive campaign of RE-education. ^{Indoctrination}

^{show selected scenes & survive sites}
^{Tell you what ought to think about etc.}

Let's take the term narrow-minded. [If this room was on fire, all the doors were locked shut, no windows, but I saw 1 opening, "If you want to live, there's only 1 way to escape = through that opening."] Am I being narrow-minded? Of course not! I'm only trying to keep you from dying in the fire. Well, the Bible says whosoever does NOT believe in / trust in Jesus Christ as Savior & Lord WILL perish in an *everlasting* fire. Xny is NOT narrow. Jesus sincerely offers salvation *from* the fire to ANYONE who will go through the only fire exit there is. - Fire Exit = X.

Friends, beware of how people use language as a tool of INDOCTRINATION to turn you away from the Lord.

^{A satanic & energized fellow world}
3. Satan uses the strategy of TEMPTATION. ^{Vs US}

^{Thomas Brooks}
 Vs 5... [Precious Remedies, "Temptation is when Satan shows you the *bait* but NOT the *hook*."] Now, if you wanted to lure someone away from their convictions, what kind of *bait* would you use? Well, the best baits -- lures -- enticements (incentives) would be the baits of pleasure, \$\$, & self-promotion. [...a lot of ink spilled over what was wrong w/this food...]
 This rich food represents the perks promised to people who go along w/the Babylonian way of getting things done. Just think, dining w/the President -- hob-nobbin' w/the "big boys" -- living the

high life of pleasure, profit, & prestige. Just ~~don't~~ play the game -- you can enjoy the "good life."

[Here's an 18-year-girl ^{Xn} ~~and boy~~ working 1 summer @ the local BK flipping hamburgers. 1 day she comes home, sweating & smelling like french fries, & ~~his~~ Her parents meet him @ the door. "Someone for Washington DC has called you -- here's the #." She runs into the bedroom, picks up the phone, dials the #. "Hello, this is Senator Shinkelstien. I want to offer you a *full scholarship* to Georgetown University. My office will pay your tuition, books -- pay your apartment & utilities + besides that, we will pay you 2K a month if you will work w/me. You will work in all the departments of state + you may choose if you so desire NOT to be an intern @ the White House. After you graduate, you will be awarded a high position w/great pay & fantastic benefits."

"WOW! Is this great or what?" (you think) Then, the next words you hear make your heart sink. "There is 1 thing you need to know. I understand you are a Xn. That's great. We need more religion these days. BUT...we get a lot of people going through here that have a different religious orientation than you do. SO, since we do not want to *offend* anyone & because of the separation of church & state, you cannot speak to anyone about your Xn Faith. You cannot conduct a Bible Study or prayer meeting -- even before work hours or during lunch break. You MUST keep your Faith a private matter between you & your God. Plus, you will be working most every Sunday. Do you understand?"

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Friends, that's what compromise is all about. Satan dangles, like shiny bait, before your eyes, the promise of pleasure, prestige & profit IF you will compromise your convictions. Perhaps we need to remind ourselves that our commitment is to what John Newton's hymn calls the "SOLID joys & LASTING treasures" that "none but ZION's children know." Friends, the devil believes that every person has his/her price. We *ought* to know better. *Everything* the world has to offer amounts to a big, fat ZERO when compared to the *Heavenly* Treasure we have in Christ.

A Satanically Energized Fallen world

4. Satan uses the strategy of CONFUSION.

Against
vs

Let's look @ this change of names. Friends, this is significant. Vv 6-7... The strategy was that if these young men heard their new names every day, they would become confused -- start thinking of themselves as servants of Babylonian gods rather than as servants of The Living & True God.

Now, if you slow down & think about it, our fallen sinful world is ALWAYS encouraging us to think of ourselves 1st as something other than Xns. "...you are a SENATOR, put in office to represent the people..." No. XNS represent GOD 1st. "...you are 1st & foremost a SOLDIER. No, XN soldier. "...Are you on the TEAM or not..?" Wrong team. EMPLOYEE? No, XN employed by the company. You work for *Another* Boss! [WHSY...for us or against us? "I'm FOR the Truth."] CONSUMER? Am I just supposed to look @ all the options & choose the 1 I like best? No, I have 1 option: choosing FOR Christ. "Are you my FRIEND or not?" Well, if I have to choose *against* Christ to choose *in favor of* you, then by *your* definition, I am *not* your friend. 1 more: "Are you part of this FAMILY or not? Blood's thicker than water, you know." Friends, CHRIST'S blood is thicker than family blood.

X Remember, you are 1st & foremost a CHILD OF GOD / SOLDIER IN X's ARMY / on JESUS' team / JESUS is your BOSS / BEST FRIEND / you are a member of GOD'S forever family. Don't let ANYbody confuse you about your True identity. No matter how anybody else tries to label you, YOU ARE A SERVANT OF THE MOST HIGH GOD!!

Remember Scottie? I would love to be able to tell you that Scottie's story ended well. But, I cannot do that. Isolated, indoctrinated, tempted, & confused, Scottie gave into the pressure of "the big squeeze," But don't look down your nose @ Scottie. We're *all* capable of giving in. But we do NOT have to. We need to be AWARE of the strategies Satan uses to draw us away from our Xn commitments. Then, we need to follow the battle cry of *Eph. 6:10*, "*Finally, be strong in the LORD and in HIS mighty power.*" May God give you the grace to RECOGNIZE...RESIST!!