

## Of Nets and Snares

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

October 19, 2009

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How does a spider make a web? How is the first line attached to the other side of the span? Does she “throw” a line across? Does she “fly” to attach it? Does she walk across on the ground and then up the ascent to bring it where she wants it? No, none of these is correct. According to one source I studied, the spider releases a “sticky” line and allows the wind to take it where it will. If the line finds something to attach to, then the spider walks across gingerly on the line like a tightrope, and attaches a second line, strengthening the first.

Then other lines are added and a frame is constructed with radii extending from a center point. After that, concentric lines begin at the middle, first using non-sticky line, to fill in the web. Finally, a sticky line is added between the non-sticky concentric lines and the non-sticky circular lines are removed, turning the web into a useful tool for snaring food. Then the spider can rest. After a night of hunting, the web may be damaged to the point that it is no longer useful. The spider then eats the web, leaving the main structural lines intact, and begins the process again. Or, it may be that the web needs only minor repair and is good for another day. (See [http://www.xs4all.nl/~ednieuw/Spiders/Info/Construction\\_of\\_a\\_web.html](http://www.xs4all.nl/~ednieuw/Spiders/Info/Construction_of_a_web.html))

Nature is filled with illustrations of traps, snares, webs and nets. One time when my wife and I were first married, we were able to dig out, from our back yard the den of a trap-door spider, with Mr. Spider still inside! I’m not sure how we ever spied it in the first place, but we carefully dug around the den and placed it in a jar. It was amazing to study how his home was constructed; how tightly sealed was the “door” of his house. If you were extremely careful, you might slide the blade of a knife between the “door” and the “jamb” of his house and be able to lift the door and look in, but those were rare moments. Usually what happened was that a slight touching of the edge of the door put him on “alert” and then he “locked” the door so that you couldn’t open it, no matter how hard you tried. When the spider died, I wished that we had kept his house, but we don’t have it anymore.

The “ant lion” is an interesting study in entrapment. He digs a funnel-shaped hole in the ground and waits for an ant or another small insect to fall in. Then he kicks up rocks and makes it hard for his prey to climb out, and it tumbles down and

becomes his lunch. The list of hunters in nature which employ some type of trap seems endless.

The Bible makes use of this illustration in a spiritual sense. Satan, we are told, is a crafty builder of traps and snares. He also uses people to entice and allure others into sin. He cleverly lays out his lines of circumstance and opportunity, using greed, pride, lust, appetite, ambition and hate to trap and ensnare his victims. Thus the mighty Samson was captured by the allurements of Delilah. Thus Adam made the fateful decision to disobey God through the efforts of the deceived Eve.

The concept of being ensnared and trapped by sin is well-represented in Scripture. In his farewell address Joshua warned Israel that if they were unfaithful and formed alliances with the heathen that they should “know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you.” Joshua 23:13.

Bildad, one of Job’s friends spoke of the wicked with these words: “He is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walks into a snare. The net takes him by the heel, and a snare lays hold of him. A noose is hidden for him on the ground, and a trap for him in the road.” Job 18:8-10.

David wrote of the wicked, “He sits in the lurking places of the villages; in the secret places he murders the innocent; his eyes are secretly fixed on the helpless. He lies in wait secretly, as a lion in his den; he lies in wait to catch the poor; he catches the poor when he draws him into his net.” Psalm 10:8, 9. “The proud have hidden a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set traps for me.” Psalm 140:5. He also said, “Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and from the traps of the workers of iniquity. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I escape safely.” Psalm 141:9, 10.

The wise man Solomon said, “For man also does not know his time; like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them.” Ecclesiastes 9:12.

Jeremiah declared, “For among My people are found wicked men; they lie in wait as one who sets snares; they set a trap; they catch men.” Jeremiah 5:26. Micah said, “The faithful man has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood; every man hunts his brother with a net.” Micah 7:2.

Satan laid a trap of self-sufficiency and pride for Cain, persuading him that his bloodless sacrifice of fruit would suffice. The devil laid a trap for Balaam with the prospect of a hefty honorarium for the service of cursing God's people. He tempted the covetous Achan with the spoils of Jericho; Gehazi with the gifts of the leprosy-cured Naaman; Judas with the reward of betrayal.

He tempted Abraham to lie about Sarah; he tempted Esau with the steaming plate of lentils to sell his birthright and give up his inheritance. He set a trap of greed and deception for Ananias and Sapphira after they sold property but kept back part of the proceeds, contrary to their oath. Since the beginning of our world and before, it has been his mission to lead others through guile and craft into rebellion with him. He used subterfuge and misrepresentation to ensnare the minds of angels in heaven. Traps and webs; nets and snares. Satan is a master at making them!

Satan wants your soul. There is a desperate battle for every soul in the world going on right now. He wants to lead everyone to destruction. Why? Three reasons. It is the nature of sin to bring others into its rebellion. Secondly, Satan hates God, and since the resurrection and ascension of Jesus he can't touch God directly. So he hurts God by deceiving His children, for whom Jesus paid the ultimate price of salvation on the cross. Satan delights in leading them into his web of deception. It is his goal to so mislead the ones for whom Christ died, that they will turn from God and see Him as the object of hatred, as does Satan. Thirdly, it is also true that Satan will ultimately bear his part of the blame for the sins of the righteous. He is the "Azazel" of Leviticus 16 who will bear his part of the responsibility for sin; not in a redemptive way (only Jesus can do that), but as part of the reality of his part in instigating and furthering sin. So it is to his benefit to keep more people from salvation.

From your birth, Satan has been devising snares and traps for you. He is well acquainted with your character; your weak and strong points. He knows what buttons to push. He knows what turns your head, what catches your eye, what bends your ear. He listens to your conversations. He lays his lines out, his sticky web, to entrap and ensnare you and me in situations in which we are bound so tightly that release seems impossible. Vicious habits grip our physiology and psychology. Unhealthy personal relationships wrap their tentacles about us and prevent us from spiritual achievement. Circumstances are arranged so that it is hard to do what is right. If you're in a situation right now, freedom from which seems difficult, know that God has the power to cut through the ropes and nets and free you!

I heard about someone who had a pet snake, a boa constrictor which had grown very large. When taking it out of its pen, the snake turned on its owner and began the death-grip choke hold for which they are famous. No amount of coaxing or prying could make it release its hold. Eventually the owner's wife was able to cut the neck of the snake with a large kitchen knife and save her husband. I put into my search engine the words "boa chokes owner" and was shown that there were more than 3 million entries!

Like a military strategist, Satan even takes note of what the preacher is going to speak about at church that Sabbath, then lays snares of circumstance to keep those very people away who need to hear that message from God's Word the most. Or, he lulls church members into slumber because of overwork during the week, so that the message God has for them is not received.

But God can help us avoid the snares that Satan sets. There's a story in the Bible that reminds us of this. It took place during the tenure of Elisha, the man of God. It seems the Syrian king had designs against the nation of Israel and set numerous ambushes against them, but his strategy failed. "Now the king of Syria was making war against Israel; and he took counsel with his servants, saying, 'My camp will be in such and such a place.' And the man of God sent to the king of Israel, saying, 'Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are coming down there.' Then the king of Israel sent someone to the place of which the man of God had told him. Thus he warned him, and he was watchful there, not just once or twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was greatly troubled by this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, 'Will you not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?' And one of his servants said, 'None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.'" II Kings 6:8-12.

Do you see the value of that principle? Wouldn't military intelligence want that kind of insight today? If we would heed the words of His messengers, we would be spared many a snare of Satan! King Jehoshaphat encouraged his people, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper." II Chronicles 20:20. There is a wealth of material in the Scriptures and in the writings of the one whom our church has recognized as being a messenger of the Lord, which if heeded, will save us from many a trap of the devil.

The devil devises nets in which to gather his subjects. But he's not the only one who makes and sets nets! Oh no; the One Who gave the spider skill to weave her

web knows about nets too! There are differences of course. The devil makes his nets through hatred; God makes His nets from the motivation of love. Satan's webs are designed for destruction; God's are constructed for salvation. God's nets are like those giant webs that firemen hold at the base of burning buildings, to catch someone in their fall and save them from death. God is after your soul, just as the devil is.

The "Hound of Heaven" is a 182-line poem written by Francis Thompson based on God's pursuing the sinner. It is described in this way: "As the hound follows the hare, never ceasing in its running, ever drawing nearer in the chase, with unhurrying and unperturbed pace, so does God follow the fleeing soul by His Diving grace. And though in sin or in human love, away from God it seeks to hide itself, Divine grace follows after, unwearingly follows ever after, till the soul feels its pressure forcing it to turn to Him alone in that never ending pursuit." The Neumann Press Book of Verse, 1988.

What does the Bible say about God's nets? Is this idea in the Bible? Yes! In one of the shorter parables that He told, Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind." Matthew 13:47. When Jesus called some of his disciples, He employed this figure of speech. "Now Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.'" Matthew 4:18.

Don't miss the point in this passage; Jesus invited them to become "fishers of men" *in their following Him*; therefore *He* is the ultimate Fisher of men. In "fishing for men," they would be copying what He was doing. He is the One Who casts the Gospel net into the sea of mankind, drawing all to Him. In following Him, Peter and Andrew would find the "net" and the "fish" taking on another reality; but it would be in semblance of the work of their Lord that they would be "fishers of men."

Is this principle brought out in other places of the Bible? Job, although he didn't know all that was taking place behind the scenes of his experience said that God "has surrounded me with His net." He spoke a greater truth than he realized, for indeed God had His purpose in the trials of Job, from which he would come forth as gold tried in the fire. Job wasn't able to fully grasp it at the time, but God's "net" that surrounded him was designed in love.

Through the prophet Hosea, God tried to teach Israel His great love. By a visual illustration within the details of Hosea and Gomer's experience, and by the spoken word He educated them. "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love." Hosea 11:1-4.

Did you know that Paul spoke of "entrapping" his converts? He knew the principle of the Gospel net. He wrote to the believers in Corinth these words: "I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved. But be that as it may, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile!" II Corinthians 12:15, 16.

Why would God need to "trap" us by His love? Why would He need to "catch" us in His Gospel net? It is because sin has so blinded us, so darkened our minds, that we often are not receptive to a direct approach. Someday we'll see the lines in His web, the strings in His net. Someday we'll understand clearly how He has been after us, to "catch us" since we were born. We'll see how He has been at work in every circumstance, wooing, encouraging, leading and drawing us by His gentle cords of love.

A rough and tough prison warden received two new inmates, charged with inciting a riot. They had been beaten by rods and placed in the stocks, a very uncomfortable position that many times caused severe cramps. Nevertheless, these new prisoners didn't whine or complain. There were no shouts of coarse language and cursing. There were songs of praise rising from the jail cell in Philippi that night! Paul and Silas were praising God for the privilege of suffering for the name of their dear Savior. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, which resulted in the chains of all the prisoners dropping from them. The warden, suspecting that all the inmates would escape, prepared to take his own life, for he would be held accountable for the lives of his prisoners, but Paul said, "No, don't do it! We're all here."

The warden couldn't understand why Paul and Silas sang in their tribulation; he couldn't understand why they didn't take the opportunity to escape, but he knew there was a power there, there was a presence there, there was hope there that he needed in his life. He knew they had something that he didn't have, but wanted. He fell, trembling at the feet of the apostle and cried out, "Sirs (imagine the Roman guard addressing his prisoners with that title!), what must I do to be saved?" Acts 16:30.

I can guarantee you that the warden woke up that morning with zero thought of how his life, and the life of his family, would be changed forever that day. He knew nothing of Satan's plot to endanger Paul and Silas' life and silence their witness. He didn't know of the web that had been spun by the devil to curtail the missionary work of God's messengers.

He also knew nothing about the "net" that God had set out for his life. You see, even though the devil had set a trap for Paul and Silas, our great God was not caught unprepared. His plan would counteract the plan of the devil and bring it to naught. His plan would result in the Gospel being witnessed to someone who probably wasn't at the market place that day when the uproar ensued. God saw in the heart of this rough, tough warden a prospect for His kingdom. Through the thick and weathered skin He saw a heart that would respond to love, His love, when demonstrated effectively. When that love was shown, the heart of the warden was broken. He was brought into the net of God's grace and into His kingdom.

When Naaman took captive a little Israelite maiden, little did he know of God's net being laid for him. Proud, successful and self-sufficient, he was laid low by leprosy, but encouraged to seek the help of Elisha, the prophet of Israel. When he dipped in the Jordan the seventh time and came up with the skin of a new-born, he knew there was a God in Israel Who could heal, and Who loved him. He was trapped by that love and became a convert.

This same "Fisher" God has been at work in your life and in mine. Though we didn't see Him, He was at work, constructing a web in which to gather us close to Him. When my parents made a selection of a certain physician for a family doctor (I wish I had asked my mom before she passed away how it came about that they chose him), how could they possibly know that it was part of God's net, and that the kindly doctor would invite them to some meetings at which they would hear Bible truth and their lives, my life, would be changed forever?

Your life is no different. Kindly, patiently, God the Divine Hunter, has been in search of ways to draw you to Him. Many have no doubt laid claim to the title "world's greatest fisherman," but 65-year-old Zyg Gregorek, of Great Britain substantiates his claim with this evidence. He has snared nine species of shark, ten species of billfish (large predatory fish like swordfish and marlin) and eight species of tuna. To catch all 27 fish he traveled over 150,000 miles and fished in some of the most remote places of the world, including North and South America, Australia, Mozambique, and the Galapagos Islands. Some may believe that he is the greatest fisherman in the world. But he is not. Our loving Lord has been fishing

for souls since the fall of man. 150,000 miles? Jesus came from heaven to this earth become the Fisher of man. He pursued Adam and Eve in the Garden. He has been in search of lost mankind ever since.

When we get to heaven, we'll learn more about how God has saved us and others. We'll learn about His net and how He has worked tirelessly as the Fisher of man. There will be great "fishing" stories told up there, and they will all be true! Do you love Him today? Do you appreciate what He's done for you in dying for your sins? Do you want to say, again today, "Yes, Lord, come into my life and be my God. I give myself to you. Please work Your miracle in my heart and make me new"?